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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
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HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent A. J. Coxon

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. J. Garbutt

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—R. H. Hyde

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 135**

EIGHTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1987-88

House of Commons

Monday 13 June 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SOUTHERN WATER AUTHORITY BILL
Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Continental Shelf (Exploration Drilling)

1. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current level of exploration drilling on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): During the first five months of 1988 a total of 75 exploration and appraisal wells were started, compared with only 40 in the same period last year. Exploration well starts alone have risen from 18 in the first five months of 1987 to 27 in the corresponding period this year.

Mr. Key: May I be the first to congratulate my right hon. Friend on becoming a Privy Councillor. That is very good news. Will he have a word with his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the models used to calculate the net present value, because some of the oil companies are very concerned about that calculation for the southern North sea? It would be a shame to do anything to disturb the very good upward and upbeat trend.

Mr. Morrison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his congratulations. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy is not here today because, as hon. Members know, he is leading a very important industrial mission to China.

I have heard the points made by some oil companies. They have discussed them with me. They are very much in favour of the proposals put forward by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in many parts of the Budget. However, they have one or two points to make and they are being discussed with me and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: May I add my congratulations and those of my colleagues in the SNP-Plaid Cymru group to the Minister on the honour that he has received. When does the right hon. Gentleman expect that there will be a spin off to the oil fabrication yards of the renewed activity in the North sea sector, particularly in view of the difficulties at Ardersier?

Mr. Morrison: I am most grateful to the hon. Lady for her remarks. She and one or two other hon. Members put points to me when they came to see me the other day. There is concern about the amount of work available in the fabrication yards. As I said then, the current level of activity—drilling and appraisal—and the number of developments that I have been able to approve this year mean that the outlook for the yards is better than it would otherwise have been.

National Union of Mineworkers

2. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet officials of the National Union of Mineworkers; and what matters will be discussed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): My right hon. Friend and I are

always willing to respond to requests for meetings by trade unions from the energy industries. No such request has been received from the NUM.

Mr. Patchett: The Minister regularly refers to or asserts the great future for coal in this country, yet he has never met representatives of the work force to hear their opinions, fears and concerns. Why is there this lack of interest? Is it because, as we suspect, the greatest interest lies in imported coal rather than in the British coal industry?

Mr. Spicer: We regularly meet members of the UDM because they have asked on many occasions——

Mr. Patchett: Scabs.

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman may call them scabs, but they represent a very large proportion of the British Coal work force. That shows his prejudices in asking this question. We have never wanted to encourage imports. We have said that a privatised electricity industry will be able to buy in the best market.

Mr. Hind: If my right hon. Friend meets leaders of the UDM and NUM, will he emphasise to them the importance of the participation of the unions in the mining industry in the Government's employment training programme? In future, that will fill a necessary gap in skills in the mining industry and throughout industry.

Mr. Spicer: I will certainly pass on to British Coal the points that my hon. Friend has raised. There is no doubt that training in all aspects of industry, including mining, is very important.

Mr. Redmond: If the Minister receives a request from the NUM, will he agree to a meeting and discuss with the union the privatisation plans as they stand to date?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Member speaks about privatisation plans, but the Government have made it clear that there are no plans to privatise the coal industry before the next general election. However, as has also been said, the Government are considering the possibilities for private capital to play a greater role in the industry. If the NUM wishes to discuss that, and the prospects that it might create for new jobs, we shall be willing to hold such discussions.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: When my hon. Friend next meets officials of the National Union of Mineworkers, will he tell them that miners in Nottinghamshire have five times broken their own productivity record? Will he point out what a tremendous tribute that is to the collieries' men and management, and that such an achievement gives the best possible guarantee for the long-term future of the British coal industry?

Mr. Spicer: It there were to be a meeting with the NUM, I certainly would convey the points that my hon. Friend has just made. However, as mention has been made of foreign imports, I would have to accompany those sentiments with the advice that foreign competitors, particularly the United States and Australia, continue to enjoy a productivity rate three times higher than our national average.

Mr. Skinner: If the Minister does meet officials of the UDM, will he tell them that they were very successfully used by the Coal Board and by the Government during the miners' strike? They were promised roses all the way for combining with the Tory Government. Will the Minister explain in what circumstances he felt it necessary to connive with the British Coal management to shut the pits in Nottinghamshire—in other words, to say to those UDM members who formed the bosses' union, "We will use you when it suits us but we will also drop you when it suits us—and we shall sack you in the process"?

Mr. Spicer: No, it is unlikely that I would say very much of that to officials of the UDM. I would say to them that the UDM, far from being a "bosses' union" has been extremely tough, not in debating politics with British Coal, but in debating the interests of its members. As a result, the UDM is getting better deals for its members than is the NUM in many cases.

British Coal

3. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what he expects to discuss.

6. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what subjects were discussed.

14. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what topics were discussed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Mr. Adley: Notwithstanding the fact that I had a tooth fall out during lunch, is my hon. Friend aware that the Secretary of State for Transport, in announcing his willingness to accept closure of the Settle to Carlisle line, said that every Government Department would do its best to see that the line stayed open? As British Coal has a vested interest in selling coal for use by the steam locomotives travelling on that line, and as it has already made substantial contributions in that regard, will my hon. Friend take an opportunity to discuss with British Coal the need to co-operate with the Government's efforts to keep the Settle to Carlisle line open?

Mr. Spicer: I congratulate my hon. Friend on raising the subject of the Settle to Carlisle line under this question, particularly given the fact that one of his teeth fell out on his way to the Chamber. I commiserate with him. British Coal has sponsored a number of steam train runs on the Settle to Carlisle line. I will ensure that my hon. Friend's views are made known to the chairman of British Coal, but, as my hon. Friend will know, British Coal is not in a strong financial position to do very much more.

Mr. Michael Welsh: When the Minister meets the chairman of British Coal, will he discuss coal supply, and whether it is better to buy British rather than foreign coal? Will he make it plain to the chairman that he would not like to see foreign coal imported cheaply in the short run, if, when it runs out, the domestc coal industry will be unable to supply our needs?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman has made a good point, which will no doubt be borne in mind by those who are laying contracts for coal on behalf of the electricity

industry. One of the great advantages that British Coal has in any negotiations about buying coal is that the spot market may change in the future. A number of analysts say that it could well rise. British Coal is able to provide on a secure basis, which foreigners may not be able to do. World coal prices, however, are considerably lower than British coal prices, and there is therefore an onus on British Coal to make itself fully competitive, which we believe it should be able to do.

Mr. Colvin: My hon. Friend has made it clear that competitiveness is one of the matters that he would discuss with the chairman of British Coal, so that, if given the go-ahead, British Coal could supply coal to Fawley B power station. I hope that the power station is not built. Nevertheless, does my hon. Friend not regard it as an act of gross contempt by the CEGB to place orders for the generators before the public inquiry—which he has now sanctioned—into whether it will be built, has even started its sessions?

Mr. Spicer: I understand that my hon. Friend is right in that certain design contracts have been placed for generators, but it is for the CEGB to take a view on whether the risks involved in placing them—with, no doubt, penalties attached if it does not go through with them—are worth taking. As my hon. Friend rightly said, the inquiry has not even begun. Certainly the Government's view is that the contracts would in no way prejudice the outcome of the inquiry, one way or the other.

Mr. Morgan: As a change from questions from toothless Tory Back Benchers, may I ask the Minister whether, if he agrees to the meeting with the chairman of British Coal, he will discuss with him the implications for the coal burn of the statement made in the business section of *The Sunday Times* yesterday and attributed to the heads of British Steel in a press briefing to City journalists in Port Talbot last Wednesday?

British Steel said that it was thinking seriously about buying its electricity direct from the generators, thus cutting out the electricity board, and possibly buying indirectly from the French nuclear electricity industry. Does the Minister realise that if British Steel does that, its private sector steel competitors, which use the electric arc method, will almost certainly do so as well? That would mean that 30 per cent. of the market for the South Wales electricity board would disappear overnight. What would be the consequences for the domestic electricity consumer in south Wales?

Mr. Spicer: Let me say first that anyone who has had to answer questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) will know that he is not toothless. I do not know who the hon. Gentleman was referring to, but his description cannot be applied to my hon. Friend.

The question whether a large customer could buy direct from the generating company under a privatised industry is one that we are considering very carefully, in view of the privatisation and the regulations that we shall have to make. My prejudice, however, is in favour of allowing for the maximum competition and, if big consumers wish to buy direct from certain suppliers, to allow them to do so. That would put good competitive pressure on what are otherwise pretty well monopolist bodies—the local regional electricity board companies.

Mr. Batiste: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the greatest contributions that could be made to the stability of the coal industry would be to give individual miners the opportunity of a substantial capital stake in their industry? Will he at an early stage have discussions with the chairman of British Coal, in the first instance to provide an opportunity for the miners to buy out pits that British Coal considers uneconomic?

Mr. Spicer: We have said that we are reviewing the limits to private capital currently imposed on the industry. The deep mines to which I think my hon. Friend was referring are limited to 30 men underground. I cannot yet tell my hon. Friend the result of the review.

Mr. Barron: When the Minister meets the chairman of British Coal, will he explain to him why Hinkley C PWR is not to be judged economically against coal, or even British coal? It is to be judged economically only against renewables. Will he explain in detail to the chairman of British Coal why, under the privatisation plans, he is willing to cosset nuclear energy but not coal, although productivity in the British coal industry is good?

Mr. Spicer: We are not comparing like with like. Coal accounts for between 60 and 70 per cent. of all the sources of energy in this country, so, whatever happens, we are talking about a vast market. All that we have said is that in the interests of security and variety of supply we wish to ensure that there is a minimum level of non-fossil-based fuel sources in this country. To that extent, we shall ensure that a non-fossil-based fuel source exists in the future.

Energy Efficiency

4. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what will be the key priorities for energy efficiency in the next decade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I recently announced that the energy efficiency office is entering a fresh phase. It will run a targeted regional service of advice and support for industry and commerce. At the same time it will continue to help the domestic consumer, through the community insulation programme and research into energy efficiency in housing.

Mr. Hind: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the major initiative taken by the building societies to promote energy efficiency among home owners is a major contribution towards energy efficiency in this country?

Mr. Morrison: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. I put the proposition to the building societies about four months ago and said that this was something that we could do together. What particularly pleased me was the reaction of the Building Societies Association and the fact that all the major building societies are now taking part.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Will the Minister confirm that the fresh phase for the energy efficiency office is a cut in the budget from £24 million to £15 million and that there is to be no major promotional advertising campaign by the office in the following year? Is the Minister telling the House that energy surveys are no longer necessary because people have somehow magically learnt the lessons that the energy efficiency office was set up to teach?

Mr. Morrison: I can confirm that the campaigns of the energy efficiency office will be specifically targeted. The success of the monergy campaign has been such that I believe that the general message has got across. There is awareness in industry, commerce and the domestic household of the need for and the advantages of saving energy. As for the survey schemes, half of those who have taken them up say that they would have done it anyway, without any input from the taxpayer. That seems to be a wrong use of taxpayers' money, so there will therefore be a reduction in the use of taxpayers' money for that purpose.

Mr. Rost: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the biggest contribution to improved energy efficiency over the next decade can come from improved thermal efficiency in electricity production—from the present 35 per cent. that is achievable for electricity-only production to the 80 per cent. potential that is achievable when heat that would otherwise be wasted is used?

Mr. Morrison: I note what my hon. Friend says about combined heat and power, and we take it very seriously. The benefits that will result from competition in a privatised industry will lead to improved efficiency.

Mr. John Garrett: Does the Minister accept that the Opposition are stunned and overjoyed to read of the honour that has recently been conferred upon him? However, does he agree that he is not being entirely frank with the House, in that there is to be a cut of one third in his Department's expenditure on energy saving programmes next year, and more the year after, and that this is hardly the time to embark on such a cut? A recent EEC study shows that Britain has made virtually no progress on energy saving since 1983. I am sure that the Minister has read the report. Does he agree that getting building societies to hand out a few leaflets is not the way to mount a major initiative on energy saving?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman knows that at this time of year all Departments of State negotiate with the Treasury. To anticipate the outcome of those negotiations would be wholly to mislead the House. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is not more effusive in his praise of the building societies' initiative. It will reach millions of householders and potential householders who in the past did not have such a checklist before them.

Coal Imports

5. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many tonnes of coal were imported into the United Kingdom in 1987; what proportion this represented of total domestic coal consumption; and what were the comparable figures for 1982.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Some 9·8 million tonnes of coal were imported into the United Kingdom in 1987, representing 8·5 per cent. of total inland consumption. In 1982, comparable figures were 4·1 million tonnes and 3·7 per cent.

Mr. Cran: Will my hon. Friend confirm that industrial and other users should continue to have access to the cheapest sources of coal, irrespective of whether they are in the United Kingdom? Does he agree that the United Kingdom's future international competitiveness may—I stress "may"—depend on that policy?

Mr. Spicer: I can confirm that the Government have no plans to prevent a privatised electricity industry from buying coal in the best market. We say that because we are confident that British Coal can become fully competitive so that the electricity industry will want to buy British.

Mr. Ashton: The Minister has just admitted that imports of coal have trebled in five years. How much of that coal came from South Africa? If the new port opens at Killingholme, how many miners' jobs in pits in my constituency will be lost because of massive importation of coal from South Africa, Bolivia and other countries run on cheap and slave labour?

Mr. Spicer: Speaking from memory, I believe that South Africa provides 0·2 per cent. of inland coal consumption and 2 per cent. of all imports. A significant proportion of imported coal is coking coal. If flexible working arrangements could be worked out between the unions and British Coal, Margam would be able to go ahead and coking coal produced there would substitute for a large proportion of imported coal.

Mr. John Marshall: I welcome the fact that my hon. Friend has said that he will not prevent a privatised electricity industry from buying in the cheapest market. Can he be more positive and say that he will encourage it to buy cheaply, as that would be good for customers such as pensioners, and good for employment in energy-using industries?

Mr. Spicer: The Government would much prefer coal used for electricity generation to be bought from British coal sources. We say that in the belief that British Coal should be fully competitive. We shall not prevent customers, particularly the electricity industry, from buying abroad, but we shall do everything we can to encourage and assist British Coal to become fully competitive so that it will be able to take on all comers.

Mr. Prescott: Has the Minister read the financial report on the coal industry by Prior and McCloskie, which says that, within six years, world prices will begin to rise, when British Coal prices are falling, making present-day uneconomic pits economic? Does that not expose the short-term nature of the Government's policy of encouraging large-scale imports, motivated largely by the desire to privatise a smaller, more profitable coal industry at the direct expense of Britain's long-term energy interests, redundancies and pit closures?

Mr. Spicer: Nobody who listens to the hon. Gentleman would imagine that the Government have allowed £1 billion of taxpayers' money to be spent on the industry each year, or allowed £6 billion of investment to be made in the industry. Anybody would think that the Government were allowing the industry to go out of business. Quite the converse is the case. The Government are building the industry into one that is able to take on all comers, particularly for the reason that the hon. Gentleman mentioned—the unpredictability of the future price of coal. Coal prices may well rise. In that event, British Coal will be even more profitable than we want it to be immediately.

Continental Shelf (Oil Reserves)

7. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of recoverable reserves of oil on the United Kingdom continental shelf; and what were the comparable figures five and 10 years before.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The latest estimate for remaining recoverable oil reserves at the proven plus probable level is 1,290 million tonnes, which compares with previous estimates of 1,475 million tonnes made at the end of 1982, and 1,980 million tonnes made at the end of 1977.

Mr. Chapman: Does that decline of about one third during the past 10 years cause my right hon. Friend to be disappointed with the rate of success of recent exploration drilling? In view of the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) earlier, will my right hon. Friend repeat to the Chancellor that the tax regime should in no way inhibit such drilling in the immediate future?

Mr. Morrison: With two years' depletion, the amount of proven and probable reserves in the North sea for both oil and gas has increased, so that trend is very encouraging. As my hon. Friend says, the amount of activity in the North sea in terms of drilling, exploration and development plans, either approved or in the pipeline, could not be more encouraging. As for his point about tax, the reaction that I receive from all the companies about the regime in terms of the economy as a whole and the tax regime in the North sea is positive. They have one or two points to make about the Chancellor's proposals and they put those fairly and forthrightly.

Mr. Skinner: If the Minister is saying that the reserves have fallen by something approaching one third during this period, does that not mean that Britain's balance of payments will worsen as a result of the ability to use those reserves and sell some of that oil abroad? If that is the case, and if there are to be dwindling receipts from oil revenue, does it not make nonsense of allowing imported coal into this country, thus making the balance of payments deficit even worse?

Mr. Morrison: Unusually, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman was listening to my answer to the supplementary question. I said that during the past two years, despite that two years' depletion, the proven and probable reserves in oil and gas had increased. I am very encouraged by all the activity that is going on. We shall have oil and gas reserves well into the 1990s and towards the end of the 1990s at least.

Coal Mining (Labour Productivity)

8. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the increase in labour productivity in the coal mining industry since 1983-84.

Mr. Michael Spicer: For the week ended 28 May, deep mined revenue output was 4·36 tonnes per manshift, a new record. This represents a 79 per cent. increase on the average for 1983-84 of 2·43 tonnes.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend agree that that figure is very impressive? Can he give comparative productivity figures for other countries?

Mr. Spicer: I very much agree with my hon. Friend that the figure is impressive. However, in answer to the second part of his question, British Coal's productivity is still low relative to its main international competitors. In the United States of America and in Australia, underground productivity is three times as high as the British Coal average. Clearly, there is much further to go if British Coal's deep mines are to compete effectively against international coal. We are confident that, with flexible working, they will be able to do so.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: Will the Minister tell us what the subsidy is on coal from South Africa, Columbia and Poland? Will he give us the figures of the subsidy paid by the Government to that coal industry?

Mr. Spicer: No, Sir, I do not have the figures for subsidy. As the hon. Gentleman knows, because we have had discussions privately and publicly, those figures are very difficult to get hold of, but I have no reason to believe that they are excessive.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my hon. Friend agree that the excellent figures that he has just reported to the House about productivity, spearheaded by the Nottinghamshire coalfied, which has reduced prices to power stations by 20 per cent. in real terms, are the way to defeat foreign imports?

Mr. Spicer: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. That is precisely the Government's strategy and objective.

Mr. Allen McKay: Should not those impressive figures lead to an expansion of deep-mined coal rather than having to import it? Is it not a fact that the number of men made redundant from the industry have helped towards that impressive output per manshift? If he believes that, will he have a word with the chairman of the Coal Board, which has owed some of my constitutents £30,000 since March and tell him to pay not only the £30,000 but the interest?

Mr. Spicer: I shall certainly pass on the hon. Gentleman's last point. I agree with him entirely about the impressiveness of what has been done, which of course is due partly to the redundancies that he mentioned, but is also very much due to the massive investment in the pits, particularly pits such as Selby, which is now striking European records, let alone British records. One seam is producing 21 tonnes per manshift. That, in very large measure, is due to the enormous investment in that pit.

Mr. McLoughlin: The figures that my hon. Friend has given to the House are impressive. However, does he agree that the fact that there are countries with greater productivity than the United Kingdom leaves us with some way to go to improve our productivity? Does he further agree that we could improve productivity by greater utilisation of machinery, rather than by adopting the Luddite approach of the National Union of Mineworkers, which is opposed to some of the huge investments with which we want to go ahead and which would allow greater utilisation of machinery?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to talk about the vital utilisation of machinery, particularly heavy duty machinery, in which the Government have enabled the industry to invest. I witnessed evidence of that in the

United States when I saw that the same British equipment is being used in similar geological conditions far more efficiently than here.

Mr. Speaker: No. 9.

Mr. Skinner: Where is the Secretary of State?

Mr. Spicer: If the hon. Gentleman had been here at the start he would have heard my right hon. Friend the Minister of State——

Mr. Skinner: I was here.

Mr. Spicer: In that case, the hon. Gentleman has a problem with his hearing. My right hon. Friend made it clear why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is not present today.

Nuclear Reactors

9. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the implications for the United Kingdom electricity industry of the recent United States Government Energy Agency report regarding early retirement of nuclear reactors.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The report will no doubt be studied in this country.

Mr. Taylor: Does the Minister accept that decommissioning costs are likely to form an increasing part of the cost of the nuclear cycle in the years to come and that the pulling out of the current decommissioning work at Windscale by the CEGB has caused serious delays? Will he give a categorical assurance that the Government will not take over any of the decommissioning costs of the nuclear industry in the years to come, thereby providing a hidden subsidy for nuclear power?

Mr. Spicer: We have yet to say publicly what we intend to do about the important issue of decommissioning costs. The report to which the hon. Gentleman referred concerns itself specifically with operating costs and the fact that American operating costs have risen. The operating costs of British nuclear power stations are still considerably lower than those for coal-powered stations in this country.

Dr. Michael Clark: Does my hon. Friend agree that British engineers, particularly British nuclear engineers, always over-design for any life expectancy? Does he agree also that the closer a nuclear power station comes to the end of its initially stated design life, the easier it is to assess its future usefulness? Therefore, will he accept that there are many nuclear power stations approaching 20 years of age that might quite safely be given an extension of five, 10 or even 15 years?

Mr. Spicer: I bow to my right hon. Friend's great knowledge in these matters, but I have to tell him that the body responsible for and which therefore takes the decisions about the safe life of, nuclear power stations is the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate. The Government have decided to increase the number of inspectors from 120 to 140 this year, bearing in mind the decisions and investigations they have to take on board.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Minister accept that the same American report highlights the unforeseen 60 per cent. increase in operating costs that are due to the regulatory controls that the Americans have imposed on the industry and that he has assured the American nuclear industry that such costs will be lower for a privatised nuclear industry? Does he accept also the recent medical report on the link between Dounreay and Sellafield nuclear plants and leukaemia? Since such matters cause deep public concern, will he ensure that the research is carried out and that the conclusions are provided to the Hinkley B inquiry; and, if not, why not?

Mr. Spicer: I think that the hon. Gentleman is confusing the two types of regulation, but I stand to be corrected. We have never said that we want our safety regulations to be other than the best in the world. It is true that the Americans have cumbersome and bureaucratic institutions to determine price regulations, and we shall try to avoid such bureaucracy. The issue of Dounreay and leukaemia was raised in COMARE's report. It has prompted the Government to ensure that further investigations are carried out urgently. I assure the House that the report comes to no conclusions about the connection between nuclear plant, leukaemia and leukaemia clusters. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman says that there are some coincidences. One can argue that leukaemia clusters occur in many parts of the world, notably in New Zealand, which does not have any nuclear power stations. We shall thoroughly consider this issue. If it is germane to the Hinkley inquiry, no doubt the inspector will raise it.

THE ARTS

Library Services (Old People's Homes)

47. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what evidence he has on the extent of demand for competitive tendering for library services to old people's homes.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): This service is one of several that library authorities may wish to consider contracting out to the commercial sector. Library authorities would continue to be responsible for the scope and quality of any service contracted out.

Ms. Walley: I thank the Minister for his reply. Will he admit that it is ludicrous to think that money can be made out of providing a comprehensive library service for elderly people? They are very worried about the service. Has any commercial interest been shown in this disgraceful competitive tendering? If not, will he withdraw it, as the Green Paper proposes?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Lady has misunderstood the purpose of the exercise. The purpose of the Green Paper and the proposals for discussing more contracting out is to improve the services for elderly people that are available in our libraries at the service points by obtaining better value for money. If a library authority decides that by tendering outside it will receive an improved service, surely that is something that the hon. Lady would welcome.

Mr. Colvin: My right hon. Friend is right—the proof of the pudding is in the eating. As he has confirmed that it is still part of the Government's policy to encourage library authorities to target special needs groups, will he give the number of library service points that are available for the elderly and other special needs groups compared with 10 years ago?

Mr. Luce: There has been an increase in the number of service points for special needs groups, such as the elderly and hospitals, from 9,700 to 13,300 over the past eight years.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister knows that what is needed are more resources for libraries. We know that the Prime Minister, and perhaps the Minister, would like our poor old-age pensioners to be stuck in their homes reading *The Sun*, or books by Freddie Forsyth and listening to MTV. That is not what they would want to do, any more than we should. This is nothing more than a further reading tax. The Minister is a disgrace to the library service.

Mr. Luce: I look forward to the hon. Gentleman's warm support for the Green Paper proposals. One of their purposes is to increase resources for libraries.

Public Library Development Incentive Scheme

48. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the implication for the arts of the public library development incentive scheme which he has set up; and how much funding he intends to award it in the next two years.

Mr. Luce: I have set aside £250,000 a year for the next three years for the scheme, which encourages collaborative ventures designed to lead to improved and more efficient services.

Mr. Knight: Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is excellent news? Will he say which authorities have received those awards and what activities have been covered by them?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support for these collaborative schemes, which are designed to help to improve services to the public by way of their value for money and efficiency. The schemes range over a cross-section of the country, including the Cleveland county libraries project, to establish a market advice and information centre in Cleveland, and the Sheffield city libraries project, to set up a sports library and information service for the United Kingdom. There are also a number of projects in the south.

Mr. Jessel: As there are 4 million more books in our public libraries than there were in 1979, which is an impressive achievement, does my right hon. Friend think that any incentive is needed for the public to read them?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that the number of books available in public libraries over the past seven years has increased from 110 million to 114 million, which shows that library services are improving. Since 1979-80 there has been an increase of 5 per cent. in library resources in real terms.

Mr. Dalyell: Will any of the money for public services in the libraries find its way to help house the Thyssen collection? What is the Government's policy?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman is ingenious in his attempts to raise totally different issues. I do not quite see the link between libraries and his question.

Public Libraries (Photographic Exhibitions)

49. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his policy on charging for the exhibiting of photographs in public libraries.

Mr. Luce: The decision on whether to charge is a matter for the local authorities concerned. I am suggesting no change in this policy.

Mr. Boyes: The House would have welcomed a more positive answer fron the Minister. Does he accept that libraries create opportunities for photographers to hold exhibitions, especially for youngsters who are starting off on the trail, and provide space for projects of local interest, involving local history, voluntary organisations and so on? I had hoped that the right hon. Gentleman would join me in encouraging libraries to create such opportunities and, above all, to ensure that their services remain free to the customer.

Mr. Luce: As I travel around, I see a considerable number of libraries that provide special exhibitions for painting and for photography. Whether there is a charge is entirely at the discretion of the local authorities. A number of local authorities provide these services, and I welcome that.

Mr. Fisher: I welcome the fact that the Minister is prepared to exempt exhibitions from his obsession with raising money and charging for public library services. Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that, by defining a free basic public library service and responsibility as narrowly and meanly as he does in the Green Paper, he will create a two-tier, semi-privatised public library service and thereby deny to many people its full range of services? That will narrow access rather than do what the Opposition want, which is to widen it.

Mr. Luce: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will come to see that the purpose of this exercise is to improve the services of libraries. Those services are already of a high standard, but it will be a great day when the hon. Gentleman can at least welcome that objective. I have made it plain repeatedly that we plan to keep the basic services—book loan services and reference sevices—entirely free. As the libraries have changed in a big way in the past 10 years, with far more information at their disposal, it seems sensible that it should at least be possible for local authorities to levy charges, if they wish, in developing specialist services.

Local Theatres

50. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Minister for the Arts to what extent his policy on private funding of the arts will aid local theatres.

Mr. Luce: One hundred and six theatres have gained awards under the business sponsorship incentive scheme, while 18 have won awards under my arts marketing scheme. Theatres which are funded by the arts councils or by regional arts associations will be entitled to apply for incentive funding under the Arts Council's scheme.

Mr. Moss: I thank my right hon. Friend for his helpful reply and draw his attention to a local theatre in my constituency, the Angles theatre in Wisbech—to which I cordially invite him and which I hope he can attend—

which is one of only two Georgian theatres still used as a theatre, the other being at Richmond in Yorkshire. Can my right hon. Friend give any guidance as to possible funding, from either public or private funds, to carry out renovation and restoration of such theatres, which are of historical and architectural importance?

Mr. Luce: I have heard of the Angles centre at Wisbech. I know of my hon. Friend's association with it and the work that he does to support it. It is largely an amateur theatre. When professional groups go there, there is, I understand, funding from the Eastern regional arts association, which I welcome. The theatre's architectural quality is a matter more for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Is the Minister aware that a number of theatres are under threat, largely because they occupy important and valuable sites and are suitable objects of interest to developers? Does the Minister understand that he has some responsibility to preserve these buildings for future generations, who may be interested in the theatre as it has been and will be, and should be?

Mr. Luce: I recognise the importance of the theatres, which have grown in number considerably in the past 20 or 30 years. There has been an average of one new theatre every year for the past 30 years and I recognise that many of them are very fine. However, it is for the managers of the theatres, the arts councils, where they are involved in funding, and the local authorities to play their part. Local authorities have an important role to play in the refurbishment of existing theatres.

Premium Book Subscription Schemes

51. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what evidence he has on the administrative costs of premium book subscription schemes.

Mr. Luce: The administrative costs of subscription services will vary according to their nature and scope. Library authorities in England wanting to set up premium services will want to assess for themselves these costs.

Ms. Ruddock: Would not a premium book service be yet another example of rewarding the haves and punishing the have nots? Would it not mean new books for the well-off and dog-eared copies for the poorer people in the community? Does that not go against the whole principle of a free library lending service? Will the Minister reconsider this horrific proposal?

Mr. Luce: We must get the matter into perspective. A large number of local authority library services, if not most, already charge for certain services, although not, of course, for the basic service. With the Green Paper we are debating whether, in the light of all the changes in library services in the past 10 years or more, we should give scope for charges in other parts of the service. This is just one of a number of proposals. The consultation period lasts until the end of June and, after that, I shall assess the areas to which we can extend that power. The basic services remain free.

CIVIL SERVICE

Armstrong Memorandum

75. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service on how many occasions since January 1986 civil servants who felt that actions they have been required to take were fundamentally against their consciences, have gone ultimately to the head of the home Civil Service or the head of the Diplomatic Service, under the terms of the Armstrong memorandum.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): None, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: Precisely. So if the Armstrong memorandum was at all realistic, why is it that a civil servant should, at great risk, send the briefing that the Secretary of State for Education and Science had in front of him to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw)—the matter is referred to in column 788 of *Hansard* for 17 May —revealing the extent of the cold, calculated deceit of the Commons in the Secretary of State's answer to me.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman is a colourful character, although his questions get a bit tedious and repetitive. I was asked how many civil servants had used the existing guidelines procedures on grounds of conscience. The answer is that none have done so. They have a right to do so. Under the Armstrong guidelines recently produced, they have a right to go through certain procedures if they think that they have a grievance on ethical grounds or grounds of conscience. They can go to their permanent secretary and ultimately, if they so wish, to the head of the home Civil Service. The hon. Gentlemen asked how many had used that right, and the answer is none.

Mr. Batiste: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, given the existence of the procedure and the fact that no civil servants have used it in the time scale referred to, there can be no justification whatever of the underhand leaking of documents by civil servants in breach of the terms of their contracts of employment?

Mr. Luce: Any leak against the rules of the organisation is to be deplored. I have no particular case in mind in saying that. By and large, the standards of the Civil Service are extremely high and will remain so.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not the failure of the Armstrong memorandum to provide real protection the reason why civil servants have leaked like sieves in relation to the Richmond Yard affair, in which a Minister deliberately misled Parliament?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must withdraw that. No hon. Member deliberately misleads Parliament.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I withdraw for you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of that unsatisfactory reply, I give notice that I propose to raise on the Adjournment the conduct of civil servants.

Appointments

76. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many new recruits to the Civil Service in 1987 were appointed directly at principal level or above; and how many temporary appointments were made of individuals on secondment from bodies in the private sector.

Mr. Luce: In 1987, 184 staff were recruited to permanent Civil Service appointments at grade 7—principal—level or above. A further 124 appointments at those levels were made on secondment from industry and commerce for periods of at least three months.

Mr. Cran: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the figures that he has given. Does he agree that maximum contact between the Civil Service and business is beneficial to both, as each can learn from the other? I hope and expect that my right hon. Friend will come back in a year's time with even better figures.

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There has been an increase of 400 per cent. in secondment to and from the Civil Service since 1979, but from very low starting figures. I wish to see a substantial increase in that and other areas. I believe that direct entry at a later age by people with experience in other walks of life is extremely healthy and strengthens the Civil Service. I am currently reviewing other ways in which we can assist this interchange, such as the Whitehall and industry scheme, the non-executive directorships and the very good training courses provided by the Civil Service.

Mr. Janner: How many of those appointed were women, and how many were members of ethnic minorities? What steps, if any, were taken to comply with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission in monitoring the appointments?

Mr. Luce: To be specific on all those questions, I should have to write to the hon. and learned Gentleman. Women make up about 50 per cent. of the Civil Service as a whole, but not at sufficiently senior levels, although we seek to encourage this as best we can. The same applies to the ethnic minorities. At national level, representation of black and Asian people is roughly the same as in the general population, but again the issue of promotion prospects will have to work its way through. My task is to ensure that we remain equal opportunity employers.

Mr. Holt: My right hon. Friend has given some interesting information about the upper levels of the Civil Service, but is he not concerned about the situation for junior ranks in London, which is so appalling that almost as many temporary as permanent staff have to be employed in the clerical grades? Could not much of the problem be overcome by generating jobs in the north of England, an issue on which we keep hearing promises but have seen no action?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right about the problems in London and the south-east, not just in the Civil Service, but in other sectors. Until recently we have had a dispersal policy. We also have a relocation policy. The end result is that today four out of five civil servants work outside London. The present climate and market pressures mean that there are incentives for further changes in that direction, which I hope will lead to the result that my hon. Friend seeks.

Dr. Marek: Has there been a shortfall in the Government's plans for direct entry at grade 7 and above? If so, has the shortfall anything to do with the low rates of pay in the Civil Service? Irrespective of that aspect, are there sufficient civil servants at senior executive officer level ready for promotion to principal?

Mr. Luce: I am not aware of any major shortfalls in the direct entry process. An encouraging feature of the last direct entry round was that 50 per cent. of those who succeeded in the competition were people who wished to join the Civil Service after years of experience in the private sector. That is a healthy trend.

AIDS

77. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many anti-AIDS kits have been dispensed by the occupational health service.

Mr. Luce: Civil servants going abroad have obtained more than 6,000 first aid packs from the occupational health service and commercial sources. The packs are used to avoid infection from AIDS and other diseases following an accident, for example, when a blood transfusion may be necessary.

Mr. Butler: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the scale of the problem in sub-Saharan Africa? For instance, in the Congo 100,000 deaths from AIDS are expected in the next 10 years. As so many hospitals have difficulty providing screened blood, should not kits be issued to diplomats as a matter of course?

Mr. Luce: This is principally a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. There has been much consideration of the matter. A great deal of advice is given to diplomats who are serving in various parts of the world. The provision of these packs is probably the best way to proceed.

THE ARTS

Regional Theatres

52. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Minister of the Arts which regional theatres he has visited since 1 February 1988.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I have visited six regional theatres since February, details of which I shall circulate in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Key: It is marvellous to hear of the enthusiasm of my right hon. Friend the touring Minister. What assistance is he giving to touring companies in this country?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is fortunate in having in his constituency the Salisbury playhouse, which has a tremendous record of attendance. Two thirds of its income is earned through private sector resources. On the question of touring, it is my view that standards of excellence in the arts should be available to as many people as possible. To that end, extra money has been made available to the Arts

Council to facilitate touring by theatre, music and opera companies. I hope that my hon. Friend's theatre and other regional theatres will benefit from that.

Following are the details:

Regional theatres visited by the Minister for the Arts between 1 February—13 June 1988.

Stables Theatre, Hastings, 19 February.
Redgrave Theatre, Farnham, 27 February.
New Towngate Theatre, Basildon, 13 April.
The Theatre on the Green, Richmond, 10 May.
Sherman Theatre, Cardiff, 17 May.
New Theatre, Cardiff, 17 May.

Devonport Dockyard (Redundancies)

3.31 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): Will the Minister answer the question of which I have given him notice?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury) *rose*——

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the House must hear the question. Will the hon. Member read out his question?

Mr. O'Neill (*by private notice*): To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the proposed redundancies at Devonport dockyard.

Mr. Sainsbury: Hon Members will be aware that Devonport Management Ltd., the commercial managers of the royal dockyard, announced last Friday that there would be a further reduction of 1,900 in the jobs available there. That, in addition to the 1,400 job losses already announced, brings to 3,300 the reduction in jobs at the dockyard by April 1990. I very much regret the need for these job losses, and appreciate the potential impact on the local economy.

I understand that DML intends to make the maximum use of natural wastage and voluntary redundancy, consistent with preserving the balance of skills and trades necessary to its organisation. The number of compulsory redundancies will be kept to the minimum. My Department will fund the cost of redundancy of ex-dockyard civil servants on generous Civil Service scales of compensation.

In the run-up to commercial management, there was an extensive consultation exercise. We made no secret of the fact that substantial job losses would be needed whether or not the dockyards were managed commercially, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State confirmed to the House on 24 February 1987 that, at the time, DML envisaged a reduction by 2,300 jobs in the period to 1990. Further job losses were expected after that date.

There is understandable concern that subsequent decisions by DML have increased that early estimate. Several factors have caused this. First, DML was deprived of the opportunity to enter the dockyard before vesting day to study the facilities on the ground and evaluate methods of operation. Secondly, there was considerable scope for improvements in productivity. DML accepted a target of a 30 per cent. improvement in efficiency over the seven-year period which was incorporated in the term contract. Thirdly, in continuation of a trend already apparent, the naval refit load allocated to the dockyard as a core programme has been reviewed twice since vesting day as part of the normal Ministry of Defence annual costings, and reduced on each occasion. In part, this reflects the fact that modern gas turbine ships are more reliable and need less maintenance than older ships.

These factors have led to a need for a reduction in the work force on a greater scale and earlier than previously expected. They will, however, result in the Royal Navy achieving better value for money in its refit programme and make the dockyard more capable of winning further work in competition from the naval unallocated programme, the private sector and overseas.

I should like to assure the House that Plymouth will remain a major naval base and our largest dockyard for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Martin O'Neill: I thank the Minister for his reply. Can I assume that the failure of any of the hon. Members who represent Plymouth to raise this question can only be attributed to the fact that this is a matter of national security? It is, of course, but at this stage it can only be seen as a devastating blow to those individuals who work in the yard, their families, and, indeed, to the entire economy of the south-west. However, is the Minister aware that, when it first became known that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), when Secretary of State for Defence, was to embark upon this scheme, there were, on 1 April 1985, 13,000 people employed in the yard? We were told that there would be 2,000 jobs lost. The figure was then increased to 2,300 and then to 5,000. We now know that by 1990 the number of 13,000 employed will have fallen to 6,000—a loss of 7,000 jobs.

Does the Minister appreciate the cynicism and bitterness of the local community when on Saturday 11 June it read the report by Michael Chilvers in the *Western Evening Herald*? The report stated that, earlier last week, Chase Manhattan bank was advising its clients in a confidential investment review to buy shares in the Weir Group, one of the consortium members. That was primarily because the initial £300,000 which the Weir Group invested in the yard would mean a profit of £1 million, which was likely to be increased to £2 million by 1990. Does the Minister not agree that, instead of handing out money in that way, DML would be better off equipping itself to seek work in the commercial sector and looking for work in the refitting of the type 42s? The last one of the guaranteed programmes is going to Portsmouth.

Is the Minister not ashamed that 7,000 jobs should be sacrificed to Tory ideology in this way? Not only are we losing jobs in the local community, but we are denying the Fleet and the country the services of men and women who have served us well for a long time and whose energies and support the fleet and the country now require.

Mr. Sainsbury: I understand that there is great anxiety among those employed. However, I am encouraged by the fact that the managing director of DML said, that he looked to the number of jobs stabilising at around 6,000. I hope that the hon. Member appreciates that these reductions in job opportunities at the royal dockyard are not a consequence of commercial management as such, but of the changes that I set out in my answer to his first question, which are a reduced naval refit work load and the need for a great improvement in productivity and efficiency in the dockyard.

That is exemplified in two ways. First, DML itself accepted, before it had an opportunity fully to assess what happened in the dockyard, a target for a 30 per cent.—30 per cent.—improvement in efficiency over the seven years. Secondly, the lower refit requirements of the Royal Navy are exemplified by the fact that in 1981 the average time spent in refit by our surface warships was 20 per cent.—one in five days. That time is now down to 12 per cent. and I would expect there to be further reductions in due course.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): May I say how distressing it was for everyone in the Plymouth travel-to-work area to receive on Friday the information

[Mr. Robert Hicks]

about the loss of a further 1,900 jobs? While we all recognise that the refits of the modern Royal Navy are less frequent and take less time, does the Minister not agree that that is so, essentially, in peacetime circumstances? The fundamental purpose of the royal dockyards is to service the Royal Navy—[HON. MEMBERS: "Was."]—is to service the Royal Navy in peacetime and in times of emergency and conflict. In view of the reduced work force, can the Minister give an assurance to the country and the House that we are capable of servicing the Royal Navy in a national emergency?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am well aware, as I am sure is everybody in the area, of my hon. Friend's concern for the well-being of those of his constituents who work in the dockyards or whose prosperity is associated with the work of the dockyards. I appreciate the concern of those people.

On my hon. Friend's important point about the strategic capacity of the refitting industry, we keep that under review. However, I must point out that Devonport is only part of the industry and that we keep under review the industry's total capacity. I can assure my hon. Friend that we would not let that fall below our crisis requirements. The existing facilities at Devonport represent a substantial surge capacity, and a great deal more surge capacity is available in the industry, in both the public and private sectors.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): I hope that the Select Committees and the Audit Commission will look at how Ministers have consistently misled the House about redundancies in Devonport. Will the Minister now do for Plymouth at least what the Ministry did with extreme success for Chatham dockyard when it was closed, because more jobs have been lost in Plymouth than were lost in Chatham? Will he make available land for industry and consider especially freeing up the south yard because Plymouth desperately needs industrial land if it is to attract new industry to the area? Will he also talk to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and try to ensure that Plymouth, like Chatham, gets enterprise agency status and extra help to meet this severe blow to its economy? Will he give the ancient dockyard buildings the same plans as Chatham enjoyed in association with the Heritage Trust? A Ministry of Defence commitment is needed to help the Plymouth economy. Will that be forthcoming?

Mr. Sainsbury: The right hon. Gentleman may have forgotten that the Department of the Environment is responsible for enterprise zones, not the Department of Trade and Industry, but I take his point. We appreciate that it would help the local economy if we could make more land available for redevelopment and for a variety of other purposes. We recognise that and, as the right hon. Gentleman will be aware, we have already released two central sites and have several other sites under active consideration—including the historic Royal William yard—for which job creation schemes are being considered. I believe that, in addition to the Royal William yard, six other sites, covering nearly 70 acres, are currently under active consideration for release. It is for DML to make proposals about the south yard in the first instance. We understand that the company will shortly be ready to present us with the results of its study into the south yard.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my hon. Friend consider for a considerable proportion of the dockyard employees who are being made redundant a reserve scheme with an annual premium paid, analagous to reservists for the armed forces themselves, so that, if it becomes necessary to expand capacity at short notice—as it did, for instance, for the Falklands or the cod war, when there was a high utilisation, none of which was a large international war—the people with the necessary skills will be available? That would also provide a measure of stabilisation which would tend to keep those skills locally rather than having them dispersed through the world and not available at short notice.

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend, as so often, has come up with an interesting and ingenious point, to which we shall certainly give careful consideration. As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks), Devonport is not the only refitting capacity that is available. The yard's facilities have considerable surge capacity to meet emergencies or crisis requirements. As I have said, that is also true of the rest of the industry.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I mean no reflection on the Minister who has made the statement, but is it not deplorable that the Secretary of State for Defence did not insist on coming to the House to make the statement himself? If the House has been misled, as the workers in Devonport dockyard have been gravely misled, it appears that the Secretary of State bears a direct personal responsibility, and he should be here to answer that point. Is not this part of the callous way in which the Government have dealt with the whole matter? When the Dockyard Services Act 1986 was introduced, the previous Secretary of State for Defence did not even trouble to come to the House to move it himself. How can the Minister say that he will give guarantees, when one grievous aspect of the privatisation programme is that no guarantee given by Ministers from the Dispatch Box has been worth anything.

Mr. Sainsbury: I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that we take very seriously the scale of the job losses and the pace at which they are having to be introduced. May I explain to the right hon. Gentleman and to the House that the need for substantial job reductions was known long before we even started discussing commercial management. The longer-term need for very substantial reductions in the work force, down almost to the level that is now being postulated, had already been disclosed in discussions with the unions before discussions about the introduction of commercial management. Therefore, we can decisively reject the right hon. Gentleman's allegations that we have sought to deceive the work force or the House on this matter.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my hon. Friend accept that no one can be happy about the extra redundancies? Will he make clear to the House the Government's commitment to Plymouth by stating the amount of capital work that went on last year, has gone on this year and is continuing now in the modernisation of certain quay work further upriver with concreting to enlarge the capacity of the docks to deal with shops—*[Laughter.]*—to deal with ships, with their engineering shops, close to the moorings?

Does he agree that such work can be dealt with more efficiently through the improvements than at present, and that that is a good thing for Plymouth?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend draws attenion to a very important point. I cannot answer offhand his question about the scale of the capital works, but I can certainly write to him about that. In addition to improving the productivity and efficiency of the work force, a substantial amount of work is being carried out involving capital expenditure, in rationalising the layout of the dockyard and in producing improved capital facilities to carry out work for the Royal Navy and also to give the dockyard greater capacity to compete on the open market for work from other private sector sources in this country and from naval and private sector sources overseas.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The Minister must accept that the scale of the job losses is far higher than the Ministry suggested to the work force. The job losses are happening more quickly and the savings from the management scheme have been nothing like as large as was originally suggested. If the Minister is telling us that the House and the work force have not been misled, at the very least there has certainly been bungling. Is there not an obligation on the Government to step in and save the jobs immediately? If jobs must go, we want to hear news about the plans that the Government will implement to provide other jobs for the work force which has done all it can to save the industry and work for this country in Cornwall, Plymouth and Devon.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am surprised that the hon. Member does not recognise the benefit to the Royal Navy of a 30 per cent. improvement in the efficiency of the dockyard labour force. I would have thought that that would have been obvious. Only by achieving that level of improved efficiency will the dockyard be able to compete for other work, which would secure the remaining jobs and provide an opportunity to increase employment in the area. There is work outside the naval sector, including work from British Rail which the yard has already obtained, for which the dockyard can compete using its skills and capital facilities.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to the fact that this is a rare private Members' day and that this is a private notice question, not a statement. We must now move on to the statement.

Barlow Clowes Group

3.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): With permission Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on Barlow Clowes. The House will be aware of extensive recent publicity surrounding the affairs of Mr. Peter Clowes and companies in the Barlow Clowes group. In view of the public concern on this matter, it is right that I should inform the House of the situation and of the action that the Government is taking.

Many companies are involved. Those most in the public eye have been Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Limited, a United Kingdom investment management company, and Barlow Clowes International Ltd. a similar company registered in Gibraltar. The holding company of the group is James Ferguson Holdings plc.

Investigators were appointed in November of last year, under section 106 of the Financial Services Act 1986, to examine the affairs of Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Ltd. The interim report of the investigators has been received and formed the basis for the winding-up petition of that company. The Official Receiver has been appointed provisional liquidator, and special managers of its assets have been appointed at the instance of the Securities and Investments Board.

My Department is in close touch with the special managers, who have been at the company's premises over the weekend. Mr. Clowes has been co-operating during this period with the special managers. At present, it cannot be said with any certainty what the return to creditors will be. Papers have been passed to the serious fraud office, and investigations are being carried out by the police.

On Friday of last week, the section 106 inspectors, Mr. David Ziman, a solicitor, and Mr. Walter Hoffman, an accountant, were appointed under section 432 of the Companies Act 1985 to look into the affairs of James Ferguson Holdings plc. That will in turn enable the affairs of all that company's subsidiaries to be looked at.

The Gibraltar company, Barlow Clowes International Limited, is being wound up at the instance of the holding company, under the supervision of the Gibraltar courts. The joint liquidators are two British firms, Cork Gully, who are the special managers of Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Limited in the United Kingdom, and Ernst and Whinney.

Public concern has been expressed about the role of my Department in relation to these companies. My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State has decided that this should be examined objectively and independently, and he intends to appoint an independent person of standing to investigate and report to him as soon as possible on the facts of the Department's handling of the matter.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Lord Rees-Mogg?

Mr. Maude: Subject to there being no legal impediment, as to either content or timing, we propose to publish that report.

Meanwhile, it will be of interest to the House to know of the earlier decisions taken in relation to those companies. In 1984, the Department approached the Barlow Clowes partnership to establish whether it should be licensed under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments)

[Mr. Maude]

Act 1958. Rumours about the partnership were subsequently reported by the National Association of Security Dealers and Investment Managers. After pressure from the Department, the partnership applied for a licence and in October 1985, after prolonged negotiation and the receipt of assurances, a licence was granted. In October 1986 it was renewed. In October 1987, in the light of some dissatisfaction by the Department with the monitoring returns from Barlow Clowes, and of other information, it was decided to appoint investigators. The company's licence was renewed while that investigation was in progress.

The main priority at present must be to safeguard as far as possible the interests of investors. I cannot at present comment on the amounts which may be at stake or on the position of individual investors. I am sure, however, that the liquidators in London and Gibraltar will seek to resolve the situation as quickly as possible in the interests of investors. I shall make a further statement when I am in a position to do so.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I welcome the appointment of an independent investigator into the DTI's handling of this matter. However, the trenchant action today stands in stark contrast to the years of gullibility and incompetence which preceded it. Will the Minister ensure that the investigator's report is completed as quickly as possible, so that the lessons can be learned?

I understand that the Minister cannot prejudge the report's conclusions. However, will he at least agree with me as to the issues it must address? Is it not the case that, until March 1985, Barlow Clowes's main activity was bond washing, which is a tax dodge with gilt-edged stock? Is it not also correct to say that that practice was outlawed in the March 1985 Budget but that Barlow Clowes continued to offer a gilt-edged fund with a high rate of interest, income tax free, and with no reduction in capital redemption? That scheme was inherently implausible and it should have set alarm bells ringing in any halfway diligent authority.

In those circumstances, should not the first question to ask be how on earth Barlow Clowes came to be granted a DTI licence, which was then bound to be relied upon by financial intermediaries and investors as giving a Government clean bill of health to the scheme? Secondly, does not the Minister have to investigate why the licence was reissued in October 1986 and in October 1987, but investigators were appointed only in November 1987? What warnings were given by NASDIM, the watchdog, and why were they ignored?

Has not the Minister also to ask why the Securities and Investments Board, which took over regulatory functions only in April, was within weeks winding up a company that had for years been sanctioned by the Department of Trade and Industry? Does not the Government's action in harrying social security claimants stand in stark contrast to their action over the years in relation to the City? What guarantees will the Minister give us that no more Barlow Cloweses are hidden? How many more firms are still trading with only interim authorisation under the Financial Services Act?

Finally, is not our most important charge now to do our best for the investors, many of whom are retired or have sunk their redundancy payments into the company, and have been encouraged by the Government to put money into the City? Does the Minister agree that it is vital now that the Government, together with the parent company and the liquidators, consider urgently how arrangements can be made for restitution, so that those who have built up funds by graft and hard work do not find that they are dissipated by greed and worse in the City of London?

Mr. Maude: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's welcome for the trenchant action—as he described it—taken by my Department today. He prefaced his remarks by saying that he did not expect me to prejudge the outcome of the investigation, and I am grateful for that as well. The hon. Gentleman knows that I cannot do so. I can, however, reassure him that the questions that he has outlined are the sort of questions that will be covered by one or other of the investigations. Some will be covered by the section 432 investigation into the company's affairs; others by the investigation by an independent person, yet to be announced, into what happened in my Department.

The hon. Gentleman asked why it was possible for the Securities and Investments Board to move quickly to wind up the company soon after the board came into formal existence under the Act. The reason is very simple. Under the previous regime, the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958, there were not sufficient powers to seize the assets of a company operating in such a way. Action taken too quickly would seriously jeopardise the interests of existing investors, and a difficult balance had to be struck in those circumstances. Whether the right balance was struck will have to be considered by the independent investigator. But it was precisely because of our concern about the extent and range of powers available to regulatory authorities under the previous regime that, in the Financial Services Act, we gave the regulatory authorities a far wider range of powers, which have been used by the SIB in the way that the hon. Gentleman describes.

I of course confirm that the interests of investors are our highest priority, and that we shall do all that we can to safeguard them.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Can my hon. Friend give some assurance to the many investors, particularly those who are retired, who are concerned about the quarterly income that they used to receive from the company so that they could build up their lives in retirement? Is it correct that Cork Gully, the provisional liquidator, has taken control of £51·5 million, but has stated in so doing that it is not yet certain whether there is a deficiency, and whether the funds are adequate to cover all the claims? If it is proved that they are sufficient, will my hon. Friend ensure that payments on the investments are restored as quickly as possible?

Secondly, will my hon. Friend attempt to ensure that, as there is some doubt about how the funds of directors found their way into the directors' control, they will be frozen until the matter has been much more clearly defined?

Mr. Maude: I do not think that my hon. Friend will expect me to comment in detail on what the position will be. This is an exceptionally tangled matter, and I fear that it will take some time for the special managers and the liquidators to sort them out. It would not be helpful if I were to speculate about the eventual outcome, but I know

that the liquidators and the special managers will want to settle these matters as soon as they possibly can in a way that is as beneficial as possible to the investors.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): But is the hon. Gentleman aware that the £130 million that has gone missing, which involved large sums for the people concerned, is a more serious matter? Will he bear in mind that it is one thing to issue a licence but that it is another thing to reissue the licence after investigation? If the hon. Gentleman reissues a licence, how can he expect the ordinary investing public to regard it other than as absolute confidence in the company concerned? Does not the Department bear a large measure of responsibility for what happened in this case? How does it intend to implement its responsibilities?

Mr. Maude: The right hon. Gentleman makes an assumption about the state of the funds and assets that at this stage I cannot possibly confirm or deny. The special managers and liquidators will need to go into that matter. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman realises that it is an exceptionally complicated matter and that it will not be possible for conclusions to be announced for a little while yet. There was no reissue of a licence after an investigation. In October of last year, inspectors were appointed under section 106 of the Financial Services Act 1986. Following the receipt of their report in April of this year, swift moves were made to proceed with winding up the company.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is my hon. Friend aware that the decision that he has announced today to appoint a Companies Act liquidator for the holding company and to hold a special investigation into the activities of his Department is absolutely the right one—in fact, the only possible one in all the circumstances that he has described? However, does he agree with me that an important contrast has to be drawn between the rather feeble powers that were available to him under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 and the really tough powers that came into force only at the end of April under the new Financial Services Act? None the less, will he confirm that if the investigator finds that my hon. Friend's Department was negligent in carrying out its statutory powers there is a precedent for paying compensation to investors?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that the Financial Services Act gives the regulatory authorities substantial additional powers to enable them to move quickly to deal with matters of this kind. Those powers did not exist under the previous regime. My hon. Friend is also right to say that, if it were found in the ordinary course of law that my Department was negligent in the exercise of its statutory duty, it would be liable in law for damages. However, I make no prejudgement of that issue. It is precisely for that reason that we want to find out exactly what happened in my Department. That is why we have decided to go ahead with what I hope my hon. Friend accepts is an unusually full and open inquiry.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Does the Minister accept that, after nine years of the green light for financial spivs, cases such as this are bound to happen? If necessary, will the Minister extend the inquiry into the particular circumstances of Gibraltar, which is not like the Isle of Man and other offshore islands? The British Government appoint a governor. Gibraltar may be internally self-governing, but if Gibraltar is involved in offshore fund dealings, the British people think that they have been given a cast-iron, copper-bottomed guarantee.

When I visited Gibraltar, eight or 10 years ago, I thought that it was in danger of brass plates littering the high street—that, because of the demise of the docks and the need for other means of generating funds, it would be forced into carrying out offshore island financial activities. Many Gibraltarians did not want that to happen, but it has come to pass. It is only one symptom of this policy. I ask the Minister to extend the inquiry into the particular circumstances of Gibraltar as a financial "offshore island".

Mr. Maude: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman does his cause much good by expressing it in the kind of language that he used at the beginning of his question. Under the Financial Services Act, companies based in other countries that do business in the United Kingdom will be subjected to a tougher regime than hitherto. I cannot say that the investigation will look in particular at the regulations in Gibraltar, but no doubt it will throw light on such matters.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Is my hon. Friend aware that, in all the circumstances, his statement is absolutely right? I am sure, however, that he would be the first to agree that this case raises serious questions about Government and DTI supervision of the regulatory process in the investment market and about some of the practices by operators within that market. Does he agree that the principal concern of the investing public at this time must be in the integrity of the market as a whole and that there will be concern, after McDonald Wheeler, that this is yet another example of closing the stable door after the horse has bolted? After examples of this kind, the greatest assurances must be given that the number of rip-off merchants who are still operating in the market is not as great as many people fear. What assurances can my hon. Friend provide for the public?

Mr. Maude: Nobody in a position of regulatory authority can ever give an absolute guarantee that all investment companies are safe. That is not possible, no matter how rigorous the regulatory regime may be. The regulatory regime that we now have is exceptionally rigorous. I said earlier that, under the previous regime, the powers were limited. They were not available over as wide a range as was regarded as necessary to deal with cases of this kind. It is precisely for that reason that we extended those powers in the new Act.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Minister makes great play of the stringency of the regulatory regime, as he calls it, but is it not true that the Government laid great emphasis on the fact that the market should be self-regulatory? Does he not agree that the history of this sequence of events gives a clear signal to any dealer that all he has to do is grab what he can as quick as he can and get out as quick as he can? What does the Minister intend to do to make self-regulation more regulation according to law rather than according to the whim of his Department?

Mr. Maude: The new regulatory regime that came into existence no more than six weeks ago is based on the law, the Financial Services Act. It provides exceptionally rigorous powers that have been used in this case. It is precisely because those powers were not available under the previous regime that events took this course. I do not

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want to say any more. To do so would be to prejudge the outcome of the investigation that I have announced. To suggest that the new regime under the Financial Services Act is in any way less rigorous than that which preceded it is an absurd travesty.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that I am not the only Member of Parliament with constituents who have invested a very large proportion of their savings in Barlow Clowes enterprises and who fear that they may have lost them. They want to know as soon as possible what is the real situation and how it will affect them. My hon. Friend referred to this as a "tangled matter" that will require some time to resolve. How long is "some time"?

Mr. Maude: I cannot put a time on it, because it does not lie in my hands. It lies with the special managers and the liquidators. As I said in my statement, they have been working solidly all weekend and they will continue to work full time to resolve this matter as soon as possible. We are very much aware of their anxiety.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The Minister must be aware of the great concern that is felt by those who have invested in this group. That is quite apart from deciding where the responsibility may lie for what has happened. Will he clarify for them the position of the parent company, James Ferguson Holdings plc, in respect of any claims that may arise? Moreover, in view of the DTI's close involvement, what role will it play in backing up any claims that may be made?

Mr. Maude: Answering the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question would pre-empt the outcome of the investigation. I have announced that we have appointed Companies Act investigators to investigate the responsibility of the holding company. The responsibility will depend on what decisions are taken as a result of the investigations.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my hon. Friend give the House a positive assurance that the internal investigation which he has announced will not be used as an excuse for granting immunity from disciplinary action if it is found that somebody in his Department had failed to carry out their duties properly?

Mr. Maude: I can certainly confirm that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to have regard to the fact that this is a private Members' day. I shall allow questions for a further 10 minutes, but then we shall have to move on.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is it not true that the names of four licensed security dealers that I gave the Securities Association—the responsible self-regulatory organisation—last week were all given interim registration by the Securities and Investments Board? When inquiries into the activities of those companies are taking place, will the Minister ensure that, if necessary, they are closed down? Will he also confirm that the last two licensed security dealers that I brought to the attention of the House as acting fraudulently were both closed down by the Government?

Mr. Maude: Under the new regime, the cases to which the hon. Gentleman refers are no longer matters for the DTI—they are matters for the Securities and Investments Board and the Securities Association, which should take proper regulatory action. No doubt they will take proper account of any representations that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the frankness of his statement. Will he confirm that the sequence of events—it is very important—was that the provisional licence was granted in March 1985, subject to assurances, and the licence was subsequently allowed in October?

Mr. Maude: My understanding is that a decision in principle to grant a licence was made in March 1985, subject to proper assurances being given and proper arrangements being set up. The licence was granted in October 1985.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Minister agree that this case, involving another City scrounger being caught in this tangled net, shows that the Government have two faces regarding the treatment of people who are caught by Government Departments? Why, after warnings two years ago, were licences allowed? If somebody claimed a DHSS benefit worth £20 a week, the chances are that one of the Minister's colleagues would have hounded that person within a month, not after two years. Rather than waste the two years, why did the Government not use the power of sequestration which they used against the miners in 1984-85? If the Government can hound the National Union of Mineworkers and follow its money halfway around the world, why can they not do the same to Mr. Clowes? Why do the Government not have one law—for the poor and for the rich?

Mr. Maude: I am sure that the House is grateful for the hon. Gentleman's legal advice. Powers of sequestration follow only when there has been contempt of court, and there is none in this case. I have told the House, and I think that the House has accepted, that no such powers existed in this case. Precisely because no such powers existed in this case, we have provided them in the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will my hon. Friend confirm that this is a shocking and disturbing story, whose implications are potentially worse than the Guinness saga? Does he agree that it shows once again that, when unsophisticated civil servants, often with classics degrees, try to follow sophisticated dishonest people in financial circles, using the advice of sophisticated honest people in the City—whose advice they often ignore or act upon too late—even with the increased powers provided by the new legislation, they do not act in time to save honest investors? Will my hon. Friend confirm that the directors' movements will now be restricted, pending the full investigation? Will he comment on the Cork Gully inference that £50 million may have been secured and covered, but that it is unsure about the rest?

Mr. Maude: I cannot comment on the detailed aspects of the case.

Sir Peter Emery: Cork Gully did.

Mr. Maude: Cork Gully may have chosen to, but it is not a matter on which I can comment. It would be wrong to arouse false hopes, or the reverse, without knowing precisely what the position is. It will not be possible for some time to disentangle this exceptionally complicated matter.

Mrs. Marjorie Mowlem (Redcar): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that he would not be prejudging the independent inquiry if he clarified an answer that he give earlier to the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler)? He said that a licence was applied for in March 1985 and that it was granted in October 1985. I should like a simple, straightforward yes or no answer to whether the watchdog NASDIM – the National Association of Securities Dealers and Investment Managers – submitted to the Department between March and October its worries and doubts about the company.

Mr. Maude: I have already said in my statement that that was the case.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): I warmly welcome the new regime of self-regulation and congratulate the Securities and Investments Board on the swiftness with which it moved on this matter. Does my hon. Friend agree that a combination of naivety and avarice is always likely to lead innocent investors to be attracted by the type of advertisements which this organisation put in newspapers? Is my hon. Friend satisfied that, when exercising the powers given it by the Financial Services Act, the SIB has taken fully on board the need to control the content of advertisements? Will he confirm that he is satisfied, bearing in mind the fact that this is the second occasion in 18 months which I can recall of the Gibraltar element leading to people losing or prospectively losing their investment, that we are making some progress with consumer protection in that territory?

Mr. Maude: Exceptionally detailed advertising regulations for investment business are issued under the Financial Services Act. They are far more detailed and rigorous than was the case hitherto. Under the new Act, a tougher regime applies to investment businesses based overseas which do business in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): If there is no certainty about what will be returned to the creditors, what is the estimate? When do we expect any interim report from the serious fraud office or the police? The Minister said in his statement:

"In October 1987, in the light of dissatisfaction by the Department with the monitoring returns from Barlow Clowes, and of other information, it was decided to appoint investigators."

What was the other information?

Mr. Maude: There was information of various types and of varied provenance. I am not prepared to say more than that at this stage. Those are matters that will properly be considered by the independent investigator, and I do not think that it would be helpful for me to go into them now.

The serious fraud office will take such steps as it deems proper at the time it deems them to be proper, and I do not propose to comment further on that. I am afraid that I have forgotten the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Dalyell: In his original statement, the Minister said that there was no certainty about what would be returned to the creditors. I asked him what the estimate is.

Mr. Maude: As I said earlier, it is, I am afraid, just not possible to make any estimate at this stage. I have been into the matter, but it would not be helpful or sensible to make an estimate.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the strange and worrying aspects of this business has been the use of funds to buy into or to buy over rather shaky public companies, at prices which at the time were regarded as excessive, through the good offices and on the apparent advice of some of the most respected names and institutions in the City of London? Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that at least one of the inquiries that he has mentioned will try to obtain advice from those institutions about what part they played and what advice they gave?

Mr. Maude: I will certainly look at the point raised by my hon. Friend. It may well be that the Companies Act investigation into James Ferguson Holdings plc would be an appropriate vehicle. I shall certainly consider that.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the Minister elaborate on a number of points that he has made? About an hour ago, I opened a letter from a constituent, from which it would appear on first reading that his home, his retirement fund and his car are dependent on his investments. I am sure that he is interested in the Minister's new powers, but I am sure that he is more interested in knowing whether he will get his money back, and when.

Mr. Maude: As I said, I am well aware of the concerns and anxieties that must exist for investors at the moment. I am afraid that it is not possible at this stage to give any further reassurance. It will be for the special managers and the liquidators to settle the matter as soon as they can. I know that they will be keen to allay those anxieties and concerns, in so far as they can, as soon as possible.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): While I welcome the points that the Minister makes about the new financial services legislation which undoubtedly improves the disciplines and controls operating in the securities industry, is he really satisfied that small companies that are responsible for managing overseas bank accounts and investments can be relied upon to exercise proper control? From this example, according to press reports, it appears that the United Kingdom funds have largely been recovered, but funds in Gibraltar that have been manoeuvred between Switzerland and other exotic locations seem to have hit problems. Whether they are licensed by his Department or whether they run under the auspices of other regulatory bodies, controlling funds overseas is a really difficult problem, and perhaps his Department should consider it further.

Mr. Maude: I am certainly satisfied that the new regulatory regime is tougher and provides more effective

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control than existed hitherto. I have to say that the position, as I understand it, is by no means as simple as that which my hon. Friend sets out.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Application under Standing Order No. 20.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I beg to give notice——

Mr. Speaker: No. I will take points of order after the application under Standing Order No. 20.

Sir Peter Emery: But it is a point of order on the statement.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is no procedure for seeking leave to move the Adjournment of the House on a statement. I shall take the hon. Gentleman's point of order in a moment.

Later——

Mr. Speaker: Now I will take points of order.

Sir Peter Emery: Not in answer to a question, Sir, but because of the great concern that exists about the Barlow Clowes group, I wished to ensure that the matter should be raised on the Adjournment at the earliest possible moment.

Sharpeville Six

4.22 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The need for urgent action by Her Majesty's Government on South Africa, following the imposition of extended emergency regulations and the latest development in the case of the Sharpeville Six."

The matter is specific, in that my application refers to the latest extended emergency powers taken by the apartheid regime. These extend all the regulations relating to detention without trial, restrictions on press reporting and making illegal and punishable all calls for boycotts.

In addition to the 17 organisations which remain banned, including the African National Congress and the United Democratic Front, another organisation—the Committee for the Defence of Democracy—has also been banned.

My application is important because of the need for the British Government to pass from simply criticism of such action to taking effective economic measures such as sanctions against the apartheid police state. It is also urgent that the House should debate these matters because of the refusal of the judge in the Supreme Court in South Africa to allow the Sharpeville Six a new trial.

The lives of five men and one woman who have been convicted and sentenced to death must be saved. There have been protests from Governments, from Parliament and the rest, and the refusal to allow new proceedings means that, once again, the lives of the six are in great danger, and it is necessary for the British Government, the United States Government and other western European Governments to make sure that there is the maximum protest.

Over the weekend, millions of people saw the wonderful concert put on at Wembley in honour of Nelson Mandela's 70th birthday. Nelson Mandela has devoted his entire life to fighting the evil that I have been describing. He is undoubtedly the most outstanding South African of his generation. The way in which people all over the world saw that wonderful concert on television showed only too well the feelings of people that Nelson Mandela must be freed.

Given all those circumstances, and bearing in mind what has happened on South Africa in the past few days and the question of the Sharpeville Six, I beg you, Mr. Speaker, to recognise the urgency of the matter and to allow a debate so that the House can debate fully these issues as quickly and as openly as possible.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The need for urgent action by Her Majesty's Government on South Africa following the imposition of extended emergency regulations and the latest developments in the case of the Sharpeville Six."

I have listened with concern to what the hon. Member has said. As he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given precedence over the Orders of

the Day set down for today or for tomorrow and whether it meets the criteria. I regret that I cannot find that the matter which the hon. Gentleman has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Valleys Initiative (Press Conference)

4.26 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have repeatedly put on record your opinion that, when a statement is made in the House, as last Thursday the Leader of the House assured us that the Secretary of State for Wales intended to do on his long-awaited valleys initiative, the Minister should make that statement at the Dispatch Box before it reached the press. You may also recollect, not least because I sent you a copy, the guarantee by the Secretary of State for Wales on 23 May:

"I shall certainly make an announcement in the Chamber, although I shall also be making announcements in the Valleys."—[*Official Report*, 23 May 1988; Vol. 134, c. 6.]

Today, I have heard that, in addition to briefing editors today, tomorrow, at 10.40 am, the Secretary of State will launch his valleys initiative with a great fanfare and press jamboree in Tonypandy in south Wales, a full five hours before he can possibly tell the House—a typical attempt to precondition the attitude of the press before questions can be raised by hon. Members.

As this is a brazen, blatant discourtesy to you, Mr. Speaker, in view of your constant rulings, and to the House, in view of its long-standing conventions, will you lend the weight of your office to our demand to the Leader of the House that that press conference and further press briefings be postponed until after the statement and questions in the Chamber?

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman kindly mentioned this matter to me in advance of his point of order, therefore giving me an opportunity to look into it. I have no authority to postpone press conferences, but I understand that the information to be given in Wales will be released in the Vote Office tomorrow morning—*[Interruption.]* Order. This will give hon. Members a chance to study it in time for questions to the Secretary of State in the afternoon.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The undertaking given by the Secretary of State for Wales was no offhand answer. It actually appears in *Hansard* as a corrigendum to the *Official Report*:

"I shall certainly make an announcement in the Chamber, although I shall also be simultaneously making announcements in the Valleys."—[*Official Report*, 24 May 1988; Vol. 134, c. 302.]

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "simultaneous" means "at the same time".

The Secretary of State said that he would be making a statement in the Chamber at the same time as he made a statement in the valleys. No one knew how he was going to do that in two places at the same time, but that is his problem. Nevertheless, he gave an undertaking to the House that he would make the announcement in the Chamber. We ask you, Mr. Speaker, to give all the weight you can to our representations, to make sure that that statement is made in the Chamber, as the Secretary of State volunteered and promised.

Mr. Speaker: The House well knows my views on this matter. I believe that the House of Commons should always be given information in advance of the press or anyone else. However, it is not within my power to

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postpone a press conference. I am sure that what has been said will be carefully noted by those on the Government Front Bench.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have consulted five dictionaries, in case I did not understand the word "simultaneous". It seems quite clear that it means "at the same time", in the same way as simultaneous translation means more or less instantaneous translation. Therefore, I suggest that the Secretary of State for Wales has misled the House by making that statement during Welsh questions.

Making a statement and holding a press conference in Wales, even though the right hon. Gentleman may be leaving the details in the Vote Office, is not the same as making an oral statement to the House before making that statement in Wales. I have no objection to Ministers making statements in Wales: it is good that Ministers occasionally make their statements in the areas that will be most affected. However, the Secretary of State for Wales has made a promise in the House simultaneously to make a statement on the valleys initiative, about which those of us who represent the valleys are deeply concerned and rightly, we want to be the first to comment and question him. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to use all your good offices to make sure that he does not make that statement before we have an opportunity to hear it and to question him on it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is it the same matter? Mr. Skinner.

Mr. Skinner: Is it not normal practice that, when a Minister or anybody else misleads the House, they are expected to make good and redeem that statement? Is it not worth noting that the White Paper on public expenditure produced in February this year shows on page 35 that planned public expenditure for Wales will fall over three years? Perhaps the reason why the Secretary of State will not come to the Dispatch Box is that he will be criticised on the amount of expenditure. Instead, he is going to the valleys to try to kid them, when he is cutting the money.

Mr. Speaker: The House well knows my views on this matter. I am sure that what has been said has been noted.

Mining Subsidence

4.32 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I beg to move,

That this House believes that any public body or organisation involved in the working or getting of coal should be required to take steps to prevent subsidence damage and to promote public awareness of any workings which might give rise to such damage; further believes that the owners of houses, land, buildings and other constructions which have suffered damage due to subsidence from the working and getting of coal should without time limit receive full right of repair to, or equitable compensation for, their properties; and calls for the establishment of an independent arbitration procedure to resolve any disputes that may arise over compensation for subsidence damage or any matter relating thereto.

I am grateful for the fact that the rules of the House have allowed me this opportunity to enable hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber to discuss the important topic of mining subsidence. I hope that at the end of the debate hon. Members will be more aware of the subject and that the Minister will be kind enough to give some suggestions as to what the Government intend to do to rectify the problems created by subsidence damage.

Many hon. Members will be aware of my interest in this matter. If they are not, let me advise them that if they wish to get on in politics, they should read *Hansard* more regularly. The problem of coal mining subsidence in parts of north Nottinghamshire is now so bad that it is the single most important issue for home owners in the area. Proof of that is shown daily in the mail bags of other hon. Members, particularly my hon. Friends the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), all of whom I hope will be given an opportunity to speak in the debate.

In other parts of the United Kingdom, particularly in Yorkshire and Wales, similar problems are appearing regularly in mining areas. Therefore, the issue needs the Government's attention so that home owners, tenants of damaged properties, businesses, landowners and the service industries may be given the justice necessary to enable them to repair such damage, or at least provided with proper compensation if it is required.

Despite the fact that the Select Committee on Energy carried out major investigations into the problem, including visits to the affected coalfield areas, the receiving of written and oral evidence and the publication of the report in 1984 by Professor Waddilove entitled, "The repair and compensation system for coal mining subsidence", I find it amazing that hon. Members still await any positive action. If any hon. Member doubts that statement, I should say that since the publication of the Waddilove report in 1984 all that has transpired from Government has been the publication in 1987 of their response to the report's proposals and, recently, a Department of Energy consultative document entitled, "Coal mining subsidence compensation: Proposals for legislation". Those reports were critical of each other on the most important points.

I shall point to some of the major differences between the documents I have listed. The Government conceded in their response to the Waddilove inquiry the importance of accurate prediction of possible subsidence damage, yet they maintain the view that as that may be expensive, a

balance has to be struck between benefits and additional costs. Without any shadow of doubt, that is contrary to the spirit of the Waddilove findings, which recommend:

"The Board"—

that is, British Coal—

"should extend the priorities for investigating likely subsidence damage and consequent preventive work to include sensitive community areas such as residential neighbourhoods".

Paragraph 80 of the same report states that British Coal "should undertake such appropriate preventive measures."

The Minister will probably say that British Coal already does a considerable amount of predictive work, including the carrying out of instructions given to it in 1984 on procedures to be adhered to, and the compilation of a subsidence damage manual. Will the Minister make that manual available to hon. Members? It would be of great help to all those concerned with this matter.

On prevention and precautionary measures, the Waddilove recommendations and those of the Government differ dramatically in their resolve. For example, paragraph 83 of the Waddilove report states:

"Coal should not normally be extracted where the Board predicts that severe or very severe damage is likely to occur unless action can be taken to reduce the likelihood of damage below this level."

The Government's view is only to concede that local planning authorities face a dilemma in such circumstances.

In my constituency of Mansfield there has been a rumour for some time that British Coal intends to make application to mine into the pillar of coal on which most of the centre of the town now stands. Will the Minister investigate that and give me an answer on his findings? Is he aware that hundreds of millions of pounds worth of property and investments are situated above the pillar? If the rumour is true, will he give an assurance that Government Departments will make available the extra finance necessary to try to prevent damage and, thereafter, to remedy any that may occur?

The Government have accepted the principle that proper notification was not being conducted fairly by British Coal and that in many cases inadequate information was being provided to those concerned with subsidence. For instance, with mining searches, recent practice in Nottinghamshire has been to provide basic information on past and current mining activities but not details of compensation claims settled and the amounts involved or what repairs they covered.

Similarly, little liaison exists between prospective purchasers and the estate departments of British Coal. Until a central register exists that is easily accessible to anyone interested and which is preferably held and managed by the local authority, difficulties will continue to occur. Such a facility would rightly offer prospective home or business purchasers direct access to the vital information they need before purchase. Further, it would give owners who believe that their property had experienced damage the opportunity to check for themselves.

The Waddilove inquiry recommended that the Government should bring the Law Society and British Coal together to agree a form of mining search to be used by prospective purchasers of property in mining areas. Why has that not yet happened? Many regard the repair of damage to property as the main cause affecting the resolution of this issue.

Needless to say, the Minister will not be surprised to learn that I agree with the Waddilove findings and the Government's view that the repair of damaged property to its pre-damaged condition is the correct formula to adopt. Compensation is paid only in exceptional circumstances and when it is agreed by all parties. I take issue, however, with a number of the matters that have been raised.

The infamous six-year rule is the method by which British Coal determines whether it should be liable for repair or compensation for damage caused by coal mining subsidence. It is outrageous and nonsense that British Coal should feel that because coal mining subsidence damage occurred six years or more after coal mining ceased under a property, it should not be responsible. I have been told that on almost every occasion when that principle has been challenged in the courts it has not been upheld, yet the Government still feel able to rely on that rule. It arises out of the Limitation Act 1980 and is the appropriate measure for such cases.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, under the Housing Bill, latent damage after house purchase is limited to 10 years? I believe that I am right in saying that there is no limit in the Latent Damage Act 1986. People suffering subsidence damage, such as those in my constituency, are getting a raw deal.

Mr. Meale: The consultation document issued by the Department of Energy states that, in cases of damage to property, the six-year limit is likely to be reduced to three years, not removed altogether.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Does my hon. Friend agree that there should be no limit to the period in which damages can be claimed for subsidence damage? There were a number of pits in my constituency, but after 30 years, holes and pitfalls are still appearing for which compensation cannot be claimed. A farm in my constituency, at which mining finished in the 1930s, is still suffering from pitfalls. Does my hon. Friend agree that compensation should be paid regardless of time?

Mr. Meale: As my hon. Friend knows, I have introduced two private Member's Bills, which stipulate that there should be no time limit with regard to damage to properties.

I inform the Minister that I am in possession of a number of confidential British Coal documents relating to the six-year rule. They show a conspiracy by British Coal in this matter. I have a letter that was sent by British Coal's London headquarters to Mr. Williams, who owns a damaged home in Sutton in Ashfield. The letter is dated 7 January 1985 and states:

"The strongest limitation period that can apply to subsidence claims is twelve years."

That view is supported by Mr. Tyrrell, who is regional solicitor for British Coal at its Eastwood hall offices. In a memorandum dated 1 April 1985 to the deputy director of administration, north Nottinghamshire area, and his area estate managers, he says:

"Claims for compensation founded on agreements under seal made between the Board and the surface owner—12 years. Claims for repair of property—12 years."

In a confidential memorandum dated 13 May 1985, Mr. Wenn, who is an area estates manager in the north Nottinghamshire area, went into more detail. Under a section headed "Claims for repairs" he states:

[Mr. Meale]

"Severance Terms contained in Title Deeds etc.—the limitation period is 12 years from the date of damage."

The Minister should remember that that is a memorandum to an estates officer saying British Coal should deceive owners who have damaged property.

The memorandum continues:

"You will note that these limitation periods appear to be entirely contrary to those that we have been employing for a number of years, i.e. claims for compensation generally under title deeds, we have allowed 12 years plus 2 years for ground movement to cease and claims for repair under the Acts, 6 years, plus 2 years for ground movement to cease. Implementation, therefore, is bound to be difficult."

The final paragraph of the memorandum says:

"It is clearly in the Board's interest to restrict claims for compensation to 6 years from the date the damage occurred as this may limit our liability. The problem is going to be that as we are pursuing a repairs policy more claims will fall into the 12 year limitation."

I have a confidential British Coal document—reference EDI(77) 1 K 664—which is headed "Estates department instruction." It was sent out by Mr. Dickie, who was then national director of estates. On page six he says:

"It is twelve years where the obligation to pay compensation was imposed by a covenant in a Mining Lease or other document by which the Board are still contractually bound, or by a Working Facilities Order."

I shall willingly pass all those documents to the Minister for his comments.

I should like to mention the effect on some of my constituents of the insistence on the six-year interpretation. The first case involves a constituent who lives at 45 High street, Mansfield Woodhouse. His home is in a deplorable state of disrepair; ceilings are cracked throughout the property, floors are out of level, window frames are twisted beyond repair and, despite the fact that the cottage is built of Portland stone and its outside walls are 20 inches thick, huge cracks have appeared inside and outside it. Mining last took place under the property in 1979. The cottage, which is the middle property of three, is splitting in two. Repairs to the properties on either side are being paid for by British Coal. To make matters worse, the property is listed with a preservation order because of its unusual and historical importance.

Mr. Johnson of 22, Bosworth street, Mansfield lives in a semi-detached property on the Ladybrook estate. Despite the fact that the adjoining house has been repaired, British Coal continually refuses to offer help to repair the property.

Mr. and Mrs. Sharman live at 24 Williamson street, Mansfield. Mr. Sharman was a coal miner and deputy, and worked for British Coal for 50 years. That elderly couple bought their council home only to be told that, because the head of claim—the local council—had changed, a new claim was required. When they claimed, they were immediately informed that, because it was a new claim, they were out of time.

Mr. and Mrs. Lilley of 37, Harropwhite road, Mansfield went as far as to pay for a lengthy consultative report on their property. It clearly showed that severe damage to their home had been caused by mining subsidence. They have been told that to continue their fight for justice in the courts will cost about £100,000—a matter that is making both of them very ill.

I shall pass the Minister a photograph album of the severe damage to 42, Southwell road east, so that he has some idea how bad it is. It is in such a state of disrepair, because of coal mining subsidence, that it is considered to be dangerous for its owners and local residents. British Coal has agreed that the property is a write-off but refuses to settle the matter because it believes that it can force the owners to accept less for their home than would enable them to buy a similar home.

There is also the issue of the response by British Coal to the need for repairs or to contact from a home owner who believes that he has a subsidence problem. Contacts and promises by representatives to visit are often not followed up. British Coal's response needs to be reassessed, because my files are full of instances of intimidation of home owners after visits by Coal Board staff. The rules need to be changed so that staff are fully aware that their job is not to intimidate owners or to scare them into believing that they have no right to compensation or repair of their properties by British Coal.

Temporary accommodation is important for people who have to leave their homes while repairs are carried out. I fully agree with the main thrust of the Government's recommendations in response to the Waddilove report. There are two main problems in north Nottinghamshire, the first of which is availability. There is an enormous list of families waiting for British Coal properties to become vacant. British Coal estates officers regularly cite that factor as a reason for owners quickly accepting sometimes low financial compensation or delaying repairs.

The second problem involves management. I have had to sort out problems with a number of the public services, including the gas and electricity boards, to stop them disconnecting properties because of non-payment of bills by British Coal. I hope that the Minister will note my comments and write to British Coal in Nottinghamshire stipulating that the board must adhere to criteria on the siting, standard, availability and management of temporary homes.

I should like to deal with compensation settlements generally, which I hope I have shown are unsatisfactory. I am disappointed that the Government in their response have declined to support the concept of a local or a regional independent arbitration service to deal with these matters. It is a major error for British Coal to rely on a home owner's right merely to a reference to the lands tribunals. As the Minister is aware, in the past two weeks two cases against the board—one in Leicester and the other in Mansfield—were won under this system, and compensation of about £40,000 and £15,000 were agreed. It took four years for both cases to reach that position, with costs in each case estimated to be between £100,000 and £150,000. These cases are not unusual; many have preceded them. A much more practical and humane and cheaper approach would be to use the independent arbitration service which I recommended in a private Member's Bill.

I again ask whether the Government intend to agree to the recommendations of the Waddilove inquiry. Recommendation 95 states:

"Government Departments should be prepared to adjust the various Capital Expenditure Allocations made to Local Authorities to take account of additional Expenditure incurred as a result of serious damage to an area."

I ask that question because, in my district council area of Mansfield, the following damage problems arise: first, structural repair costs to council housing stock of about £1 million are outstanding, covering hundreds of homes; secondly, at least eight homes which have had to be

vacated because of subsidence damage are uninhabitable; thirdly, 16 properties which have had to be demolished because of coal mining subsidence; and, fourthly, because British Coal has placed stop notices on certain areas, hundreds of homes cannot be repaired.

The Minister is aware that the Department of Energy is awaiting responses to a recent consultative document on this subject. He is aware also that district councils throughout north Nottinghamshire, together with Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire county councils, have already undertaken a study into their areas, as well as compilation of a central register of damage to property, services and land. I ask the Minister to take account of that work and expenditure and agree to delay the closing date of the consultative exercise so that the valuable information which the study will provide is included.

As hon. Members know, I could speak for hours on this subject but I should like to offer others the opportunity to participate. I ask the Minister to take note of all my questions and to respond to me either at the end of the debate or later, if he wishes to investigate other avenues. I ask the House to record my view that this matter is of public concern, especially in my area of north Nottinghamshire, which has hundreds of damaged homes, businesses awaiting compensation and some schools and even a hospital which have closed. I sincerely ask the Minister to respond genuinely to my request for justice for home owners and businesses in my area.

4.55 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I congratulate the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on winning the ballot and on selecting this subject, which is locally of great concern in his constituency and peripherally of concern in mine.

I recognise the hon. Gentleman's worry. He will recall that, just before the Easter adjournment, at 5 am in the debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill, we debated this and a number of other subjects covering economic development generally in Nottinghamshire. There was not enormous agreement then, but I am pleased to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that on one issue he is in complete agreement with British Coal. The board does not want its headquarters moved to Nottingham. Like the hon. Gentleman, the board feels that that would not be an enormous advantage. I continue to find that surprising, as 50 per cent. of the economic activity in mining is based on the Nottinghamshire area, but British Coal clearly feels that it is more suitable for the headquarters to be nearer the Department than the industry's centre.

I declare an interest in that I have recently received notice that mining will take place under my home near the Cotgrave colliery. That colliery has had major problems, but it has also had enormous investment. Now that its prospects are much improved, I wait with a certain trepidation to see whether there is subsidence under my own home. I have, however, been impressed by the length of notice warning that mining would occur under our village, the details of the planning process and the information on my rights to object, although I shall not be objecting. Although my constituency is a coal mining area, I have had only a handful of complaints about problems with the board over subsidence. In the past year I have had only three or four complaints and I felt each time that the board had looked fairly into the matter.

I underline the need to keep subsidence to the minimum and I also underline the progress made both in the interests of those affected, many of whom work in the industry—enormous anxiety and distress can be caused—and also in the interests of the industry as a whole. The Waddilove report makes it clear that the cost of subsidence is part of the cost of winning coal. We must bear both points equally in mind. A balance must be struck, as I am sure the hon. Member for Mansfield accepts.

British Coal now has a far better system of notification and publicity, following introduction of new notification procedures in 1986, which advised where workings were taking place or were about to take place. Credit is due to British Coal for that action and to the industry, which is now operating in a much better climate of realism. We must accept that, no matter how the costs of subsidence are divided—whether as social costs, the cost to British Coal as a whole or the costs to an individual pit—there is a trend towards pit-top accounting and there must be a reserve to meet the potential liability for subsidence. That reserve must increasingly relate to the cost of the coal extracted from under the houses affected.

I draw attention to the need to have a procedure that is neither costly nor cumbersome and to the absolute necessity to do right by those adversely affected by subsidence. It is interesting to note what John Harris, the chairman of the East Midlands electricity board, whose headquarters is in my constituency, said on a visit to the House last week. He recognises that he is sitting on top of an enormous coalfield with huge potential. He recognises that in a landlocked area, importing foreign coal is not particularly attractive. He recognises that the potential for new coal-fired power stations is enormous. He recognises that Nottinghamshire could be the powerhouse of the energy and electricity industries.

We have the natural resources, skills, traditions and manpower. The main proviso—if not the only proviso—is that we should continue the current progress towards competitiveness and maintain the current excellent productivity results. In the Nottinghamshire area we have broken the record for productivity five times this year alone. Productivity nationally is up by 16 per cent. and in the past year the Gedling colliery in my constituency increased its productivity by 25 per cent. Having lost £6 million last year, it expects to break even this year. Those figures are an enormous credit to the miners and the management. They are encouraging to customers and critical to the plans and future of the privatised electricity industry.

My remarks are intended to keep subsidence and the many other important problems aired by the hon. Member for Mansfield in perspective. All too often when we discuss the prospects for the coal industry we hear doom and gloom. We need to hear more about the progress that has been made in the industry and the promise and the prospects for the future.

In referring to the need to keep subsidence to a minimum, I have already paid tribute to the greater sensitivity of British Coal in Nottinghamshire to the problem. I should like to go further than that. I note that in the Sherwood colliery, which I think is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Mansfield, there has been working by finger panels or single entry and in built-up areas panels of 40 m or 45 m wide have been used,

[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]

rather than the normal long wall of 200 m plus. That is an example of sensitivity to possible disturbance on the surface of the techniques of mining underneath.

Mr. Meale: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman mentioned that. I would point out that on a number of occasions I have had to visit properities in areas around Sherwood where whole streets of houses were shuddering because of the new workings underneath.

Mr. Mitchell: I readily accept what the hon. Gentleman says, as I am no expert in these matters. However, those in the industry tell me that the point I am making is an example of a more sensitive mining technique which makes a great deal of difference to the degree of subsidence. Perhaps that is why there is evidence of progess in respect of the number of claims. In Nottinghamshire, I understand, there are one third as many claims as there were three years ago. That shows that there has been some progress at least.

The third key point that I mentioned was the need to deal fairly with those affected and ensure that their properties can be properly looked after. As I said in dealing with claims, we must strike a balance between the maintenance of professional standards and the merits of speed. We should again give credit where it is due. In Nottinghamshire, British Coal is handling claims 50 per cent. faster than it was last year. It is also employing outside professional consultants to try to speed up the process and help its own staff. Last year there were about 4,000 claims. Two thirds are being, or have already been, agreed—sometimes with compensation in cash but mostly in repairs—and British Coal tells me that nearly all the backlog should be cleared by the end of 1989. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Mansfield accepts that, but I am happy to put it on record that that is what I have been told by British Coal.

Let me make a few brief points about the Waddilove recommendations. I congratulate the Government on commissioning the report and accepting many of its recommendations. I note that the hon. Member for Mansfield also did that to some extent. I look forward to the legislation replacing and supplementing the Coal-Mining (Subsidence) Act 1957 and the subsidence provisions of the Coal Industry Act 1985. In particular, it is clearly sensible that it should be the norm for compensation to be in the form of repairs rather than cash. It also seems to me that the extra efforts announced by the Government to build defences against subsidence into new buildings in mining areas represent an important trend in the right direction. It is also sensible of British Coal to make a contingent liability of likely subsidence costs in the five-year programme for each colliery.

I should like the Minister to clarify two points. The first, which has already been raised, relates to the six-year limit and the statute of limitation. I note from the Government's proposals that the yardstick to be used is "three years from the time when the claimant had reasonable grounds for believing subsidence had occurred."
I understand that most subsidence is evident after two years, but I would welcome the Minister's confirmation that where that is not the case this three-year rule will take precedence over the six-year rule. That would seem to me to resolve many of the concerns expressed on this issue —not least by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) and the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale).

Secondly, paragraph 50 of the consultation paper, which deals with home loss payments, refers to the assessment of the value of the property that has been damaged with reference to rateable value. Have the Government yet decided what alternative method to use when the community charge is introduced? It would be most helpful to hear anything that my hon. Friend the Minister has to say on that matter.

5.5 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I shall be brief, because I know that many of my hon. Friends from mining communities wish to speak. I urge the Minister as strongly as I possibly can not to turn down the appeal made so excellently by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) but to consider all the facts and come back with constructive proposals for dealing with a whole series of injustices that still continues and which is becoming more serious in some respects. I plead with the Government not to come forward with a ready-made reply but to examine the individual cases and consider the problem to be dealt with.

Since I have represented Ebbw Vale, I have dealt with scores of subsidence cases. My experience is that, over the past few years, British Coal—and before it the National Coal Board—has become a good deal more mean and restrictive in dealing with the problem. That derives partly from the instructions that the Coal Board was given some years ago when Mr. MacGregor arrived. He never thought that it was part of the business of the Coal Board to deal with extraneous matters—if this can be considered an extraneous matter. Part of the change of attitude dates from his arrival.

Despite the efforts of some of the people on the spot—I do not blame them—it is clear from individual cases that there is pressure from the top of British Coal to make the whole business much more restrictive. That is the first reason why I urge the Minister to consider the individual cases. Several of us could add many more such cases to the list. By the way, we are talking not only about individual householders, although in some respects they suffer more severely than anyone else. If the Government have any interest in small businesses, they should recognise the dangers. Some businesses have taken great risks in establishing themselves and then found themselves subject to this special difficulty.

Let me illustrate my argument that the Government should consider the whole matter. I hope that the Minister will report to the Secretary of State for Wales on this subject and that the Secretary of State for Wales will include in the statement that he is to make tomorrow a reference to subsidence and its effects on the valley towns. We have urged this upon him and we think that one cannot have a proper valid initiative that does not include proposals for dealing with subsidence problems as a major feature.

The village of Troedrhiwgwair in my constituency provides a remarkable illustration of the problem. The villagers feared that the mountain was going to move. After the Aberfan disaster, there was a great fear that the inhabitants would have to be moved, and the council properly made arrangements for people to move if they

wanted to, but some of the residents were determined to stay there. Despite the local council's perfectly proper decsion to proceed with a compulsory takeover order, the villagers decided to stay and fight for their homes, as they had every right to do. Following the inspection, the Secretary of State for Wales came down on the side of the villagers, and all honour goes to them for the way in which they fought their case.

But that is only part of the problem. If the problem is to be solved, there must be sufficient money for the necessary repairs to be carried out so that the inspector's decision, approved by the Secretary of State, can be properly put into effect. The case was widely discussed throughout Wales, and there was a full inspection. The more it was discussed, the clearer it became that mining communities faced special problems from the threat of subsidence or landslips in one form or another. In dozens of cases in my constituency, landslips are a real peril. We must have more money and determination to deal with the problem.

I would rather the Minister gave no answer today than hear him retail to the House whatever British Coal happens to be saying at the moment. I hope that he will consider the series of individual injustices cited in the debate and come forward with a comprehensive policy to deal with the real and widespread danger of subsidence, both in the industrial sphere and for individual householders.

5.10 pm

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I echo the tribute paid by my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) to the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) for giving the House this opportunity to discuss again the whole problem of coal mining subsidence and the injustice of current compensation procedures.

I go further, and pay tribute also to my hon. Friend the Minister for his particular interest in the subject and for being a moving force in ensuring that the Government responded as positively as they did on 29 April by producing their consultation paper. To me, that suggests that legislation is contemplated—indeed, is in the pipeline. During the next Session of Parliament, therefore, I hope to contribute to proceedings on a Bill embodying in a constructive and lasting form the ideas advanced from both sides today.

As the hon. Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) will confirm, on 19 March 1982 I introduced the Coal Mining Subsidence (Fair Compensation) Bill. Like other right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, I was also pleased to submit evidence to the Waddilove committee. I must declare an interest, as I did on that occasion, in that I am a vice-president of the Building Societies Association, and I know that subsidence is a matter of particular concern to national and regional, and especially to local, building societies in the east and west midlands and in the Yorkshire coalfield area.

I am concerned that the Department has not gone far enough in a number of respects. The present law has remained unaltered for some 30 years and gives British Coal considerable discretion in the treatment of claims for compensation which, in my view, falls well short of providing adequate protection for the interests of individual home owners, tenants, business men, farmers and smallholders, whose property is often damaged beyond repair. With the threat of both seam mining and opencast mining activity hanging over large areas of the country for many years to come, proper notice of such activity and full compensation for consequential losses, especially for agricultural land, must be made available in the United Kingdom, as it is in all other European countries.

I am glad to see from paragraphs 79 and 83 of the consultation paper that due regard is now being paid—and, I hope, will shortly be enshrined in legislation—to damage to chattels, home loss payments, depreciation of crops, farm loss payments and additional compensation for tenant farmers. I welcome that, but I do not welcome paragraph 5:

> "The Waddilove committee carried out a thorough analysis of the compensation scheme as it then stood"—

and had stood for 30 years

> "They recognised that the main thrust of existing provisions was right, but identified certain shortcomings. They did not call for a radical revision or overhaul of the system as operated by British Coal, but for administrative changes, many of which have now been made by British Coal."

It is on that point that I should like to share my views with my hon. Friend the Minister.

Hon. Members on both sides will know that certain legal obligations are devolved to British Coal to make good or compensate for damage caused by subsidence and mining activities, but broadly speaking those obligations relate only to damage to land and buildings. The legal obligation on British Coal is too loosely defined and, in my view, Mr. and Mrs. John Citizen are not adequately protected in law and will not be adequately protected if the proposals in the consultative document are enshrined in law. Nor can they necessarily be assured of receiving fair compensation for damage to businesses, property, farms and smallholdings or for nuisance or disturbance, as would be the case if their properties stood in the way of a bypass or motorway project.

The reason for that is simple. British Coal has a duty to compensate the public according to a code of practice, but the code of practice has no standing in law. I hope that in any Bill which comes forward the code will be enshrined in law. At present, it is capable of being interpreted for the convenience of British Coal and cannot readily be challenged by an aggrieved house owner, business man, farmer or smallholder who may be unfamiliar with the nooks and crannies of compensation law.

If your back garden was taken for road widening, for a bypass or for a motorway, Madam Deputy Speaker, under the Land Compensation Act 1973 you would have the right to have your fees paid, regardless of your financial circumstances, and to have your case discussed and negotiated on behalf of both parties—the Department of Transport, and yourself as a private citizen—by an independent arbitrator known as the district valuer, whose job it would be to bring both parties together.

My concern is that, in this instance, unlike any other application for compensation, British Coal has—and, if I read the consultative document correctly, will continue to have—wide discretion as to how and when compensation is to be paid. It thus has a psychological advantage over individual tenants and home owners, often with small terraced or semi-detached houses, who are unfamiliar with the nooks and crannies of the law.

[Mr. John Heddle]

That discretion allows British Coal to act as both judge and jury. I believe that that is wrong, and I hope that the point will be taken on board by my hon. Friend the Minister. Between now and drafting the Bill, I hope that he will give serious consideration to ensuring that this basic change—not an administrative change, but a structural change—is incorporated in the Bill.

Judging from the heart-rending correspondence that my parliamentary neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), and I receive, as I am sure do many other hon. Members, British Coal often seems to offer compensation on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. It is a large, forbidding Government body and the individual voice is perhaps not heard with the same sympathy, understanding and respect as it would be if the individual were represented by a qualified surveyor, valuer, solicitor or other person capable of prosecuting the case in the same professional, technical valuation language used by the coal board itself.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend, as it is unlikely that my contribution will be reached and this is an important point. The proposal that these matters should go before a tribunal would mean that the aggrieved party could not obtain legal aid as well. Whereas, previously, an aggrieved party could go to the county court and perhaps obtain legal aid, that possibility will be denied to people in the future. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is an important factor in the recommendations?

Mr. Heddle: As one would expect, as a lawyer, my hon. Friend has raised a particularly interesting point, and it enables me to identify another matter. I agree with what he has said, but a more fundamental point undermines his intervention. That is that an individual may refer to the lands tribunal only on a point of law. Disagreement with the compensation put on the table by British Coal's valuer is not a matter of dispute that can be put to the lands tribunal. Therefore, as a court of appeal, the lands tribunal is not a satisfactory solution to the problem. The only way for Mr. and Mrs. John Citizen to get a fair hearing is by negotiations being conducted by an independent party. That independent party must be the district valuer.

My hon. Friend is absolutely right on his second point about legal aid. One cannot obtain legal aid to refer a matter to the lands tribunal. But, in the parallel that I drew to your attention, Madam Deputy Speaker—that of your garden being taken for road widening—whatever your financial circumstances, you would be entitled to have your fees paid by the acquiring authority. Over and above the compensation offered there would be no question of you, or Mr. and Mrs. John Citizen, being out of pocket because of the activities of British Coal or the other acquiring authority.

I draw the Minister's attention to the code of practice. If it is to be enshrined in law, I invite him to agree that the booklet advising compensation applicants should be better drafted than it is at present. Under the heading "How to make claims under the Act", it asks:

"Will the repairs always restore the property completely to its condition before the damage?"

The answer states:

"No. In most cases the Coal Board's obligation is to do such repairs and re-decorations as are needed to make the property reasonably fit for its use at the time that the damage occurred."

Who is to say what was the state of the property when the damage occurred? Who is to define "reasonably fit"? I understand that, in a fair and equitable society, the basis of compensation is to restore property to its original state, or, if that is not possible, fully to compensate the owner. Therefore, prior notification is absolutely vital to give the person whose property is affected the opportunity to seek professional advice, to prepare a schedule of condition as the property exists, and to be prepared before any damage is suffered. When damage is suffered, a schedule of dilapidations should be prepared, one document compared with the other, and compensation based on the extent of the damage.

With those few remarks, I repeat my gratitude to my hon. Friend the Minister for his positive attitude in bringing forward the consultative paper. I am sure that he will take on board my suggestions, in the hope that the forthcoming Bill—which I hope is not yet cast in bureaucratic stone—is capable of some amendment before it comes to the House for its first and subsequent readings.

5.22 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale). In the year that he has been an hon. Member he has shown extreme assiduousness in presenting his campaign. All credit is due to him. One seventh of my constituents live within the Mansfield district council boundaries. I shall not attempt to repeat the excellent case that my hon. Friend made, but I stress that the forthcoming Bill will primarily affect owner-occupiers who, in no small way, have been urged by the Government to buy their houses. In particular, I refer to council tenants.

For two or three years, a poor woman in my constituency has been going around in circles solely because she took the Government's advice and bought her council house. Her name is Mrs. Morley, of 68 Laurel avenue, Warsop. For two and a half years, she has kept quiet and asked me not to publicise her case, but, on this occasion, she has given me permission to do so. In case the Minister wants to telephone her, her telephone number is Mansfield 846932. Hers is a special case. Her husband has Crohn's disease. He will never work again. He is only in his 40s. He worked at Welbeck colliery. Despite their circumstances, they took the Government's advice and bought their council house.

Their income is £86 a week. They took out a mortgage for a mere £5,000. They got the house at a discount. Within a couple of years, it started to crack. There were cracks in the walls, the ceiling started to come away from the walls, ties had to be put into the bricks, and the floor sloped so badly it was like a ship's deck. They cannot decorate or hang curtains. The central heating pipes and joints are bending and cracking. The house is in a deplorable state. Quite frankly, it is worthless. No building society would provide a mortgage for somebody to buy that poor couple's house. They are saddled with a mortgage on an ex-council house that is not worth tuppence, because they took the Government's advice to buy their council house.

They cannot get compensation from the Coal Board, because the Coal Board has already paid it. It paid it to the council 15 years ago. Therefore, the Coal Board says, "We

will not pay it again. There has been no coal working since 1959." Mansfield district council, which has been helpful, was asked, "Will you buy the house back?" It said, "We cannot." The Government's legislation will not allow it to buy it back. The Government's legislation stopped it refusing to sell it in the first place. The council knew that the house was in a dodgy area, but, because of the Government's legislation on council house sales, it could not refuse to sell the house. That poor woman's house, at the junction of two major fissures, is worth nothing.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): The hon. Gentleman is making his case well. At the time of selling the house, was there not an obligation on the council to make it clear to the potential purchasers that it was in an area in which there had been coal workings and that further subsidence was likely? Therefore, the price to the tenants should have reflected that, and they should have taken it into account in their considerations.

Mr. Ashton: They are not daft. They live within half a mile of the pit. They know that it is in a coal mining area. The council sold it for £5,000. How cheaply can one buy a house? That does not prevent the poor woman from being in such a predicament.

What did she do? She went to the insurance company. When owner-occupiers buy their houses, as I and other hon. Members did, they must take out insurance. The building society that lends the mortgage says that one must insure the house. When they go to the insurance companies and say, "Our house is falling apart, and there are cracks in the walls," the insurance companies do not want to know. They find some small print, stating that the company is not responsible for land slip or, in the case of subsidence, the owners must spend the first £3,000. There are other clauses and get-outs. That is the situation that that lady faces.

I took the case to the ombudsman, and said, "This poor woman has been led astray by all sorts of people. She has an invalid husband who cannot get about. He is on mobility allowance. She cannot sell their house. What will you do about it?" The ombudsman said, "I cannot do anything. No law has been broken." I went back to the council and asked, "Will you provide her with another council house?" The council said yes. The woman said that she would be happy to move into another council house and board up her present house. But the council must charge her rent. To get into a decent house, she will finish up still paying the mortgage on a house that is not worth anything and paying rent to the council.

It is a Catch 22 situation. The buck has been passed in circles. She asked the council, "Will you write off the mortgage?" It said, "We cannot. In any case, if we do, there will be another 100 ex-council houses in the area with the same problem." Hon. Members know, as anyone does in a coal mining area, that once one hears a whiff of the word "subsidence" a terrible fear comes into the area. Often the owner-occupiers in that area say, "Please, Mr. Ashton" or "Mr. Skinner" or "Mr. Meale. Do not make a fuss. Do not tell the television or the newspapers. Do not name our street or nobody will want to buy the houses." Then they have to set to with a bit of anaglypta, Polyfilla, plaster or cement. Cement rendering is applied and everyone is walking on eggshells. They are in this Catch 22 situation.

I have advised council tenants in Warsop—my part of Mansfield—under no circumstances to buy their council houses. They would be daft. It is nothing to do with politics. A lot of the tenants have taken the trouble to have an extra survey carried out on their council house before buying, which in some cases has cost £200. The surveyor has then said, "All right, you are going to get the council house for £5,000 or £6,000, but it will cost £18,000 to put the house right." That is without any guarantee of a penny from the Coal Board.

In that kind of situation, the Government have a 100 per cent. moral, and almost legal, duty to bail out those people who have bought their council houses in those circumstances. They have already introduced legislation for defective houses, where they have said, "Okay, they took our advice and bought defective Coal Board houses and council houses which were built of a certain construction. In those cases, we will pay the grants and recompense those people for taking our advice on buying council houses." The Government have not said anything about people who have bought council houses and then discovered that they were not covered for any subsidence compensation.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield said in his admirable introduction, there is a need for at least two or three measures. There has to be some sort of independent tribunal which can adjudicate without—with respect to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle)—tenants having to pay high fees to surveyors and other people cashing in by charging £100 just to have a look at the house. It must be some kind of independent tribunal to which local councils, British Coal or the occupiers can take their case and get a fair deal.

There must be a register. I am happy to say that on Friday I attended a meeting in Mansfield, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield and the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). We heard that six district councils are joining together, and when they send out the voting registration forms in October, there will be a letter included saying, "Has your house ever had any problems with subsidence? Will you tell us whether you have made a claim and what happened to it? What is the procedure you have gone through? How much did it cost? Were you happy with the service from the Coal Board?" That scheme will cost £30,000.

Mansfield district council has had to underwrite £30,000 to call in Trent polytechnic and universities to prepare a proper report, because nobody knows the extent of the problem. Some of those areas are sitting on a San Andreas fault such as is found in California. If it was an earthquake or a volcano, there would have to be Government intervention. When there was a hurricane last October, and trees were blown down, the Government quickly found £15 million for 15 million trees, or whatever the total was, to be put back again. This matter concerns people who have taken the Government's advice.

I close with this point, because many of my hon. Friends want to make a contribution. The Minister said earlier that the coal industry would not be privatised before the next election. However, if the Tories win—I do not think they will—and try to sell off the pits, they will have great difficulty in selling to anybody with this kind of open-ended compensation commitment hanging over the industry. No one will want to take these houses on. It is a

[Mr. Ashton]

major problem, affecting not just north Nottinghamshire and my constituency, but many others, in Wales and elsewhere.

As yet, no one knows the extent of the problem. No one knows the number of houses involved and the compensation necessary. There is no machinery to find out those facts. It is a downright disgrace that ordinary decent people, who have taken the Government's advice to become owner-occupiers, have found themselves in the same kind of situation as Mrs. Morley. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said that he did not want any answers today. I hope we get some answers today, as we might not get any in the months to come.

5.35 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I too would like to thank the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) for raising this subject and to welcome the efforts that he has made to rectify the subsidence problems. From my experience of dealing with constituents' cases, it strikes me that the major problem relating to British Coal and subsidence is the use of the six-year limitation rule. I am told that in the old days British Coal used a 12-year rule, but in recent years it has been told by its lawyers that it can get away with a six-year rule. That means that virtually no subsidence claims are accepted in my constituency, because most of the workings took place some years ago.

British Coal has used its six-year rule ruthlessly. It has only really agreed to settle claims which might have arisen more than six years ago in instances where the claimant might qualify for legal aid. In instances where people have, none the less, taken British Coal to court, it has always settled generously before a judgment has been made, to prevent a precedent being created. However, I say to the hon. Member for Mansfield that when Councillor Brian Eley of Amber Valley district council suggested that Mansfield district council, Amber Valley district council and the other councils concerned should join together to take a test case to court and ensure that it was fought to a conclusion so that a precedent was created, I understand that Mansfield district council and the other councils concerned were not willing to join Amber Valley to fight such a test case.

It could be argued that one cannot blame British Coal for getting away with what it can within the law. After all, any commercial company—British Coal is no different—has a right to make as big a return as possible. However, I feel that the inadequate laws which have allowed British Coal to get away with this has caused a great deal of misery and anguish. All hon. Members can quote examples from their constituencies. I will briefly quote two cases just to bring home to hon. Members that this matter has caused immense problems.

A couple called the Allsopps in Heanor in my constituency had a claim accepted in 1972. However, they were told that a further claim in 1986 for damage which had arisen subsequently was out of time. As they did not qualify for legal aid, they were up the proverbial creek. An even worse situation arose for a Mr. R. Cook of Marlpool in my constituency. There were workings under Marlpool between 1938 and 1960 and Mr. Cook successfully claimed for subsidence in 1960. However, when he claimed in 1984 for a massive tilt which had occurred since 1960, liability was denied. He is now unable to sell his house, which is tilting so much that one thinks one is on a ship when one visits him.

I believe that the Government's proposals show that a major improvement is on the way, because from my understanding of the new three-year rule—the Minister will no doubt confirm this—it is proposed that claims will be accepted, not just three years after workings have ceased, but up to three years after the claimant could reasonably have noticed that that work would need to be carried out. That is a significant and major improvement, which seems to have escaped the notice of Opposition Members.

Mr. Ashby: My hon. Friend has given an illustration of a case that is common to all of us who have mining constituencies, but which is not covered by the Government's scheme or the Government's proposals. The example my hon. Friend has given is where compensation has already been paid and then there is further damage 20 years afterwards as a result of the same mining. There is nothing in the Government's proposals that covers secondary damage. As my hon. Friend knows, there is a rule that once compensation has been paid in respect of a claim, that is it, once and for all. Does my hon. Friend not agree that in exceptional circumstances the Coal Board and the Government should propose that subsequent discovery of damage from the same source should also be covered by compensation?

Mr. Oppenheim: My hon. Friend, who has a great deal of experience in these matters, is right. However, I would welcome confirmation from the Minister of the exact position. If there has already been a compensation payment for earlier damage, under the new three-year rule will people be allowed to make a second claim for subsequent damage which emerges at a later date? That is a key point, because the three-year rule will only be effective in helping people if it can be used more than once. Justice dictates that that should be the case.

My other queries relate to the proposal to give British Coal the right to require developers to take preventive action when building new structures to ensure that subsequent subsidence does not damage those structures. I should like to raise two points. First, I sincerely hope that some provision will be made to ensure that British Coal makes its submissions quickly so that developments are not unfairly delayed by bureaucratic problems at British Coal. Secondly, if British Coal makes such proposals, it is only fair that it is British Coal, not the developers or their subsequent customers, that bears the cost.

I believe that in the Government's proposals we have the kernel of what could be a major improvement on what has been a grossly unsatisfactory and unjust situation. At the very least, the proposals will be some improvement. I sincerely hope that when he replies to the debate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will give some indication that there will be justice for those people who need to claim for subsequent damage after they have made an initial claim. I hope that they will be covered by the new proposals.

5.40 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I shall be brief, in the interests of the other hon. Members who wish to speak.

First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on the selection of this subject and on his contribution, which was first-class and which, as far as I am concerned, has opened up the field in relation to this nationwide problem in the coal mining industry.

I get the impression that Conservative Members favour what is coming. They obviously know what is coming but I will not know until I see it, and I do not know whether it will be of any help to the people I represent.

The young hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) has not lived yet. He does not know what the mining industry is about, what work is about or what this place is about. He has yet to live, but he will find out. When he read his speech, I got the impression that it had been written by Sir whatever-his-name-is, the chairman of British Coal.

I want to put a message across about the seriousness of this situation. The Government do not come off well. There is no doubt that in the past this Government made a big mistake because the cost of meeting mining subsidence nationally came from central funds. However, this Administration then changed the rules. The Minister is frowning, but he has not been in that job long and he is learning. A Minister before him changed the rules so that the cost of mining subsidence had to be borne by the pit and the area that caused it. The end result fitted in with the Government's policy on pit closures. I used to have nine pits in my constituency, but now there are only four. The cost of mining subsidence made pits uneconomic. The Government were well on their horses to get rid of the mining industry in my constituency and in others. It all fits in with the Government's privatisation programme. Never mind what the Minister says—the Government are preparing the way for privatisation by using mining subsidence.

I should like to give one or two examples. Hundreds of compensation cases in my constituency have been rejected, yet the hon. Member for Gedling talked about the progress that has been made. He said, "The claims will be gone by 1989." Yes, they will be gone all right—they will have been disqualified, just as happened in the past. That is how British Coal will get rid of the claims.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) was right when he said that the real problems began when MacGregor became chairman of the National Coal Board. Opposition Members gave fair warning in the Chamber that he should not have been appointed because of the problems that would be created.

In one road in my constituency, containing about 120 properties, every compensation case has been settled over a period, except for two which have been described as out of time. That is scandalous and ridiculous. If the people concerned approach the Minister, he does not want to know. He says, "Go back to British Coal. It is British Coal's responsibility." However, when people go to the Coal Board, the Coal Board says, "The Government must change the legislation." Who is the piggy in the middle? It is the Member of Parliament and his constituent, the complainant, who has bought a house that is falling down.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) said, the Government encouraged such people to buy, but the houses are now falling down and our constituents have lost their money. They do not know where the hell they are, so they go to their Member of Parliament's constituency surgery to see whether he can help them. The result is a debate such as this, initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield.

I do not trust the lands tribunal. It is another arm of the Government. It is linked to the Government, but it should be totally independent. The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) was correct to say that there is a need for somebody or some body to be totally independent of the Government and of British Coal. However, that body should have a connection with Members of Parliament so that we can feed in the necessary information on behalf of our constituents so that they get a fair deal.

In conclusion—I said that I would be brief, Madam Deputy Speaker—I have read the Waddilove report. I am sure that all hon. Members have read it, because we all have problems in our constituencies. An elderly lady in my constituency made a claim and the board said, "No, we are not going to settle but we will do a bit of patching and decorating. We are coming underneath again. We do not meet the claim twice." As my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw has pointed out, the NCB does not pay twice. However, it admitted that it would go there again. It came again, all right, and when it had finished the lady made a claim. The Coal Board said, "Sorry, you are out of time." Those are the arguments being used by British Coal at present. It should come off it because the Waddilove report makes it clear that claimants have not had a fair deal with the mining subsidence programme. Indeed, I see a theme of fairness in the Waddilove report.

The Secretary of State should be sitting at the Dispatch Box listening to this debate. He is probably down at Weymouth enjoying himself in the sunshine on the beach. He should be here listening to an important debate about an important problem in our constituencies. I look forward to the legislation if it is going to help my constituents. If it is right, I will back the Government, but if it is not, I will kick and kick and kick just as I have done previously.

5.47 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I shall be brief, Madam Deputy Speaker, and am grateful that you have called me. This is an excellent subject for a debate —because all of us with mining constituencies have to deal with subsidence problems time and time again.

The first point that I should like to make is that the Coal Board is not all bad. It is often very good. I can give examples of cases in which the Coal Board—or rather, British Coal—has acted quickly, bravely, strongly and well, in financial terms. The village of Oakthorpe in my constituency had a fire smouldering underground. The coal was on fire and many houses in the villages were subsiding. I can only praise British Coal for the manner in which it acted. It brought its engineers to the village swiftly to assess the situation. It spent millions of pounds and dug out the burning coal. Now, two years later, the village can only be described as a model village. So British Coal is not all bad. It does some good things and sometimes acts honourably.

However, there are times when British Coal falls from grace, sometimes in the most scandalous way. We have heard examples of that today. We must realise that we are talking about the exceptional powers enjoyed by the Coal Board. What other authority has the right to mine

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underneath one's house, to cause damage to one's property and then to say, "I am going to be judge and jury about that."?

British Coal is in an exceptional position. One would have thought that, as it has such powers, at the very least it would treat those who have suffered in the way that other people would expect to be treated if they had suffered damage. For example, if a car had knocked someone over or been driven fast down a hill, through a wall and into a house, negligence claims would be made in the courts. There would be a six-year period for claims or a claim in three years following the discovery of that damage. However, that does not apply to mining subsidence. British Coal has been the judge and jury in its own cause for a long time.

At long last, the Waddilove report has appeared and the Government's responses to that report in the White Paper are very good. The Government are looking at the civil law and the way in which an honourable party should behave—the way in which the Coal Board should behave. However, the Government must go further than that. We are not talking about a car being driven into a house. We are not talking about normal damage claims; we are concerned about exceptional behaviour involving undermining property.

If damage occurs to a property, a claim may be made. However, 20 or 30 years later, more subsidence might occur and another claim might be required. Compensation must be paid in such a case. British Coal must pay for or repair any subsequent damage even though it has paid for the first lot of damage.

We must remember that we are dealing with very simple people who are not used to going to law. They may have put all their savings into a house, and subsidence may prove to be a major claim. Subsidence may loom very large in their lives. Those people need help. At the outset, they should be encouraged to have a schedule of condition prepared on their property. They should be encouraged to get expert advice. British Coal should tell those people that it will not deal with them unless they have received independent advice. British Coal should tell them who will provide that advice, and British Coal should pay for it.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): What about legal advice?

Mr. Ashby: No; those people may simply need the advice of a surveyor. However, they need independent advice.

Time after time, people have come to my surgeries for help. They have not sought independent advice, and they have not received the proper compensation. Their affairs tend to be in a complete mess in connection with problems with British Coal over subsidence claims. Their affairs are in a mess because they have not received independent advice. British Coal should put money aside to provide that advice.

We must remember that a mine is only as profitable as the cost of mining. Part of the cost of mining must include claims for subsidence in respect of a mine. We are not talking about an open-ended book, and there are two sides to the equation to determine whether a mine is profitable.

British Coal must include the cost of subsidence claims in its equation when it decides whether to mine in an area. Having done that, it should go out of its way to offer help and independent advice to people whose homes may suffer from subsidence.

If we are to have a lands tribunal, it is absolutely essential that legal aid should be extended. That may not be the ordinary legal aid scheme. British Coal should put a fund aside to legally aid people who go to the lands tribunal. There are plenty of precedents for that. Many other bodies provide such legal aid, and British Coal should put money aside for it.

In view of the excellent recommendations that change the rules under which British Coal operates, what possible reason or justification can there be for those rules not to prevail now? If the Government are to make those recommendations, the rules should apply to British Coal now. If we wait for legislation, people will run out of time. That would be unfair and unjust. The whole purpose of recommendations is to be just and fair.

If we are to be just and fair, the legislation must include backdating. That legislation should at least date back to when the White Paper was produced or—even better—when the Waddilove committee was established. It is wrong that someone who is entitled to make a claim now might have three years in which to make a claim from the moment that they become aware that the damage has been caused, because the rules are to change—that provision will apply once the legislation is introduced—while other people will be aware that time is running out as they anticipate the legislation being introduced. There can be nothing more unjust than that. There must be some backdating in future and we must be fair and just.

5.55 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I apologise on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie), who would normally have dealt with this debate. He has suffered a slight accident about which I was unaware until Saturday. He is immobile. The debate will be poorer without his expertise on these matters. In those circumstances, I apologise to the Minister because I must leave early to attend another engagement.

I want to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale), as all other hon. Members have done, on choosing an excellent subject, which has found echoes of support from hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber in its references to justice for constituents. This matter hs clearly caused considerable concern for some time. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) said, the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield was excellent. It showed the expertise, detail and example which the House likes and which shows the House at its best.

The argument put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield requires an answer from the Government. However, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said that perhaps the Minister does not want to be pushed into answering at the moment. From my brief reading on this subject, preparing for the debate, I can see that the Government have been pressed for some time in various reports to produce answers to these questions about justice for people affected by subsidence caused by British Coal.

The speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield confirmed that he has established a reputation

for hard work and research on behalf of his constituents, in this case against a big corporation. I know that this is not the first fight that my hon. Friend has had with British Coal. He achieved a victory with other hon. Members in his area in preventing the Coal Board from privatising its houses in that area. I am aware of the tough style of the Coal Board management in the area and I know that it is no mean feat to battle against that management. My hon. Friend will work well for his constituents, as he has shown in his short time in the House.

The debate has clearly reflected the concern among hon. Members on both sides of the House about the issues. I had a brief read through the Waddilove report today. I have also read the reports from the Select Committee on Energy, which places pressure on the Government to act. I have seen the White Paper, produced in response to Select Committee pressure.

The consultative report states that the Goverment are likely to bring in more legislation, presumably to give force to what is already a code of practice. We have heard complaints from hon. Members that the code of practice is not adequate. It appears that the Government have accepted the argument for legislation, and that is reflected in the White Paper. Can the Minister give us any idea when we can expect the legislaton that he has promised to deliver?

The issues reflected in this debate, in the various reports including the Waddilove report, and the reports from the Select Committees are about balance.

Balance is the one aspect that really concerns the House —a balance between the rights and responsibilities of the individual versus, in this case, British Coal; a balance of justice in the payment of compensation; and a balance in the fairness of treatment. From the examples given by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield, it was clear that there is not a proper balance of justice in those matters. The various recommendations for correcting that situation, which hon. Members have mentioned show that there is a long way to go before one will be achieved.

There is also the question of delay, as was also pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield. I was astounded to hear of the legal costs involved, although perhaps of late we should not be astounded about the level of such costs. I refer to the costs of tribunals. One member of the public in Leicester, and another in Mansfield, seeking to put a case before a tribunal each paid something between £100,000 and £150,000 to have their compensation increased to a level marginally beyond that offered by the board. That is an exorbitant amount of money for anyone wishing to use the tribunal system.

The report raises serious questions about whether the tribunal system is satisfactory. I note also that the Government are aware that very few people use tribunals. Cost, as well as the question of delay, must be in the minds of many people already suffering from anxiety and stress in their desire to repair properties damaged by subsidence.

It is clear that there is an absence of equality among the parties concerned. A number of individuals have already complained that British Coal has exploited its power and that they have very limited rights compared with the board. However, I acknowledge also that many people have reached an amicable agreement with British Coal. My concern is where injustice may be perpetrated. Parliament should concern itself with arriving at a framework of law which will give a balance between the individual and a public corporation.

The same argument is equally applicable in the case of a private corporation, and that may be relevant if it is the Government's intention to privatise the British coal industry. The balance achieved in moving from codes, recommendations, a sense of fairness, and what lawyers call "acting reasonably" may prove insufficient, and there should be statutory enforcement in respect of certain aspects of the codes, as recommended by some reports. The same concern was expressed by my hon. Friends the Members for Mansfield and for Ashfield. They argued that it should be clear both now and in the future that, whatever happens to this industry, there exists a responsibility to fund the compensation necessary for those seeking damages arising from subsidence.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield made the point that the situation is becoming more acute, because the uncertainty which prevails has been increased by announcements of Government policies in other areas affecting the coal industry. Recent statements about opencast developments will reduce local authorities' rights, which one or two hon. Members have already pointed out are already limited.

If planning controls are to be reduced, and if local authorities are to have even fewer rights, the rights of individuals to pursue, through local authority planning inquiries, information and compensation will be further reduced. The removal of mineral rights advocated by the Government in view of their possible privatisation programme, under which those rights will be taken from one body and given to a number of others, will also cause uncertainty, until the Government's intentions are clear.

Overriding all that, and at the head of the Government's own basic policy towards coal, is the industry's possible privatisation. Past examples have shown that a privatised company is not given the same regulatory and economic framework as that of a nationalised industry. A privatised company is concerned with operating with fewer controls and maximising profits, with very little sense of social obligation. At Question Time, we heard the Minister make clear yet again his beliefs concerning the bureaucracy of controls, when he compared the controls he is prepared to reduce in respect of a privatised nuclear industry with the situation in America.

In considering controls and social obligations, one should be able to expect of public companies a better standard than that of a private sector company. The reports clearly show that there are inadequacies in that respect and that one needs to establish a legal framework by which the rights of the individual may be properly adjusted. That is the clear message from this debate.

A number of other issues have been raised, and given the short time available to me, I will comment only briefly on one or two of them. The question of compensation raises the whole subject of liability. There is something to be said for the claim by a number of hon. Members that the question of assessing the full extent of any damage and liability has not yet been resolved. My hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield commented that a study was under way in Nottingham to catalogue the extent of the problem. As someone who is new to this subject, I find it amazing, given that the problem has been with us so long, that such an effort has not been made before and that information is not readily available.

I was amazed to learn that members of the public cannot find out from an authority exactly what are its

[Mr. John Prescott]

plans or what damage had been caused to an affected property. I was appalled to discover that even claims whose registration I understand the Government still reject could not be recorded somewhere so that, by making a search, an individual could establish whether a property had suffered any subsidence damage. The Government, in their consultative document, have rejected that proposal, which is wrong. People should have all the information available to them in making a proper assessment, and I add my voice to those who advocate a proper procedure.

There are also conflicting views as to how long liability should last—be it three, six or 12 years—and about establishing the period in which damage must be declared, which might conflict with the time at which the damage itself arose. I was impressed by the case put for extending liability to all matters of consequential loss, which is one of the proposals the Government are now considering. However, it is not clear whether British Coal should have placed on it an obligation which is not imposed on others in analogous circumstances. That aspect is not properly explained. What are the same or similar circumstances which the Minister has in mind? How limited will be the liability compared with the six or 12-year period we have discussed? Perhaps the Minister can give the House further information.

I am persuaded by those who argue that there is a national responsibility and a strong argument for a national fund with the resources available to guarantee justice. It follows that such a fund should be separately administered. If it is the Government's intention to privatise the industry, it is all the more important that there is an independent, separately funded body for that purpose. The Government do not totally accept that British Coal should carry all the cost. The Select Committee's report rejected the view that British Coal should not carry any part of the cost of subsidence, but it also rejected the Government's view that their sole concern was the taxation cost. I do not have time to quote from paragraph 161 of the Select Committee's report, but it said that there should be a balance between the two—and that balance probably represents a cost far greater than the industry should carry.

It is amazing to discover from the Select Committee's report how much subsidence costs add to the price of a tonne of coal—particularly in an area such as Nottingham. In 1983, it was about £1·11p, but it has risen nine times to about £9·58. That is an extraordinary cost for any industry to carry—whatever may be considered to be its fair share of that amount.

The Government have given the industry a rather fair economic framework, designed to cut it down to size in readiness for privatisation, to a level at which it will become profitable—and therefore attract the resources for which the Government hope. I hope that the Government will address themselves to the problems I have described, because otherwise they will either deter people from purchasing the industry—and there is something to be said for that—or there will be attempts to cut costs, leaving even fewer resources to ensure a balance of justice.

Having heard about the costs of arbitration for the lands tribunals and the time involved, I feel that there is an argument for independent local adjudication. I noted that the Government mentioned that as a proposition in the White Paper, but they did not follow it through in the consultative document. I hope that the Minister will say something about it now.

On the issue of repair versus compensation, I favour what seems to be the majority view—shared by the Government—that the emphasis should be on repair. We already know the arguments, but I wonder whether the Minister can tell us whether he intends to do anything to assist local authorities—which have tremendous problems in this regard—to obtain extra resources to deal with their housing estates. There is a legitimate argument for such action. I know that it conflicts with the local authority financing arguments, and that it involves another Department. Nevertheless, I should like to hear what the Government have to say.

I have offered the House merely a few observations based on a limited amount of research and judgment. I think, however, that it is agreed on both sides of the House that this is a question of justice, and that a proper balance must be achieved—one that puts more emphasis on statutory enforcement, so that an individual can exercise his right when his property is damaged by subsidence.

6.10 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Today's debate gives hon. Members an opportunity to bring to the attention of the House the serious and often distressing circumstances that constituents must endure as a result of damage to their properties by mining subsidence. I should like first to thank the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale), who used his good fortune in the ballot to choose this subject for debate. The timing is right, as the Government's response to the Waddilove report, published in a White Paper last October, is still open for comment.

Since I was elected to the House more than five years ago, I have received hundreds of letters—and a similar number of visits to my advice surgeries—from constituents complaining about British Coal's attitude, lack of progress and outright rejection of their subsidence claims. None the less, I must be fair to British Coal and say also that many claims have been satisfactorily concluded.

The problem faced by my constituents and myself is that, in Nottinghamshire, British Coal has changed, the rules and moved the goal posts when it is in its interests to do so. A blatant example of that was the reduction in the time limit for claims to be made from 12 years to six. If a claim had been lodged but not yet processed, it was just the claimant's bad luck. Offers of compensation were withdrawn after serious financial irregularities were uncovered in Nottinghamshire during 1983-84.

The only redress available to my constituents is the right to appeal to the lands tribunal. That was satisfactory when it was introduced many years ago, but in the past few years the average cost per case heard has risen to about £15,000. That is not much of an incentive for claimants to rush there for justice.

A change to a simple and cheap system of recourse for claimants is long overdue. That is why I welcome the White Paper published in response to the Waddilove report, in which the Government make it clear that they are determined to alleviate the hardship and distress suffered by those whose properties are affected by coal mining subsidence. No one can afford to be complacent about such an issue, least of all British Coal, many of whose employees live in areas prone to subsidence. The

cost of meeting compensation claims is an average of £90 million per annum, approximately £1 per tonne of coal mined. Small though that may seem, it can be crucial in making a colliery viable. I share the view of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers that the charges should be set against a national fund and not against individual pits.

I was delighted to read in British Coal's annual report, that charges to collieries had dropped substantially—from £245 million in 1983-84 to £69 million this year, of which £58 million relates to earlier years. At the end of the financial year 1986-87, British Coal had £297 million set aside for latent liabilities arising from subsidence. But how do we ensure justice for claimants?

Paragraph 25 of the consultation paper is most welcome. It states:

"Under this legislation a claimant is able to bring an action within a period of six years from when the damage actually occurred, or three years from when the claimant first had reasonable grounds for believing that damage had occurred."

However, for the reason that I outlined earlier, I cannot accept that if a claim is rejected it should be referred to the lands tribunal. I believe that the matter should fall to an independent adjudicator, or better still—as we are going to legislate—that an office of mining subsidence ombudsman should be set up. After all, we have ombudsmen for national Government, local government, banking and insurance. Why should the office not be used to deal with this serious problem?

The White Paper said that simple arbitration would be available as an alternative. Unfortunately, that is not happening, even when British Coal has accepted liability. All my submissions on behalf of constituents have been rejected. One constituent has submitted 20 separate claims for arbitration on differing aspects, and those also have been rejected. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister can tell the House how many disputes have been referred to independent adjudication since the publication of the White Paper last year.

In their response to the Waddilove report, the Government stated that many of the recommendations had been accepted by British Coal and incorporated in its subsidence damage manual. While I have every faith that that is the case, I felt that it was in the interests of my constituents that I should have sight of the manual. Alas, it is available to hon. Members neither in the Library nor direct from British Coal. According to a parliamentary answer, the Department of Energy does not possess a copy either.

Why is British Coal so secretive, if it is playing fair? Secrecy breeds suspicion. Perhaps my hon. Friend can reassure me that he is satisfied with the manual's contents and that the recommendations are being implemented, but the evidence in Nottinghamshire so far is that that is not so.

From the many cases in my files, I have selected six to illustrate that nothing has changed in Nottinghamshire where British Coal is concerned. The first case concerns a constituent in Ravenshead who had some damage repaired. The repair work was unsatisfactory, and British Coal offered £2,300 in compensation. The householder rejected it, and went to an agent to submit the claim. At that point British Coal turned around and said, "We are sorry, but this is under a different heading. You are no longer eligible, as you are out of time." To date, nothing has been given to that constituent.

Case No. 2 was submitted by a constituent in 1986 on five houses, one of which was divided into flats. It was inspected in July 1987. By February 1988, no progress had yet been made. A meeting was arranged in March 1988, when the inspector said that the house divided into flats had not been inspected, because only one claim had been submitted and two were needed. The constituent had never been told that. Eventually the constituent said that he wished to be told the procedure for arbitration. The answer from the chairman of British Coal was, "We cannot give you an answer."

The third case relates to a retired couple in Calverton, who purchased their house from the local council. They put in a claim for subsidence damage and it was accepted. The repairs were not carried out to their satisfaction. The workmen withdrew because the couple objected, and the work was left unfinished until I put pressure on British Coal to complete the repairs. When I visited the couple, I found that the husband was suffering from arthritis and walking with a stick. His wife was recovering from a major operation. They were trying to redecorate their home on their own. I insisted that they should stop. That case was put right, but why should this old couple have had to suffer because British Coal adopted a high-handed attitude when they complained about poor workmanship?

My fourth example relates to the Beauvale estate in Hucknall. It is a beautiful estate, built on a slight incline in the shape of a horseshoe. A few years ago, every house was repaired because of mining subisdence. Subsequently, the gardens of those houses started to flood. Everybody believes that the damage to the drainage was due to British Coal's mining activities. However, the flooding started after the six-year rule, so British Coal rejected the claim and said that it was out of time. The local council is pursuing the matter with British Coal on behalf of the residents. As the houses suffered from mining subsidence, the people who live in those houses know full well that the drains must have suffered from subsidence, too. British Coal should put that right immediately.

There are other cases that I could mention, but because of the pressure on time I shall not refer to them in the Chamber but will draw them later to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister. British Coal's recent production records are impressive. During the last two and a half years, the turnround in the industry is nothing short of miraculous. The same expertise ought to be applied to settling mining subsidence damage claims, with a view to providing justice and fairness for the claimants.

6.21 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) referred to the problem of publicising cases in certain areas. Such publicity might give the area a bad reputation and property values may fall. The alternative is to adopt a softly, softly approach, but that might lead to little being done. Many of us are therefore in a quandary about what to do.

I want to refer to the Hartington estate in Staveley. Some of the people who live on that estate are worried about publicity, but others would like it to be used as a weapon. The cat is out of the bag, though, because the Hartington estate has been the subject of local publicity, so I feel that it is possible to draw the attention of the House to the views of my constituents.

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

Mining subsidence occurred in 1984, and 108 representations have been made to me. My constituents tell me that in 1984 they were not told about the action that British Coal intended to take with its underground workings. The hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) said that the 1986 notification procedure now applies, so that difficulty has been overcome. I know that notification is now given in other areas of Staveley that lie within the Chesterfield constituency, but the people on the Hartington estate were not notified in 1984.

As for the repairs, residents feel that their rights and what they have to do when they vacate their property are not made clear to them. They make arrangements to move into another property where they expect to live for a matter of weeks, but they find that the weeks turn into months, or even into more than a year. When they vacate their property, they put their belongings into storage where they find that mildew affects it. Consequently, they feel that they must return as quickly as they can to their homes without checking whether the repairs have been completed satisfactorily.

Residents say that they experience considerable delays before agreement is reached about repairs or compensation, and they blame British Coal and their own agents. When they complain, British Coal blames the householders' agents for not taking appropriate action, but when they go to the agent, he blames British Coal for not implementing his recommendations. They feel that British Coal attempts to push those who cannot stand hassle—the pensioners and the infirm—into accepting compensation when it would be more appropriate for repairs to be carried out.

The compensation that is accepted does not cover the amount that has to be spent on putting the property into order. The compensation that is paid sometimes covers what has to be spent, but that is only because the compensation includes loss of value of the house, due to tilt. The additional compensation for tilt has to be used to put their property into reasonable order.

Reference has been made several times to the fact that, when a settlement has been reached, it is impossible for the residents to make a further claim. Repairs often take much longer than the residents expected when the settlement was accepted. Many of them have faced considerable difficulties because of the time that they had to spend out of their homes, either in caravans or in property that had been rented by British Coal. Residents say it is difficult to consult British Coal. They are not involved in the inspections that are made of their property. They believe that the repairs are mainly cosmetic and that they are done on the cheap, either by cowboy builders or by decent builders who are overstretched and underpaid.

Residents say that when bricks are missing, resulting in holes between one house and another, the holes are filled in. Bricks are not used to fill the holes, and a quick plastering job is done on top of the filling. If the residents complain and say that they want a proper inspection, they are told that that can be carried out only if they are prepared to pay for fresh replastering. The result is that many people then accept what has been done. There are also problems about the pointing of brickwork. It looks a mess from the outside because it is not straight; it zigzags.

Many problems arise after the repairs have been completed. Mr. Hunt, of 11 Hartington view, lists 57 defects in his property. I have seen many of them. I have also seen the defects in the repairs to his neighbours' property.

Subsidence is a traumatic experience for many people. They need to be shown care, concern and compassion, but that is not being offered to them. Instead, they are involved in considerable hassle with British Coal. My hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) said that there ought to be greater public awareness of the problem, that there should be an end to the time limit for repairs and that provision should be made for independent arbitration. When my hon. Friend's Bills come before the House again on 8 July, the Government should not automatically say "Object". They should consider placing some of the recommendations that have been made today on the statute book.

6.29 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): I was sorry to hear about the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie)—perhaps the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) will convey our good wishes to him.

I too congratulate the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on his success in the ballot. I should like to pay a special tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) and for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) and to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). Like the hon. Member for Mansfield, they have spent a tremendous amount of time on this issue. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire has spent many years on it and he recounted the history of his involvement. I hope that the whole House is aware that there are several hon. Members who have battled with this problem for a long time. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who is muttering, wants me to congratulate him too, I am happy to do so.

The debate has shown that subsidence damage is of great concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House who have constituents who have been seriously affected by it. I can also congratulate myself, because I remember my time as a candidate for the Easington constituency in County Durham in the 1960s and early 1970s, when I saw the distress that subsidence causes people whose homes are damaged by it.

The hon. Member for Mansfield asked whether the Law Society and British Coal should agree on a new form of mining search. He stressed that there is no proper machinery for searching for subsidence. The Law Society and British coal have agreed on such a document, which will be made available.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) asked whether the Government decided on an alternative to rateable assessment for valuation purposes. We are considering other methods due to the proposal to introduce community charge.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) mentioned backdating legislation. It is not the general practice to make legislation retrospective, but we shall consider the appropriate date from which the measures that we shall introduce should become effective. We shall consider many of the arguments that have been advanced today.

The committee chaired by Mr. Lewis Waddilove has been referred to many times. That is quite right.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Minister has dealt with some of the issues that have been raised, but he has missed out the change, after the strike, from 12 years to six, in the length of time for which British Coal remains liable. What steps will the Minister take to ensure that British Coal honours the arrangements that applied before 1983-84?

Mr. Spicer: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman any assurances about history, but I can tell him what we plan to do with time limits. I recognise that this is a problem.

The Waddilove committee recognised from the start the importance of achieving a balance. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) talked about a balance between the needs of people who are affected by subsidence—they are often employees of the coal industry—and the interests of the industry. It has to be said that that industry is today struggling in a depressed market to stand on its own feet.

Mr. Waddilove felt that concern for loss, disturbance or damage caused by subsidence had to be weighed against the needs of an industry engaged in developing a major national energy resource. The costs to that industry of compensating for damage caused by subsidence cannot be underestimated. They have averaged more than £90 million a year recently, and the corporation has set aside £297 million against latent liabilities for subsidence damage.

I recognise, of course, that some hon. Members question whether subsidence costs should be taken into account in assessing the economic viability of individual collieries. We believe that it is a cost associated with the extraction of coal and should be treated as such. It is not, perhaps, generally recognised that the knowledge that subsidence costs are directly relevant to the future well-being of a colliery must sharpen the incentive for colliery management to avoid areas of high subsidence risk when drawing up their mine plans.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Where are the subsidence costs of the 12 collieries in my area that have closed?

Mr. Spicer: If given notice, I am happy to answer that question. All I can tell the hon. Gentleman is that, as a matter of principle, the Government support the view that such costs should transparently be borne by the pit concerned. We think that that will provide management with an incentive to ensure that subsidence is kept to a minimum.

The Waddilove committee published its report in 1984. It found that, although the basic framework of compensating procedures was sound, the subsidence repair and compensation system had certain serious shortcomings, some of which have been stressed today. It recognised that improvements had been made, but stressed that further advances were necessary, and so made a total of 65 recommendations.

The Government gave careful consideration to all 65 of those recommendations, taking into account the points of view of those most clearly concerned—the people who live in and operate businesses in mining areas, their local authorities and British Coal—and those of professional bodies such as lawyers, chartered surveyors and the representatives of the farmers and country landowners.

The Government's reply to Waddilove was published in the White Paper in October 1987. By the date of the White Paper's publication, a number of changes had already been introduced in line with the thinking in the Waddilove report.

The White Paper emphasised the need for a repairs-based compensation scheme. The hon. Member for Mansfield and others have accepted that idea. The White Paper also endorsed Waddilove's view that it is essential to strike a balance in the repair and compensation scheme between benefits to individuals and the environment, and the cost to British Coal and, currently, to the taxpayer.

Given the large number of subsidence claimants, it is not surprising that a disputed claim may arise from time to time, and it is therefore quite natural that disputed claims should have taken up a substantial part of this interesting debate.

The Waddilove committee was worried that the existing statutory appeals procedure was too little known and that some claimants might find it daunting. The committee considered the lands tribunals to be the most appropriate bodies to consider appeals on subsidence, and the Government agree. The Government also agreed with the committee that where reference to local adjudication would be acceptable to both parties and was likely to be simpler, cheaper and faster for them, that approach should be encouraged, without there being any need to put the arrangement on a statutory basis.

Since the Waddilove report was published, the Department of Energy has published a detailed guidance leaflet to help claimants. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire referred to that leaflet, not entirely favourably. I shall certainly look carefully at his comments to see if there are ways in which the leaflet can be improved. If he has any further examples to raise, perhaps he would be kind enough to write to me. The leaflet is circulated widely to public libraries, citizens advice bureaux and others, and it is very important that a leaflet telling the people their rights is accurate. I should very much welcome any specific criticisms from hon. Members. We can certainly get it right, and I should be glad to receive any advice.

The White Paper also took a number of other points from the Waddilove report, which either helped to prevent subsidence damage, or widened the scope and the control of the compensation system. Some of those points have been referred to, but they included, among others, the inclusion of subsidence costs in the investment appraisal of any new mining proposals, and the modification of mining layouts to prevent surface damage as far as practicable; giving claimants the choice of using their own, rather than British Coal's, contractors to repair damage; a payment for loss of home amenity where damage has been severe and repair extensive, but where British Coal has been unable to offer a householder alternative accommodation; extending the scope of non-statutory compensation to householders and to owners of agricultural land; and an annual report to the Secretary of State for Energy on the administration of the compensation scheme, which would need to be laid before Parliament.

The Government have accepted the Waddilove recommendation that existing legislation—in the

[Mr. Spicer]

Coal-Mining (Subsidence) Act 1957 and the Coal Industry Act 1975—should be codified, and that other of British Coal's discretionary provisions, at present set out in a code of practice, should be brought into statute. That is a direct answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire. The Government plan to bring forward legislation in that respect, although I have to say it will not be in the next Session.

The Government are satisfied that, since 1984, there have been marked improvements in the coal-mining subsidence compensation system. The hon. Member for Bolsover questioned my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling, who raised that issue. During that period, the compensation system has already been improved. There has also been encouraging improvement in the handling of claims—whether or not hon. Members are prepared to accept that. Since 1984, the typical time taken to settle claims has been halved from four years to two, and that is an improvement. Since 1984, more than 62,000 claims have been settled. There has also been a decline in the number of new claims, and consequently a marked decline in unsettled claims.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that one of our arguments about settling claims has been that, during the past few years, British Coal has done its level best to hold up those claims for as long as it possibly can? There is no better example than that of Bolsover church when British Coal refused to negotiate. I had to bring the matter here to the House of Commons and ask the hon. Member who answers on behalf of the Church Commissioners to get on with the job. I challenged British Coal to a debate in Bolsover church, and no doubt we would have filled it. Only as a result of all those efforts did British Coal agree to start the process of settlement with the parochial church council.

Mr. Spicer: No doubt the hon. Gentleman's intervention will be read by British Coal. It is strange for a member of his wing of his party to be making such wide-ranging allegations against a nationalised industry such as British Coal. It is interesting that nationalisation does not always work, at least in this context.

Mr. Haynes: I wonder if the Minister was correct in what he said to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover. He was obviously talking about the average amount of time across the industry. If we had a figure for Nottinghamshire, then we might get somewhere.

Mr. Spicer: I do not deny that there will be such cases. One of the reasons I am interested in the issue is that much improvement is possible; I do not in any way deny that. However, one must be fair to both sides. The number of unsettled claims has fallen quite dramatically. In 1983-84, there were 52,000 outstanding claims; in 1986-87 there were 36,000. That is not good enough, but there is a trend of improvement on which we must improve considerably.

Of course I am aware that some people are disappointed that we have not accepted that householders should be offered compensation for residual loss in property values. We did consider this very hard, but we came to the conclusion that, given the wide variety of factors which can affect the values of property, it would be difficult to identify and properly to assess permanent loss in value, so we have concentrated on compensating for repairs and damage.

British Coal is now committed to achieving "a good standard of repair" in all cases, as opposed to ensuring that a property is "reasonably fit", as present legislation dictates. British Coal will also continue to compensate at the date of completion of repairs where there remains an identifiable material and physical change in the condition of a property following subsidence, and where it can be demonstrated that such change has materially reduced the value of the property.

In the White Paper, the Government also promise to pursue the question of time limits for making claims. A number of hon. Members raised that question, particularly my hon. Friends the Members for Gedling and for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim). We think that it would be going too far not to have any time limits at all. That matter was also raised by the hon. Member for Bolsover. To have no time limit would be as inequitable, in its way, to the body liable to compensation as an over-restrictive approach would be to the claimant. We believe that subsidence compensation should be treated consistently with limits on other claims for damage.

For England and Wales, the Limitation Act 1980, as amended by the Latent Damage Act 1986, sets out time limits in respect of latent damage which does not involve personal injuries. Under that legislation, a claimant can bring an action within six years from when the damage actually occurred or three years from when the claimant first had reasonable grounds for believing that damage had occurred. My hon. Friends the Members for Gedling and for Amber Valley asked which of those it would be. The answer is that they are alternatives; whichever is most favourable to the claimant applies

The Government propose to legislate to apply a similar approach to the limitation of subsidence claims. In these circumstances, the present right of appeal to either the British Coal Corporation or the Secretary of State against the rejection of claim as out of time under the 1957 Act would no longer be appropriate.

Mr. Tam Dalyell: The Minister mentioned England and Wales. Are there any proposals for Scotland?

Mr. Spicer: The proposals for Scotland would be a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and that question might properly be addressed to him.

It would fall to the lands tribunal to determine whether a claim was time-barred. In fact, I can tell the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that similar principles will be applied in Scotland.

Mr. Skinner: How do you know?

Mr. Spicer: It is written on the brief. I had forgotten about it, but it is there.

On 29 April, the Government issued a consultation paper on proposals for legislation. Copies were sent to over 100 interested parties and are freely available to anyone who applies to the Department of Energy. It is a matter of contention—the hon. Member for Mansfield raised the matter today or has raised it in writing—whether the period of consultation should be longer. We think that three months is adequate for consultation. However, in view of what the hon. Member for Mansfield

said about further research being undertaken and the fact that we want to get the legislation right—that is why we have listened to what has been said today and at other times—the Government will always be interested to hear the views that anybody may wish to contribute towards the policy. If those views seem appropriate, they will be included. There is nothing sacrosanct about the time allowed, and we will keep our ears open until the legislation is drafted. We will be glad to receive views from hon. Members or anyone else.

The legislation will be introduced as soon as possible but, as I said earlier, it will not be possible to introduce a Bill in the next Session.

Mr. Oppenheim: I should like to doubly clarify two important points, one of which the Minister has touched upon but the other he has not. Will my hon. Friend state categorically that the three-year rule applies not to when the damage occurs but to when the householder or owner could reasonably have noticed that damage resulting from the workings was affecting their property? What will be the position of people whose properties have had an earlier claim accepted but who then have subsequent claims arising out of further damage?

Mr. Spicer: On the first point, the answer is uncategorically yes. On the second point, it would be difficult for the same damage to be the subject of new compensation. If it were new damage, it would be much easier. The matter has been raised several times in the debate, and I shall see whether I can do anything further.

The Government will bear in mind the concerns that have been expressed on both sides of the House. We will be bringing forward legislation. We are not complacent about subsidence and are well aware of the hardship and distress it can cause. I believe that the proposals set out in the White Paper, which have been developed in the consultation paper, constitute a balanced and acceptable standard of compensation for coal mining subsidence. The significance of the problem has certainly been recognised today.

In answer to mumbles I have heard from Opposition Front-Bench Members as to speed of action and so on, I should say that British Coal is already putting many of the Waddilove recommendations into practice. The legislation will largely be a question of consolidating those changes and putting them into statute.

Mr. Meale: Will the Minister answer the questions that I asked in my speech?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman will recognise that I have tried to address myself to all the major issues. I cannot possibly answer every point, particularly constituency points, but I would be happy to do so in writing.

6.53 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) for giving the House an opportunity to debate this subject and I am more than grateful to him for allowing me to have the few remaining minutes that should have been his.

The Waddilove report was a response to the Flowers report and if we are not to have a Bill before the next Session, 10 years will have passed without a response from the Government to this important subject.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) referred to paragraphs 158 to 162 of the Select Committee report. In the short time I have available I do not have an opportunity to go into detail but the Committee said:

> "Any system of compensation which is developed from the Waddilove Report should be so framed as to apply equally to British Coal and any present or future competitors".

I hope that when the Bill is produced it will not refer only to the responsibilities of British Coal. If British Coal is to be privatised, one hopes that the legislation will be final and binding on the coal industry in the private sector.

Along with others I had the privilege of giving written and oral evidence to the Waddilove committee. However, at that time the problem to which I wish to refer had not reared its head. The Townville estate in Castleford in my constituency is an estate of 400 dwellings where 70 ex-miners purchased their homes from British Coal. At the time, there was no mention by the board of any subsidence. Since that time, those unfortunate owners have been caught by the Housing Defects Act 1984.

The Minister will know that the properties must be repaired to the required standard authorised by the Secretary of State or they must be repurchased by the local authority, whichever involves the lowest cost. The repair of the properties would amount to about £18,000 or £20,000 each, more than the market value. Therefore, it was left to the local authority to repurchase the homes. The local authority valuer valued 60 or so houses at about £12,000 but four of the owners, ex-miners, were told that because their homes had suffered subsidence, £4,000 would be knocked off the valuation.

After corresponding with British Coal, I have been told that it will admit liability but will pay only 50 per cent. of the difference. Therefore, 66 of my constituents will receive about £12,000 for their homes but, because British Coal has conceded that four of them have been damaged by subsidence, they will receive less money. Surely, if there is any justice, British Coal should meet the full difference. That matter is not mentioned in the Waddilove report or the consultative document but I hope that the Minister will take it on board because it is serious.

The owners have obtained legal advice and have been referred to the six-year rule. They have been told that their claims are out of time. I hope that cases of this type will be included when the Minister produces his Bill.

As I sat in Mansfield and listened to the people of the area, I discovered that their main problem is the lack of information. The Government's response to Waddilove excludes public participation. They have talked about discussions with local authorities and other bodies but they have suggested that there should be no public participation. I do not know what they mean by that. As has been said, many of those people have had no experience of dealing with claims of this nature and are having to obtain advice. However, they do not seek advice unless it is brought to their doorsteps. Many people have lost out purely because of lack of advice. I hope that the Minister will deal with those matters.

6.59 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I have enjoyed today's debate because, for the first time since I have been an hon. Member, the House

[Mr. Geoffrey Dickens]

seems to be in complete harmony. We agree that there must be a better compensation system for mining subsidence.

I remember that in my former constituency of Huddersfield, West an elderly couple came home from holiday and tried to open the front door but it would not open. When they got in they found cracks in the hall and on the stairway, that the inner doors would not open and that the ground floor had sunk, but they could not explain why. The Victorian mine workings had not been properly delineated on the maps——

It being Seven o'clock, proceedings on the motion lapsed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 13(8) (Arrangement of public business).

Orders of the Day

Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Lords amendment No. 1 agreed to [Special Entry.]

Lords amendment No. 2 agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): In view of the progress that we are making, if no hon. Member wishes to address the House on any of the amendments I shall put them together.

Lords amendments agreed to, some with Special Entry.

WAYS AND MEANS

CONSIDERATION FOR CERTAIN RESTRICTIVE UNDERTAKINGS

That provision may be made charging to income tax under Schedule E any consideration given in respect of certain restrictive undertakings.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

ANNUAL PAYMENTS BY SCOTTISH PARTNERSHIPS

That provision may be made about annual payments by Scottish partnerships.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

RESIDENT COMPANIES CEASING TO BE LIABLE TO UNITED KINGDOM TAX

That provision may be made about companies which, while continuing to be resident in the United Kingdom, fall to be regarded for the purposes of any double taxation relief arrangements—

(a) as resident in a territory outside the United Kingdom; and

(b) as not liable in the United Kingdom to tax on gains arising on disposals of assets of descriptions specified in the arrangements.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

GAINS ARISING FROM CERTAIN SETTLED PROPERTY

That provision may be made about the taxation of gains accruing to trustees of certain settled property where the settlor or his spouse has an interest in the settlement —*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

POST-CONSOLIDATION AMENDMENTS

That provision may be made to correct errors in the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 and in the amendments made by the Finance Act 1987 for the purposes of the consolidation effected by the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

VALUE ADDED TAX ON CERTAIN SUPPLIES OF MEDICAL GOODS

That provision may be made amending Group 7 in Schedule 6 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Housing Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), further considered.

7.3 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The other day, Mr. Speaker declined a motion to refer the Bill back to Committee. I should like your advice about whether we can refer some parts of the Bill back to Committee.

We are deeply concerned that the Government have introduced so many amendments and new clauses, which were not debated in Committee, that they are again changing the nature of the Bill. We object not only to the iniquitous voting system whereby even the dead have votes, but to the fact that we have been unable to debate the Welsh housing corporation and new clause 47. The social landlords, charter—to which the Minister referred in Committee and said that he felt that it was necessary to refer it back to the House—is not available, although there is a pamphlet about the powers that are available.

On the Government's own admission, they have tabled 15 new substantive amendments. In only one part of the Bill they have tabled 15 new amendments, 19 technical ones and 18 as a result of concessions made in Committee.

I wonder whether you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or Mr. Speaker, would consider referring back those parts of the Bill that were not debated in Committee. I understand that it may not be possible to take the amendments today, but could you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, give the House some guidance about whether they could be considered at a later stage? Do they necessarily have to be taken on Report? If so, one of the problems is that the issues will have been debated in a wider way rather than in the detailed way that they would have been discussed in Committee, had the Government been able to get their act together and deliver the Bill in a proper form on Report.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall not repeat the points made by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), with which I agree.

When we debated the procedure of the Report stage with Mr. Speaker last Thursday, the Minister—I thanked him for this at the time—suggested that he might be able to make available to hon. Members some notes on the new elements in the Bill. Obviously that matter does not directly concern the Chair, but it may influence the timetable. Substantial new matters are coming before the House for the first time, one of which is specifically referred to in the press release that the Government issued last week. It relates to a matter that probably will not come before the House until Wednesday in part IV of the Bill, which concerns what the Government think is tenants' choice. In that press release, the Minister for Housing and Planning said that the amendments would be supplemented

"by an account, intended to help informed debates at the Report Stage, of how we expect the scheme as a whole . . . to work."

As I said on Thursday, it is difficult for Opposition Members and Conservative Back Benchers to know what amendments to table before the House rises today, because we are not aware of the Government's proposals. I ask for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on how time can be made available to table the appropriate amendments so that they can be debated before we complete the Report stage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I shall deal first with the points made by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). The selection of a recommittal motion is a matter for Mr. Speaker to consider at the appropriate time. As to timing, page 573 of "Erskine May" makes it clear that a motion to recommit a Bill on consideration may be made only at the moment when that stage is entered upon—in this case, that was last Thursday—or immediately after the stage is concluded. Such a motion is therefore hypothetical with regard to today's business.

I appreciate the points made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and the difficulties that may arise. As we proceed with the debate, the hon. Gentleman will have to take opportunities when he can to table further amendments if he thinks them appropriate.

Clause 32

NEW PROTECTED TENANCIES AND AGRICULTURAL OCCUPANCIES RESTRICTED TO SPECIAL CASES

Mr. Simon Hughes: I beg to move amendment No. 306, in page 22, line 45, leave out 'cannot be a protected tenancy, unless' and insert 'shall be a protected tenancy if'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Government amendment No. 48.

Amendment No. 325, in page 23, line 5, after 'question;', insert

'or—(ba) it is granted to a person (alone or jointly with others) who immediately before the tenancy was granted was the protected tenant (or one of the protected tenants) or a statutory tenant of other premises owned by the same landlord or managed by the same managing agent.'.

Amendment No. 232, in page 23, line 5, at end insert—

'(c) it is granted to a person (alone or jointly with others) who immediately before the tenancy was granted was the protected tenant (or one of the protected tenants) or a statutory tenant of other premises let by the same landlord.'.

Amendment No. 307, in page 23, line 22, at end insert 'unless, in any of the cases in (a) to (d) above, the tenant informs the landlord in writing that he wishes to be granted an assured tenancy.'.

Government amendments Nos. 49 and 50.

Amendment No. 80, in clause 33, page 24, line 8, leave out from 'tenant' to end of line 11 and insert

'(alone or jointly with others) of a registered housing association: or'.

Amendment No. 81, in clause 33, page 24, line 26, at end insert

'; or

(e) it is granted to a person (alone or jointly with others) who, immediately before the tenancy was granted, was a secure tenant (alone or jointly with others) of a local authority, a new town corporation or an urban development corporation, all within the meaning of section 80 of the Housing Act 1985, a housing action trust established under Part III of this Act or the Development Board for Rural Wales.'.

Government amendment No. 51.

Amendment No. 300, in clause 33, page 24, line 43, leave out from second 'was' to end of line 45 and insert 'a secure tenant of a registered housing association;'.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

Amendment No. 301, in clause 33, page 25, line 10, at end insert—

'(f) it is granted to a person (alone or jointly with others) who, immediately before the tenancy was granted, was a secure tenant (alone or jointly with others) of a local authority, a new town corporation, or an urban development corporation, all within the meaning of section 80 of the Housing Act 1985, or a housing action trust established under Part III of this Act or the Development Board for Rural Wales.'.

Amendment No. 299, in schedule 13, page 120, column 3, leave out lines 6 to 10.

Mr. Hughes: If I were to give a title to this debate, it would probably be "When is protection not protection? When is a concession not a concession? And when is a social landlords' charter not a social landlords' charter?" Each of those matters arises in the debate.

I was reminded of a quote—I thought that it was from Sir Winston Churchill but it has an older pedigree—derived from Tolstoy:

"Should you read, upon an enclosure with an elephant, a sign saying *Buffalo*, believe not your eyes."

One question which will arise regularly in this debate is, when does a sign that says one thing reveal, on a closer look, that there is something else behind the bars?

Amendments Nos. 306 and 307 deal with Rent Act-protected tenancies. Clauses 32 and 33 deal with four types of tenancies—Rent Act-protected tenancies, protected agricultural tenancies, housing association tenancies and secure tenancies. Each half of the two clauses deals with a different species of protected tenancy. The important matter of principle—the Government's response will determine whether it will be put to the vote—is whether tenants who are at present entitled to and enjoy Rent Act protection will automatically be granted new Rent Act-protected tenancies and whether, at the end of a Rent Act-protected tenancy, the new or old landlord can grant them assured tenancies even if they do not know what is going on. The risk is that a person could lose his rights at the end of a tenancy without being aware of it.

Amendments Nos. 306 and 307 are designed to guarantee statutory tenants the right to new, similarly protected tenancies unless they do not want them. That is stated clearly in amendment No. 307. The presumption is changed so that Rent Act protection continues

"unless . . . the tenant informs the landlord in writing that he wishes to be granted an assured tenancy."

Sometimes—this will be the exception rather than the rule—people may be willing to forfeit Rent Act-protected tenancies or similarly protected tenancies for assured tenancies—for example, if they want to sell on a fixed-term assured tenancy. There should be opportunities for a tenant to opt out of protection, and that is what the amendments provide.

Clause 32(1) and (3) and clause 33(2) and (3) provide that new tenancies can be protected tenancies, but do not guarantee that they will be. The amendments attempt to reverse that. This is not a theoretical point. I raised in Committee, and make no apology for raising it again, a typical example from my constituency. Just over the bridges into Southwark and just off Borough High street, there is an attractive estate called Newington estate, owned by Trinity House, which invested in the estate to provide the income necessary to fulfil its duties to lighthouse keepers and seafarers. Just over half the tenants are on fixed-term leases governed by the Rent Acts.

The tenants have asked me several times since the Committee stage whether their present rights will be protected when their current fixed-term leases end. Will they be granted a new tenancy of the same property and given the same protection? If the Government concede, as I think they must, that that protection is not built in, I look to the Minister to say that that is a valid request and to agree that protection should be continued. After assignment by inheritance of a fixed-term lease on the Newington estate, would the new tenancy be an assured tenancy or have protection under the Rents Acts? That point has not yet been made clear under the present drafting of the Bill.

7.15 pm

Amendment No. 325 raises another substantive point—the extent to which people can move into other properties owned by the same landlord and still have the same protection. I am grateful to the Minister for making some concessions and, in turn, I concede that they go at least some way to meeting my worries. I seek by way of my probing amendment to discover whether the Minister accepts that my measure goes further than his. The Labour party has tabled a similar amendment, No. 232.

There may be good grounds for a person to move elsewhere. They may be instigated by the landlord in order to renovate a property, or a tenant may wish to move to larger, or smaller, premises because of a change in the number in his family. The concessions should be made clear. If they do not go as far as my amendment, the Government should accept that they need to go further. The Government's concessions do not appear to cover whether a move to another property owned by the same owner or managed by the same managing agency carries the same protection.

The Minister will have seen in the specialist housing press reference to worries about this aspect. Amendment No. 48 appears to allow a new landlord to talk a tenant who is unaware of his or her rights into signing a new agreement when ownership is transferred, with none of the old rights. I accept that this will apply only when a tenancy and ownership ends and there is a new landlord. It is likely that a person will buy a property so that he has it when the fixed-term lease concludes. Tenants may find on signing their new seven or 14-year lease that they have an assured tenancy and not a Rent Act-protected tenancy. Like many hon. Members, I listened to the Goverment's case in Committee. The logic of their argument is that they are not seeking to alter the rights of tenants who are presently protected. I believe, as do many tenants and those involved with them, that the Government are resiling from that position and that some existing protected tenants will not be protected if the Bill is passed unamended.

Amendments have been tabled which are worthy of support and an appropriate response and which protect the present practice of mobility between properties in the housing association sector. Many of us use in our constituency work information from the housing association liaison project, which is operated by housing associations. It allows people who live in a property owned by a housing association in one borough to apply for a transfer to another property owned by a different housing association in a different borough. I am not convinced

—the amendments point to this deficiency—that there will be the same facility to enable people to move once the protection ends. In particular, I would ask the Minister to consider the threat that clause 33 appears to pose to arrangements which are mutually beneficial, which allow mobility and which the Government should support.

This is the first opportunity that we have had to debate the social landlords' charter, to which amendment No. 299 relates. In Committee, we had a long debate about whether there should be a housing association tenancy. The Minister will remember our exchanges about the status of housing associations. We wanted to establish whether they were private sector bodies, public sector bodies or something in between. Are they a new social provision? The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) asserted that they were in the public sector. The Minister resisted. Eventually, I elicited from him a commitment that they were not in the private sector either.

If that is correct, what is now presented as the social landlords' charter appears to be slightly different from what was implied in Committee. It looks as though we are to have not a housing association tenancy, or even half a housing association tenancy but some sort of guidance from an ever more powerful quango, the Housing Corporation, appointed by the Secretary of State, which will apparently mysteriously provide some sort of protection for the new sector which is neither one thing nor the other. It looks as though all that we shall have is a bit of extra protection added on to the private sector with a lack of rights that the Government seek to make the growth sector of their rented housing policy.

Mr. Soley: Is not the reason for that that the Secretary of State for the Environment would dearly like housing associations to be moved into the private sector, whereas the Minister for Housing and Planning recognises that that would not work and would therefore like to keep housing associations in limbo, whereas, to my mind, they clearly belong in the social landlord or public sector portfolios?

Mr. Hughes: The Secretary of State is in his place so perhaps he would like to reply to that. Last week we were all waiting for the balloon marked "social landlords' charter" to go up, but no one was sure whether it was the right balloon. On Wednesday, the Minister of Housing and Planning went to Warrington and made a speech. The press release, issued at the very last minute, did not relate to the contents of the speech. No one was sure whether what they saw was the balloon marked "social landlords' charter" or something else. Perhaps the Secretary of State will come clean on this. There certainly appears to have been an internal debate about what the new creation should be. Whatever the substance may be, the Secretary of State must surely have been happy with the description given.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the biggest balloon was in the Scottish Office? Having served on the Opposition Front Bench during the proceedings on the Housing (Scotland) Bill, I am very interested in this debate on the English Housing Bill. The Secretary of State for Scotland held throughout that housing associations were to be in the private sector under the new arrangement. Therefore, I was particularly interested to read the speech made by the Minister for Housing and Planning in Warrington last week as it was prefaced by a paragraph that concluded by referring to a new social housing sector in Britain. For the time being, at any rate, Scotland is part of Britain, as far as I know. I have tabled a series of written questions to the Scottish Office to try to find out whether Scotland is to be part of the new scheme, but there seems to be chaos in Government ranks at present.

Mr. Hughes: I shall not be drawn into discussing whether Scotland is in Britain; the Government have not yet managed to float Scotland off, despite their efforts to float everything else off. We discovered in Committee that what went on in the Scottish Office did not go on in Marsham street and vice versa. I might say that we were often envious because we wished that we could have proposals similar to those accepted by the Scottish Office. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) may be critical but we would have been grateful for some of the small droppings off the Scottish Office table.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Droppings?

Mr. Hughes: I am sorry, I meant the crumbs.

Mr. McCartney: We have table manners in Scotland, you know.

Mr. Hughes: The confusion probably arose from bread and dripping.

The was-it, wasn't-it social landlords' charter announcement on Wednesday has certainly not persuaded good Tory bodies such as the Association of District Councils to welcome the proposal with open arms. The National Federation of Housing Associations said that there were good bits, but that it did not go far enough. The Institute of Housing still has its alternative ready to be taken up by the Government. We are sad that what promised much has apparently given birth to so little.

I do not know whether you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will have the good fortune to be chairing them, but we shall no doubt have some very interesting debates on this question. The Minister implied that the rents in the social landlord sector must remain within the reach of those in lower-paid employment, but we have not yet been shown the mechanism to achieve that. We shall be asking, "When is an affordable rent not an affordable rent?" Some of us have very clear views about that and we await the Government's response on it. We shall be interested to discover whether we got the whole picture and whether what was described as an elephant is in fact a buffalo, to return to my original quotation. Are we to have a social landlord's charter or are we to have private sector assured tenancies with knobs on but very few advantages to the tenant in the end?

Amendment No. 299 focuses on the fact that in moving the housing association sector the Government appear to be removing its security and removing from housing association tenants the right to buy. I do not know whether that is what the Minister intended. The right to buy applies only to secure tenancies. If housing association tenancies are not to be secure tenancies, presumably the right to buy will not apply. That did not get a press release in Marsham street green, or bigger neon lights either.

It also looks as though the Government are repealing the right of housing association associations and the like to grant secure tenancies. This is the time to ask the Minister to set out clearly—not just for the House but for all those who have been building up the housing association

[Mr. Hughes]

movement—the exact implications of this part of the Bill and what exactly the Government amendments will do to the housing association sector. What will be the rights of tenants in housing association property and as regards the rent that they have to pay? If the provisions go through and the Opposition amendments are rejected will the housing association tenant have only four weeks' notice to quit as opposed to the security enjoyed by such tenants at the moment? This is the time when the truth will out. I note that the Secretary of State has just left. Perhaps he does not want to be here when what was promised fails to be delivered. I hope that the Government will at least accept that the fears are well founded. Unless they move some way in our direction, we shall have to register our feeling that much was promised but not enough has been delivered.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The Opposition take strong exception to the Government's failure to make absolutely clear their intentions on the transferability of tenure for housing association tenants and the other transitional provisions. The Government are attempting to tighten the noose around the Rent Act protection that private sector, local authority and housing association tenants have hitherto enjoyed. It is part of their attempt to make what they see as a great leap forward—the vision of a free market-based housing market. They see it as an attempt to rerun the 1957 Act deregulation of the housing sector. For some of the reasons already mentioned by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) we take strong exception to that and we also have special reasons of our own.

Amendments Nos. 232, 300, 301 and 299 are intended to highlight the problems that the Government are creating for themselves by their inability to make up their mind about the status of housing associations in the brave new world of the deregulated housing market. Their current dilemma is in the same tradition as the problems that they faced in extending the transitional provisions when phasing out the Rent Acts in the private sector. The Government were unable to sort this out in Committee and the amendments that they have been tabling right up to this morning leave us with the impression that the Secretary of State as Caligula and the Minister of State as the horse appointed to be his proconsul are still in some conflict and that as the Minister of State canters through the private green belt around his hon. Friend's castle in Cirencester, communications between the two of them are still somewhat deficient. In the next couple of days, they must tell us finally whether housing associations are intended to be free market bodies with assured tenancies and market rents or part of the social housing sector and, if the latter, how the right to buy will be handled.

That critical division within the Government has produced an extraordinary piece of legislative jerry-building to which last-minute additions are still being proposed. I have no doubt that when the Bill goes to another place it will still be subject to multiple amendments, some put down by the Minister of State to neutralise those that the Secretary of State persuaded his ministerial team to table the previous day. The Bill will be a succession of lean-tos propped precariously on one another.

7.30 pm

The difficulty that we all face is in knowing the kind of tenants for whom the housing association sector is intended to cater when it moves away from the traditional concept to which we have become accustomed even from this Government. The Government went to a great deal of trouble to extend security of succession to council tenants in 1980 and the right to buy to housing associations other than charitable associations in 1980, further strengthened by the Housing Associations Act 1985. The Government's current mental state on housing matters is clearly schizophrenic, but they have a duty to inform the half million families in housing association tenancies what is intended for that sector and how it is to move from the situation created by the Government in the past nine years to the proposed new state of affairs.

Housing association tenants need to know whether they will have the right to buy or whether the Government intend to treat the associations as commercial agencies with commercial methods of raising funding and thus not subject to the right to buy. If that is the intention, will tenants be offered transfers to other public sector housing with full transferability of discount? This is a critical area of difficulty for the Government as they have invested so much political capital in the right to buy with transferable and successively increasing discounts.

Moreover, while the Government are furiously tabling amendments to their own legislation 14 weeks after the end of the Committee stage, along comes the Secretary of State for Wales and starts dripping words to the press about a further extension of the right to buy, with massive discounts and the sale of two-up two-down council houses in Wales for £1 apiece to sitting council tenants. Presumably the same would apply to housing association tenants. The provisions in the Bill seem to run directly counter to the press briefings by the Secretary of State for Wales two weeks ago, which were presumably intended to cover England and Wales and perhaps even Scotland, too.

None of this does much to foster the conviction that the Government know their own mind. The Minister of State will have to take a couple more canters around the Secretary of State's private paddock to establish whether the intention is to introduce further discounts for council tenants, and presumably also for housing association tenants, or whether it is the opposite. People must be told whether the Government are still committed to the right to buy and the possible elimination of public sector housing or whether they have decided to go back on that commitment because they regard a large rented sector as desirable for reasons of labour mobility or whatever else they have in mind.

The Government's schizophrenia must come to an end in the next couple of days. Local authority and housing association tenants have the right to know what is intended for them. They waited for the Housing Bill and they have waited 14 weeks since the end of the Committee stage, but Government amendments are still pouring in. Many of those amendments do not fit in with previous legislation. The moment of truth must come during the Report stage of this extraordinary double Bill which the Minister of State and the Secretary of State have cobbled together in such a way that it would certainly not be guaranteed by the National House-Building Council, as it clearly will not last long.

Will the Secretary of State now tell us how he regards the housing associations of the future? Will they offer

secure tenancies and the right to buy or will they be part of the private sector with assured tenancies and market rents, and how are they intended to move from one situation to the other?

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): Many Opposition Members seem not to have understood the history of the housing association movement, which should actually be called the voluntary housing movement and does not really fall either in the public sector or in the private sector. If hon. Members have not yet read C. V. Baker's excellent book on the history of the housing association movement, they should do so now. They will then realise that it is a progressive movement which was forestalled mainly by the failure of local authorities to show the same enthusiasm for housing after the first world war as the voluntary movement had before the war and has again today under the Government's proposals.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): If the hon. Gentleman is giving us lessons on housing, I should remind him that both the Addison Act and the Wheatley Act which were dealt with by local authorities made an enormous contribution to housing in the public sector. Local authorities participated strongly in that initiative which grew directly out of the campaigns which developed before the first world war and continued thereafter.

Mr. Kirkhope: I thank the hon. Lady for that intervention, but it is the belief of many that the failure of councils to take up the old management traditions after the first world war, combined with the poor estate design, had much to do with stunting the growth of a very important movement.

It is important to realise that, by and large, housing associations are small bodies both in terms of the number of houses that they control and in the scope and area of their activities.

Mr. McCartney: In giving this history lesson on public housing concepts, will the hon. Gentleman tell us exactly what happened in the public sector before 1919? He seems to suggest that there was some kind of activity before that date. Perhaps I went to a different school and my knowledge of history and social science is deficient on that point, but I doubt it. Having done such magnificent research on the subject, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will give chapter and verse about what exactly was the public sector before 1919.

Mr. Kirkhope: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am not trying to teach anybody anything. I am trying to make a few observations about these matters, as I am entitled to do, just as the hon. Gentleman is entitled to do.

It is perfectly true that, before 1919, one of the large movements in this country was the almshouses. *[Interruption.]* Any derogatory remarks about almshouses are not helpful. They were the precursors of the present voluntary housing movement. They were set up on a charitable basis and were extremely successful in providing good, modern housing. They had enlightened housing management. That is what I tried to say to hon. Members when I referred to local authorities which, I regret to say, for many years were not as enlightened and did not have the same progressive views as the voluntary housing movement.

When one talks about the great number of housing associations, it is important to remember that my constituency and the area around it in Leeds have more diverse types of housing associations than many other parts of the country. The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) will acknowledge that. I support what the Government are trying to do. It is important not to create an atmosphere in which small housing associations are unable to continue their work in that small area in which they want to work.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the hon. Gentleman explain why Leeds housing associations have petitioned the hon. Gentleman—he has made press statements about them—to say that the proposals in the Bill will make their work more difficult? Not least, they will price them out of development in inner-city areas that are difficult to develop and will make it more difficult for them to provide accommodation for those with special needs. Having voted against them in Standing Committee, what is the hon. Gentleman's response to housing associations now?

Mr. Kirkhope: The hon. Gentleman is now trying to give lessons of one kind or another. I have met representatives of the Leeds housing association movement. I am rather more aware than the hon. Gentleman is of what they said to me at the time. They generally welcome the Government's proposals to enliven— *[Interruption.]* I have had meetings with them, and I know what they think. They generally welcome the Government's approach to the enlivenment of the housing association sector. They welcome the greater freedoms that they will have in raising finance. They greatly welcome the fact that they will receive support from the Housing Corporation and from many other institutions such as the building societies that are now able to support them. They welcome all those things. Naturally, they have the concerns that I have expressed. To some extent, smaller associations worry that they will be gobbled up or that their specific role will be affected.

The Government are generally right, but, obviously, it is important too for us to do our best to recognise the needs of housing associations of every size and type. Only through doing that will we continue to give the extra necessary support to make the housing association movement grow even faster.

Mr. Soley: My remarks on this important group of amendments will be brief. We should like to know why the Minister is moving Government amendments Nos. 50 and 51 when, in a later part of the Bill, he proposes to remove from about 500,000 existing housing association tenants security of tenure, tenants' charter rights, and rights to buy. If the Minister examines amendment No. 299, he will see that we seek to delete the proposed partial repeal of section 80 of the Housing Act 1985. The partial repeal would mean that housing associations no longer satisfy the "landlord condition" required for a secure tenancy.

In other words, after the enactment of the Bill, the existing 500,000 housing association tenants will cease to be secure tenants, because the landlord condition required for a secure tenancy will not be satisfied. Additionally, tenants of non-charitable housing associations will lose the right to buy, and tenants of non-charitable housing associations will lose the right to apply for a transferable discount to assist them to purchase a property in the private sector. I should like the Minister's comments on those issues.

[Mr. Soley]

Rather more widely, and without repeating the arguments already outlined by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), I warn the Government, with considerable seriousness, that they are in danger not only of not achieving their goal but of destroying the housing association movement as we have come to know it. The hon. Member for Leeds, North-East missed an important point. In 1974, the Labour Government put forward the housing association movement in its modern form. That action was based on all-party support.

It is fair to point out that the legislation was considered in detail by the Government of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). It was picked up by the Labour Government and put into effect. It had all-party support. The present Government have busted that consensus wide open, and have put housing associations in an incredibly difficult position. The hon. Gentleman should not say that housing associations do not mind that. They are deeply worried. I concede that they are now divided—some support the Bill and some are against it—and that division is doing much damage.

7.45 pm

Mr. Kirkhope: The legislation was drafted by the Conservative Government in 1974. If the hon. Gentleman will check the matter, he will see that barely any amendment was moved by his party. The inspiration of the Conservative Government led to the housing association legislation. It is important to remember that point.

Mr. Soley: I do not object to the hon. Gentleman taking up the time of the House by repeating what I have said. Some amendments were made, but there was all-party agreement. The Labour Government enacted what they picked up from the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. That is what happened. This Government are busting the consensus wide open.

The problem is that some housing associations may wish to move up-market, when the Minister for Housing and Planning actually realises that there is a crisis in low-cost rented accommodation and when we need more housing associations, more local authorities, and more co-operatives providing for the lower end of the market. Obviously, if some housing associations choose to move up-market, they are free to do so. But they must not expect an open-ended Government subsidy, either under the present Government or under a future Labour Government. If they provide up-market accommodation, they carry the responsibility of arranging finance for it. The priority for a Labour Government will and must be good-quality, low-cost homes for people on low incomes. Investors who do not recognise that fact will burn their fingers.

The housing market is not and cannot be a free market. Conservative Members keep falling into the trap of talking about it as though it were a free market—it cannot be; there are too many imperfections in it. At best, using economists' language, it is an inelastic market, in which change takes time. But several other factors—for example, cost and availability of land, alternative uses and the various Government subsidies in the form of tax relief and regional grant—affect the supply of housing and make it nonsense to talk about a free market in the way that the Government do.

Where there is scarcity, a Labour Government will arrange for rents to be set independently of the landlord. I predict that even this Government will return to that sooner or later. They will do so because they will find that the growing sense of scarcity in the low-cost accommodation sector—be it for rent or for purchase—will drive them to it. As the housing crisis worsens, and as more people sleep out or are forced into bed-and-breakfast accommodation, so the Government will be forced to address the problem. As the Government take off the Rent Act tenancies, they are aggravating the problem that they are seeking to solve.

It is important that that message goes out loud and clear, not only to investors, but to everyone in the housing association movement. We set up the housing association movement with all-party support. The Tory Government have broken that consensus and placed housing associations in a difficult position. We will continue to support housing associations as long as they remain true to the principles on which they were set up. That is the important aspect that is being placed at risk by the Government's absurd legislation.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): Though I would put the rhetorical points differently, I can agree wholeheartedly with a lot of what the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said. That is that no one wants the housing association movement to move away from doing the job for which it has been funded under both Labour and Conservative Governments. We want it to do more. I do not think that anyone would thank me for widening this point into a general debate about housing associations, which we shall be coming to later. However, there are one or two points to deal with now.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) said, it is right that the experimental mixed-funding scheme is a small part of the funding of the Housing Corporation. About £60 million has been put into the scheme and there have been £700 million worth of bids from interested housng associations. That shows the amount of interest that there is in the scheme. I do not believe that the people who have put forward those bids —some of whom are in my hon. Friend's part of the country—are departing from their traditions. They are seeking to make the money go further and have more useful, low-cost housng built, which is the objective of all of us. I do not disagree with what the hon. Member for Hammersmith said. The House would want to know if the subsidies did not produce housing at low market rents. That is clearly what they are meant to achieve. We shall continue the subsidies.

I can dispose of one small point that the hon. Member of Hammersmith raised.

Mr. Soley: Before the Minister moves on, the scheme is not producing more low-cost rented accommodation in the housing association movement.

Mr. Waldegrave: As the hon. Member knows, the mixed spending scheme has only just started, with a tiny sum of money in the first year and the grant levels too low. Therefore, we have put more money into it and we are developing it as we go along. The scheme is now beginning

to work. I have visited, as the hon. Member probably has, some useful schemes that have already been carried out in the second year of the experimental programme.

One small hare that has been started running by a genuine misunderstanding in the National Federation of Housing Associations can be laid to rest. The hon. Member for Hammersmith alleges that we are affecting the rights of 500,000 existing people. That is not so. We are certainly not resiling from the pledge to maintain people's existing rights. We shall, of course, need a saving provision to exclude from the repeal provison in schedule 13 those who are in existing secure tenancies. That would normally be done in a commencement order under a Bill like this, but, as it is so important, it will be on the face of the Bill itself. Obviously, we must do that, and that is a technical amendment which will be brought forward. Clearly, that is just a misunderstanding. We have written to Mr. Page of the NFHA, who has probably briefed the hon. Member for Hammersmith on this, to explain that point to him.

Mr. Soley: I am grateful to for the commitment that the Minister will amend that matter, but will he tell us when he will do this? Will it be more legislation on the hoof? Will we get it at a later stage in here or is he proposing to do it for the House if Lords?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member for Hammersmith is really pushing this slightly thin line a little bit too far. Normally, it would be done in the commencement order of the Bill. We can do that if he wishes and wait until next April. That would be the normal way of doing it. However, we thought that it would be better to put it on the face of the Bill.

However, the hon. Member for Hammersmith presses me never to make another concession to him again.—*[Interruption.]* That is the message I have received from his behaviour in the past couple of days.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On the question of the state of the housing association tenants, is the Minister saying that the present security for all housing association tenants will be underwritten and guaranteed, not just on the right to buy, but that all their present security will be guaranteed?

Mr. Waldegrave: As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) knows, there are broadly two categories among present housing association tenants. There are tenants of registered housing associations, who are secure tenants with the right to buy, and all the rest of it. There are also tenants of unregistered associations, who are usually—not in every case because some of them may already be on secure tenancies—Rent Act tenants, without the right to buy. Some hon. Members have been asking whether all those tenants in the housing association movement have the right to buy. Of course, they do not all have the right to buy. If they are tenants of charitable housing associations, they do not have it. They also do not have it if they are Rent Act tenants. However, all existing rights will be continued.

Mr. Hughes: For both categories?

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, for both categories.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked me about the assignment of tenancies. There is no problem about that. I am advised that the Bill makes our intention clear. If a fixed term protected tenancy is assigned or devolves by inheritance, it will remain protected even after the commencement of the Bill.

I think I made this point in Committee, but it is perhaps worth making again. People have the right to register a fair rent, even after the commencement of the Bill. If they are in the category of Rent Act tenants who have never got around to, or chosen to register, a fair rent, they can do so at any time. Their rights under their existing tenancies continue indefinitely.

The purpose of our amendments was to undertake the commitment that we made in Committee. I think that it was I who made that commitment. It is to be found in column 603 of the Committee *Hansard*. That commitment was at the commencement of the legislation to provide additional protection for people who are tenants of private landlords or housing associations who might be required to be moved around. One can imagine that that might be necessary in hostels and other types of accommodation, and might be good housing management.

I said in Committee that we were inclined to do it only for tenants of the same landlord. That is what the amendments provide and there can be no doubt about it. Tenants moved within the property of the same landlord would obtain secure tenancies on the same basis. We said in Committee—and we have stuck to it—that we were doubtful about doing it for transfers because that would greatly increase the number of Rent Act tenancies. Therefore, we have not moved further. I understand that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey would have liked us to move further but we have not.

I cannot accept the argument that people who happen to share the same management agent might gain a secure tenancy from it. That would have the most peculiar random effects. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey as a lawyer—I am glad to see that he has recovered from his cold—would regard it as a matter of some importance that it would produce tremendous uncertainty and argument subsequently about what had been the status of a tenancy at the beginning. It would depend on who the managing agent was and that might have no relationship to the property ownership at all. I should have thought that that would have been an odd procedure.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I am aware of the possible general difficulty. However, one of the things that happens, as the Minister is aware, is that there are often transfers of ownership between a holding company and a subsidiary company—different companies in the same group. There are a lot of companies in the private sector which will transfer ownership from one company to another, which may be technical in one sense, but in terms of legal ownership it is fundamental. The management is carried on by the same agency—the same firm of estate agents, surveyors or whatever—and transfers take place for reasons that have nothing to do with the management of the property or the good of the tenants.

There are a lot of mischiefs which, I am sure, the Minister will want to prevent when dealing with some of the worst landlords—corporate landlords—and which are occasioned by transfers between one technically "corporate" owner and another. I would be grateful if the Minister could consider that problem because it seems

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

something that he would not want to slip through the net. My amendment sought to protect such moves which, at the moment, might be to the disadvantage of the tenant.

8 pm

Mr. Waldegrave: I hear what the hon. Gentleman is saying. However, his method of making the managing agent the test would produce some peculiar anomalies. I want to argue against him and I claim that our amendments are much clearer than amendment No. 307. Our amendment states that there is no question but that the tenant becomes a secured tenant. We do not give the option for negotiation about whether or not he wants to choose to become an assured tenant, first because clarity is important and we do not want subsequent arguments about "Did he agree, or did he not?" and the landlord saying, "Oh yes, he did," and so on. We want it to be clear that there is no legal argument. The tenant continues to be a secured tenant. That is the first and most important point.

Secondly, if we opened up the idea that there could be negotiation, one might open up just the pressures which hon. Members of all parties would be against if there was the option of pushing people into an assured tenancy. There will not be an option. The tenancy becomes secured automatically, which is right.

Amendment No. 80 goes much wider than our amendments. Its effect could be that tenants of registered housing associations with new-style assured tenancies who have never had a fair rent tenancy of the old kind would, if they moved to another dwelling let by the same or a different association, get a housing association tenancy subject to part VI of the Rent Act 1977. That seems extremely odd because they might never have been in such a situation. I think that amendment No. 80 was a probing rather than a serious amendment.

I have dealt with amendment No. 299, the point of which is absolutely essential and clearly we must deal with it. As I have said, we shall deal with it not in the commencement order, but on the face of the Bill. I hope that the House will welcome that.

We have moved to meet some commitment that we made in Committee and which will improve the Bill—

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose—*

Mr. Waldegrave: I see that the hon. Gentleman wants to go even further. I am willing to give way to him once more.

Mr. Hughes: The Minister appears inadvertently to have missed the question about whether the protection continues if a fixed term protected tenancy ends at the same time the landlord changes, even with a new landlord. That is a specific question that I have been asked and which I now ask the Minister.

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that I should be absolutely sure and get a lawyer's answer on that, so that I will not mislead the hon. Gentleman. I shall write to him about it. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and other Opposition Members will agree that, although they want us to go further, we have met two commitments that we made in Committee and that the drafting has met our objectives.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister has certainly clarified for me some things that were not clear. I cannot speak for the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), but speaking for myself, the right course is to go away and consult lawyers and to await the Minister's letter on the one remaining matter. That is the responsible way forward, because there will be opportunities in another place, where as the Minister knows, the housing association movement has many friends. If any matters remain unresolved here, they will no doubt be pursued in the other place.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 48, in page 23, line 2, leave out from second 'was' to 'or' in line 5 and insert

'a protected or statutory tenant and is so granted by the person who at that time was the landlord (or one of the joint landlords) under the protected or statutory tenancy'.

No. 49 in page 23, line 42, leave out from second 'was' to 'tenancy' in line 46 and insert

'a protected occupier or statutory tenant, within the meaning of the 1976 Act, and is so granted by the person who at that time was the landlord or licensor (or one of the joint landlords or licensors) under the protected occupancy or statutory'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 33

REMOVAL OF SPECIAL REGIMES FOR TENANCIES OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS ETC.

Amendments made, No. 50, in page 24, line 8, leave out from second 'was' to 'or' in line 11 and insert

'a tenant under a housing association tenancy and is so granted by the person who at that time was the landlord under that housing association tenancy'.

No. 51, in page 24, line 43, leave out from second 'was' to end of line 45 and insert

'a secure tenant and is so granted by the body which at that time was the landlord or licensor under the secure tenancy'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 37

STATUTORY TENANTS: SUCCESSION

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 27, line 30, leave out subsection (1).

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 3, in page 27, line 42, leave out 'paragraphs 5 to 8 of'.

No. 4, in page 28, line 1, leave out subsections (5), (6) and (7).

No. 215, in page 28, line 44, leave out subsection (9).

No. 305, in page 28, line 44, leave out subsections (9) and (10).

No. 5, in schedule 4, page 85, line 25, leave out paragraph 1.

No. 6, in page 85, line 38 leave out paragraphs 3 to 8.

Government amendments Nos. 275 to 281.

Mr. Squire: In moving amendment No. 2, which is tabled in my name and that of various Labour and Social and Liberal Democratic Members, I shall obviously seek to comment on amendments Nos. 3, 4, 5 and 6.

To those hon. Members who were not privileged to serve on the Standing Committee, a little explanation might be needed. I readily confess that my amendments do not clarify the issue. However, we are discussing the important question of carers in our society—those people, often relatives, who give up their existing homes to look after aging or infirm relatives.

I make no apology for returning to this subject, which I raised in Committee. Although my hon. Friend the Minister of State listened as courteously as he always does to reasoned arguments, he felt unable on that occasion to concede any ground. Therefore, I return to those arguments today. If I may, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall make some passing comments about the Government amendments that are to be considered at the same time.

At present, the law is that anyone who gives up their home, whether rented or owned, to move to look after a relative, will succeed to that person's tenancy after six months. I do not know whether there has been any widespread abuse of that. If there has been, I am sure that my hon. Friend will give us the figures at the appropriate time. However, in the absence of any knowledge of abuse, clause 37 and schedule 4 reveal that, instead of the period being six months, in future it will be five years. That is excessive both in itself and by comparison with the existing law.

We owe an enormous debt to the people who give up their time and homes to look after relatives in their own home rather than seek to have them released into the wider community at a considerably greater charge and, no doubt, with less advantage to the aging or infirm relative. The Bill does such people no service and has greatly worried organisations such as Age Concern, which has written to me, and Shelter, which believes that the present proposals go too far. This evening I wish briefly—seeing the Minister's amendments encourages me to think that if I speak briefly I may achieve something that I am seeking, whereas when I spoke at length in Committee, I was unsuccessful—to say that we owe a great deal to those carers and that we must be seen to look after them.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled has spoken at great length and on different occasions about the important role that carers play in our society. We must recognise that and say that five years is far too long. Ideally, I should like the period to revert to six months, which is the purport of my amendments.

I notice and naturally welcome the Government's amendments. I notice also that in the way of these things it is possible to amend schedule 4 without amending clause 37. I wish that I had access to the same advice as my hon. Friend the Minister of State. Never mind, the purpose of his amendments is precisely the same as mine, with the single obvious exception that the period now becomes two years. Clearly, that is an improvement on the five-year qualification period that we were otherwise facing. That must be welcomed although I naturally wish to hear from my hon. Friend why his proposal is not for six months, as I moved in Committee and move now.

Ms. Primarolo: In Committee, the Minister said:

"We believe"—

that is, the Government believe—

"that succession rights have been as important as rent control in driving rented property off the market . . . It would be easy to seem caring by reinstating the right, but it would lead to further drying up of rented property."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 2 February 1988; c. 614.]

We totally refute that and ask the Minister, if he can, to provide us today with proof for his assertion. We believe, and organisations such as Age Concern believe, that there is no sign that succession rights have proved to be a difficulty in the private rented sector.

We believe that it is crucial to link the Government's policy on succession rights with their so-called "care in the community" policy. At present, it is estimated that one in five women over 40 are responsible for dependent relatives. The Government's care in the community policy increases the burden on women, but carers are often forgotten when housing policy is discussed. They were forgotten when this section of the Housing Bill was drafted, because their needs and responsibilities were totally ignored.

It is estimated that women living with elderly tenants in the private sector account for about 60 per cent. of private protected tenants aged over 65 years. The Government's proposals to remove from them the right to take over a tenancy or succeed to one on the death of a relative by elongating the period of qualification, seems wholly inappropriate.

At the moment, there are three significant proposed changes to the current arrangements in the Bill. First, where a tenant is protected under the Rent Act 1977—in other words an existing tenant when the Housing Act 1988 comes into force—a relative would have to have lived with the tenant for the previous five years instead of the present proposal of six months. The proposals in the Bill would enforce homelessness on those who have cared for relatives if they then die before having lived with them for five years. It is unbelievable that at a time of great stress and sorrow for families, carers might find themselves with the additional problem of homelessness.

The second proposed change would mean that a relative would have no right to succeed to a protected tenancy if the relative qualified under the five-year regulation. Instead, she—I say "she" specifically because I do not want that to be translated into "he" in *Hansard* in the sense that "he" always means "he or she"; in the majority of cases when we talk about carers we mean women in our communities—would succeed to an assured tenancy. In other words, that carer would probably face a massive increase in rent and be subject to the landlord's potential use of much more wide-ranging grounds for possession than those covered in the Rent Act 1977. The third change would mean that, where a tenancy begins after the Housing Act 1988 comes into force, the carer will have no right of succession.

The Government want to help landlords to increase the supply of rented accommodation by ensuring that, when an existing regulated tenancy comes to an end, any succession is to an assured tenancy only. The Government have stated that the rights of existing tenants will not be affected by the Bill. They continue to explain that that is the case. However, as I have said, and as Age Concern has been at great pains to stress, we are extremely anxious about the effects of the Bill on family members who care for elderly people.

Carers who have been living with a relative for less than five years may be made homeless when that relative dies. Many carers will have to decide to give up a home to care for a relative whose health is deteriorating. Age Concern also knows of no evidence that the right of succession is being abused and therefore why the period of qualification should be extended to five years.

[Ms. Primarolo]

8.15 pm

Carers who have been living with relatives for more than five years will be entitled to succeed, but only to an assured tenancy. Many of the carers who have given up their own accommodation may well be on low or modest incomes and are extremely unlikely to be able to afford the new market rents that they will be required to pay under the new regulations. Therefore, they will be forced out of their accommodation even though they have some nominal rights, simply because they cannot afford the rent.

The chances of their finding alternative accommodation are not high. Only assured or assured shorthold tenancies will be available in the independent rented sector. Most local authorities will have enormous housing waiting lists. For example, there are already 14,000 people on the waiting list in Bristol. There will be very little chance of a local authority being able to house a single woman.

Many people who give up their homes to care for an elderly relative in the private rented sector will not realise that they will be forfeiting their rights to the right to a home in future. The Government have put pressure on women to take up responsibilities and burdens in the community; women recognise that if they do not care for an elderly relative, no one else will because the Government have made cuts by their policy of care in the community. As a result, we know that, despite the restrictions facing carers in securing a home after the death of a relative, the considerations of care and love for the relative are likely to override the possibility that the carer might find herself homeless.

The Government are exploiting the feelings and responsibilities of many women in our community to pave the way for the greater exploitation of tenants in the private sector. That is simply not good enough.

The Government have issued guidance document LAC (85)2 to local authorities on the treatment of a dwelling house when an elderly home owner has to go into residential care leaving a relative at home. That acknowledges that, if that family member seems to have been a principal supporter and has no other home, local authorities have discretion to ignore or discount the capital value of the home in assessing whether it is to be used to pay for home fees.

The proposals on succession contradict the Government's care in the community policy which relies heavily on family carers. We do not support the Government's care in the community policies, but we believe that it is outrageous in one Newspeak that they should say that we should recognise and give a place to carers in the community and recognise their contributions, while another Ministry attempts to take rights away from the same people.

At a Conservative party conference fringe meeting in October 1987, organised by the National Council for Carers and their Elderly Dependants, the Minister for Health emphasised the Government's commitment to supporting informal carers, recognising that they are the bedrock on which community care provision is based. The lack of alternatives to family care further underlines the Government's dependence on formal carers. Yet the Government have the audacity to place before the House proposals which will mean that widows could find themselves homeless, having lost the right to succeed to a protected tenancy, and that single parents moving in to care for elderly parents will lose their right to tenancy unless they have lived at the property for five years.

That is another example of the Government's attempt to exploit those in our community who give freely of their care and support, and who so allow the Government to avoid paying for the cost of that care out of the Exchequer. Because of that shame and the way in which the Government have treated carers in other areas, the Government should remove the restrictions in the Bill and allow the succession right proposed in the previous Rent Act to remain with a six-month qualification remaining intact.

We strongly made the case for that change in Committee, when the Minister said that he sympathised and that it was a difficult decision to make. I hope that today the Minister will say that, because of the problems which carers in particular face in our community, their right to succession on the death of a relative will be reinstated with a qualification period of six months rather than five years.

Mr. Simon Hughes: In Committee there was all-party agreement from the Back Benches and it is important that the same degree of agreement is in evidence now. I wish to underline both the points made by the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) and the important betrayal that there has been on the fundamental issue. Later, we shall debate succession rights within the new assured tenancy regime, but that is not the subject of this debate. It concerns succession rights for tenants currently protected by the Rent Act. Unless the Government are prepared to make a concession, their proposals give the lie to their assertion that they are not taking rights from people who already have them, because that is not the truth. The Government's succession proposals would clearly take away rights which people have acquired.

The Government have now come clean about that aspect, because a Government press release dated 7 June states:

"The succession rules are modified to make them fairer to landlords."

That is certainly true, and it is now the case. The Government's previous argument that the position of Rent Act tenants would not be changed is now shown to have been deceptive.

In Committee, it was argued that people should not lose rights retrospectively, and that to make people wait for five years when they have already qualified by virtue of the previous six-month rule would be unfair. Concessions have been made in that respect, which I acknowledge. What remains unaltered is the Government's position in respect of the request made in Committee—which we forced to a vote on both the clause and the schedule because of the strength of feeling—that the right to succession should remain if one were resident at the property in question for six months.

I could understand the logic of the argument, if the Government were to advance it, to increase the period of qualification to one year, because that is the present requirement for succession in the case of council property tenants. However, the Government are arguing for a period twice that length, of two years, and their case for that needs to be clearly made.

The hon. Members for Bristol, South and for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) made the case that the people

most vulnerable are in large measure women and the elderly. I wish to cite the concern felt about this matter by personalising it to some degree. Last December, my constituency office received a telephone call from a constituent of mine named Miss Fuller, who lives in Larcom street, Walworth. She wanted to know how her housing situation would be affected by the Bill. The point was not clear and the head of my constituency office discussed the matter with me. I made inquiries and wrote back to Miss Fuller. She in turn, as I had suggested, made inquiries of her landlord's managing agents. My advice to her was to seek a joint tenancy with her mother.

On 3 December, the landlord's agents replied:

"Thank you for your letter of 2nd December, regarding your application to have your present tenancy, which is in your Mother's name, to be expanded to include your own. I regret"—

here comes the surprise—

"at the present time that due to the fact that we have contracted to sell the freehold of No. 55, we are unable to agree to your request."

Incidentally, she did not know that the property was to be sold. The letter went on:

"However, as and when the sale has been completed, when we shall be continuing to manage the property, we will approach the new owners of the property with your request which of course at this stage I am unable to forecast the outcome."

Miss Fuller wrote to me in January:

"This is just to thank you for your letter of 7th December in which you promise to attempt an amendment in the new Housing Bill to ensure that people in my position have some security of tenure. Luckily, although my mother is in her late 60s, I am not yet in the position of having to 'care' for her, but I am sure that there are people in the position of 'carer' who will be affected by this Bill."

She goes on to express precisely the same concern as that raised by the hon. Member for Bristol, South—that she will be entitled only to an assured tenancy and not one protected by the Rent Acts. The reality of that is a substantially greater rent, for instead of paying a fair rent she will have to pay a market rent. In some years' time, she will herself be in her 50s or 60s and will probably be unable to succeed to the home in which she and her mother have already lived for seven years and in the street in which she has lived all her life. That is the reality of the situation.

The Government promised that the rights of tenants currently protected would not be adversely affected. The present proposal is a betrayal of that promise. The Minister should be decent to the House and to many vulnerable and important people in the community, and he should respond to massive external concern and give people the succession rights to which they are entitled.

Mr. Wigley: I am glad to participate in this debate, although I did not serve on the Standing Committee because I was attending another Committee at the time, as other hon. Members who served with me will remember.

This matter is of considerable concern to those involved in disability politics and in caring for the elderly. Coincidentally, in my constituency surgery this morning, I was presented with a case that underlines the kind of problems facing relatives when they give up their own homes to look after an elderly disabled person and that person then dies. The case I encountered this morning was most invidious, and none of the amendments would have catered for it. It involved an elderly relative who died just two weeks after the carers had given up their own home. They could not turn the clock back and retrieve their old home or have a right to the new one. One can never have a safety net that will protect everyone. None the less, one must try to ensure that legislation makes the best possible sense under all circumstances. The Minister would have to make a very strong case for changing the existing provision. I am glad to support the amendment of the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), to bring even more all-party support for the change he proposes.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) spoke of the Government's care in the community policies. I would not wish to give any impression of being against those policies, but some of us have misgivings about whether they are sufficiently generous and go far enough. I am glad that the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) is in the Chamber, given the struggle we had to obtain adequate resources for the full implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, which he sponsored.

Ms. Primarolo: I was not seeking to denigrate the principle of care in the community. I was trying to say, perhaps not very well, that the Government make a sham of that principle. They are trying to get policy on the cheap rather than proper care in the community.

8.30 pm

Mr. Wigley: That is the point. I may disagree with the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) about that. Care in the community is not necessarily a cheaper option, but we should support it because it is right in terms of human dignity and family values. We should ensure that those who make enormous sacrifices, often late in life—and they are often single women—are cared for properly.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) mentioned the costs that can hit those who lose the security of the rent levels previously paid. That can indeed be a blow. Someone looking after an aging and infirm relative, having been in receipt of attendance allowance, probably at the higher level—and possibly mobility allowance as well—may find that all the money stops coming in at the same time. It is likely that such people will face increased rents at the very time when there is a reduced income to sustain the household. Often there is only one carer, whose age may make it very difficult for him or her to go out into the community to look for work—particularly in areas such as mine where there is high unemployment. We should introduce policies that do their utmost to secure the position of carers.

The Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West contained a charter for carers. Concern has been expressed by those in all parts of the political spectrum about the necessity for better consideration for the needs of people who sacrifice so much for the disabled and elderly. While I acknowledge that the Government seem likely to move some way towards meeting their arguments, as it stands the Bill is retrograde.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend when he reminds the House, as he does so often and so eloquently, that substantial sections of the 1986 Act that were so firmly supported have not yet been implemented. Does he not agree that it is tragic that the Government are trying to push through yet another

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

measure that will be conspicuously unhelpful to carers, when we have waited for two years for those sections to be implemented?

Mr. Wigley: Absolutely. A policy for disabled and eldely people, and for those who look after them, should be a seamless web. It should be integrated into a single thrust. Unfortunately, the present thrust seems negative in many ways. We are not making progress with the Act brought forward by my hon. Friend, which would be of such great benefit. Indeed, we seem again to be moving backwards. I appeal to the Government at least to try to provide some coherence in their legislative policies, and to ensure that they run from one Department to another.

The length of time for which a carer may be living with the person for whom he or she cares is open-ended. Carers move in not knowing whether the people for whom they are caring will live for a month, a year or 10 years. It can be an enormous commitment, and the sacrifice can be equally enormous. The position can be particularly difficult when the relative concerned dies after a fairly short time. Many district council areas have a qualification for housing residents: they must have lived in the area for a certain period—for a year of even two years. If someone has been there for six months or a year and the relative dies, they may not be entitled immediately to get rented accommodation from the district council. They will not be a priority under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, yet they will be in danger of losing the tenancy.

I hope that the Government, in conceding that the threshold should be brought down to two years, as the amendments appear to suggest, will be prepared—if not tonight, in another place—to go along with the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Hornchurch and do what they can to maintain the status quo, so that at least we do not make things worse for the people who give so much.

Mr. McCartney: Thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker. Let me first congratulate you on your 15th anniversary in the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), you and I are today celebrating 15 years in the House. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, have weathered the storm rather better than my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is most generous, but he really should not draw the Chair into the debate.

Mr. McCartney: You know what I am like, Madam Deputy Speaker. I never learn from experience in these matters.

I also congratulate the Under-Secretary of State on returning from Finland in time for the meat of the debate. The Minister of State was rather tetchy the other evening when she was not here to help him out then things got difficult. I am sure that this evening she will give us some words of wisdom about why the Minister has done a partial U-turn, insufficient to deal with my concerns and those of my hon. Friends.

The principle behind the amendment was debated on two occasions, on 19 January and 4 February. In both instances the Minister failed to take account of the cross-party objections to what was being proposed, and at no time gave an indication that he was prepared to concede the principle for which we argued. He made his view clear to me—I had tabled the amendments that we were discussing on 19 January, when he said that he was "coming too clean for the hon. Member for Macklesfield". —[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 19 January 1988; c. 305.]

He meant that he was prepared to reject the amendments. The Government felt that succession ran contrary to the whole concept of the Bill, in that the Bill was concerned with providing an immediate access to the owner of the property. If that access was through death, so be it. The Bill would give the landlord the opportunity to take possession of the property.

During that debate and the subsequent debate on 4 February, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) and I pursued the Minister, and my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) attempted at every stage to give the Minister an opportunity to backtrack and say that he was wrong. However, he rejected all our approaches. At the end of the debate, he refused in any circumstances to accept an amendment to help carers who have had to move house to look after elderly or chronically ill relatives.

We have dealt with amendments proposed by Age Concern. Before I came to the House, I dealt daily with the problems of the physically handicapped, many of whom were not elderly. Unfortunately, because of the nature of their illnesses, they never reached retirement or even middle age. In many instances elderly parents suffered infirmity or death, and a friend or another member of the family would have to move in to care for them. That group will be affected further by the Government's proposals.

This is a missed opportunity for the Minister to respond to the strength of feeling expressed on two occasions by hon. Members on both sides of the Committee. The Minister has not answered the questions that I put to him on 4 February. At the time of death, the tenancy is in the market place. It is available for rent. If the family wishes to continue the tenancy, why are the Government proposing to restrict the right of that family to continue it? Even if the family is allowed to continue the tenancy, why are the Government changing its fundamental nature, particularly rent levels?

After a death, the landlord has a number of choices to make about the tenancy. The landlord could sell the property for commercial or residential use or he could allow the family to continue to live in the property. Unless the property goes to the tenant, it comes out of the market place. That is against the whole concept of the Bill. The Minister said that the purpose of the Bill is to retain tenancies in the market place, but if the landlord wishes to evict a tenant, he can then sell the property for commercial or other uses. That leaves local authorities and the Government with the problem of homelessness. There is no logic behind the Government's amendments. They say that they need to restrict succession because they want properties to remain in the private rented sector. However, if a family wishes to continue the tenancy, the legislation allows the landlord to remove the tenant and take the property out of the private rented sector. That will lead to homelessness.

The Bill also makes provision for new tenancies, but what is the logic of that? The property already has a tenant, who may have a wife or a child. If the tenant dies and the tenancy is offered to somebody else, the wife or the

child of the tenant will be left homeless. No additional accommodation is to be provided for them. What is the logic of that? If the tenant is removed from the property and the landlord decides not to offer it to another tenant at a higher rent but to sell the property for purposes unconnected with the private rented sector, it will lead to homelessness and to the removal of private sector rented property from the market place. That makes no sense.

I accept that the Minister is attempting to increase the private rented sector but the amendments mean that tenancies will be removed from the market place. Landlords will be able to take their property out of the private rented sector. The Minister must explain why he is doing that. It will happen every day after the Bill becomes an Act. He must explain this intellectual difficulty. The amendments will lead to a reduction in succession rights. The Government want to ensure that property remains in the private rented sector but tenants will be made homeless.

8.45 pm

The Minister has argued against the six months' entitlement. I do not understand why, because the Government say that they are committed to looking after the carers in the community. My hon. Friends referred to the arguments advanced by many organisations. The Secretary of State for Social Services says that local authorities and the social services should provide resources for care in the community. They want people to be looked after in the community instead of being transferred to institutional care, and they want those who are now in institutional care to be looked after in the home. However, the Government's proposals will lead to persons who are looking after sick people being evicted when those sick people die. Under this legislation, carers can be evicted.

It would not be so bad if the Government were proposing to move a further amendment that would lead to additional resources being made available to local authorities and housing associations to provide for the carers. Instead, the Government are proposing to reduce still further the rights of local authorities and housing associations to provide for the carers.

This is an absolute hotch-potch, and the Minister knows it. In Committee he was purple with embarrassment. He may lift his bushy eyebrows and ask me what I am talking about, but he knows precisely what I am talking about. In Committee he was severely embarrassed about having to defend his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. What he said in Committee and is saying now is not his own view.

The Minister is an honourable gentleman. I do not believe that he wants a carer who has looked after a sick person for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to be evicted. I do not believe for a moment that he wants to have to defend such a proposal at the Dispatch Box. Because he was severely embarrassed, the Minister, behind the scenes, went back to his right Hon. Friend the Secretary of State and said to him, "Look here, we have a problem, I cannot defend our policy. But it is a long time before the next general election, and as I am not prepared to resign we had better come up with a compromise." In reality, the compromise is meaningless to those in the community who will have to implement the legislation. It is meaningless for the carer and it is absolutely meaningless for the family.

If the Minister does not believe me, he should believe his hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire). Despite our clashes in Committee, I believe that the hon. Gentleman is sincere. I do not believe for a minute that all that he is trying to do is to kid the electors of Hornchurch into thinking that he cares for his constituents. The Minister should believe those of his hon. Friends who, in their own guises, put forward the views of various organisations, because they are the same points as I am making.

I ask the Minister to come to the Dispatch Box not just to withdraw the amendments but to make a commitment that he will return to the House later, or in another place, with proposals to meet the concerns of hon. Members and of those in the community who look after the disabled. Without such a commitment to carers in the community, he will do a major injustice to carers. If somebody gives up his own home to care for a member of the family or a friend, he could eventually find himself thrown out into the street as the victim of market forces. I do not believe that any hon. Member would vote for such a change in the legislation.

For the third time, I ask the Minister to withdraw the amendments and to return to the House with a meaningful solution that will meet the concerns that were expressed in Committee. They were expressed not because of party-political rancour but because of genuine concern for those who work for the disabled, the carers in the community. I ask the Government to deal with the practicalities of the market place and with what will happen if the Bill becomes law. Even at this late stage, I cannot believe that the Minister will come to the Dispatch Box and defend the Secretary of State's proposals. By defending that, the Minister is defending the indefensible and the proposition that carers should be evicted because the person for whom they have cared has died.

Mr. Waldegrave: The House is seldom more eloquent than when it is disposing of someone else's property. That, after all, is what this is all about. Ever since the iniquitous Rent Act started, we have, where fair rents are lower than market rents—which I imagine is most of the country—been disposing of other people's property rather than facing the consequences of providing people with the resources necessary to buy into the market by voted housing benefit or by providing subsidised housing, also through funds voted by the House. More or less randomly, both parties, but especially the party which introduced the Rent Act, have taken certain people's property and also, rather randomly, passed the benefit of it to a group of tenants. That is not defensible.

When trying to get out of that muddle, we have the difficulty of having various vested interests to deal with. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), alone in the Committee, drew attention to the six-month people. We have taken the view that they, and others who live with people with Rent Act tenancies, should have some rights to security. All the eloquence, so easily deployed by the Opposition on this issue, is simply another way of saying that the people who should take responsibility for looking after such people are the landlords who have been caught at random by the Act. That is not a very high claim for justice.

The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) was honest enough to say that the Government did not move at all on this issue in Committee. There were three Divisions on closely related proposals which the Committee rejected. Nevertheless, we listened to the

[Mr. Waldegrave]

arguments and we have come up with the compromise —getting out of such situations is bound to lead to some compromise—of suggesting that it would be right to offer security under the assured tenancy regime.

It must be a matter of judgment whether we alight on six months, two years or five years. We have settled on two years as a reasonable step forward and as the time after which one can reasonably say that a person has made their home somewhere. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) and others will recognise that we have gone some way to meet the point, although not as far as they would like. The further we go, the more we perpetuate the injustice inherent in the fact that the House has previously, more or less randomly, confiscated part of the capital value of a landlord's property, finding that an easier way to popularity than dealing with housing policy properly.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister has moved from five years to two years. That is an improvement. An argument has been made out for six months. The House will be interested to know why the Minister did not accept one year, as that is the period of security of tenure in other legislation which the Government have proposed, most noticeably for people in local authority property. It would seem logical to have a common base. The two years would also be one year better for those people who face the prospect of being protected for one and a half years less.

Mr. Waldegrave: The argument works both ways. We took the view that two years seemed a reasonable definition of establishment of a home. There is no magic about the figure.

I am well aware that the arguments that we had at great length in Committee exposed the fundamental divide between us. The Opposition think that the easy way to meet the commitment of caring is to take property which was originally let in good faith and, by Act of Parliament, confiscate part of the benefit of it and hand it out. They would be the first to observe, in their gleeful way, that there are more tenants than there are landlords, so that is a more popular way in which to proceed.

It is not a sensible course in terms of housing policy, however. The sensible course is for the Government and local authorities to take responsibility for the provision of low-cost rented housing, if it is needed, and for housing benefit to work in the market. The Rent Act is neither of those. That is why we want to end it as swiftly as possible and why we want to make as few additional loopholes as possible. It is also why, having made some concessions to the arguments made by my hon. Friends and some organisations, we do not wish to go further.

Mr. Morgan: The Minister has not said whether he has discussed the implications of the Griffiths report, which was published after the Committee stage finished but before Report, with his colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Security. If the Government intend to legislate on the basis of that report, they will clearly be backing more care in community. It would involve removing people from institutional care in hospitals to local authority care and providing back-up in the form of old people's homes or sheltered housing so that people do not have to stay in local authority institutional care. Such people may also be looked after by younger relatives or, in the case of those suffering disabling diseases such as multiple sclerosis, they may be looked after by older relatives. If the Minister has not discussed these issues with his colleagues in the DHSS, he has not done his job properly.

Mr. Waldegrave: This is collective Government policy. Neither the Griffiths report nor any other part of DHSS policy will be based on the extension or continuation of Rent Act tenancies. If there are consequences elsewhere, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have to consider them, but he knows that it is central to the Government's stance that Rent Act tenancies should be wound down as soon as possible.

Mr. Soley: The Minister is disingenuous. If he really was concerned for carers, he would ensure that alternative accommodation was available for those who will be evicted as a result of the Government's proposals. He has not done that, and he is aware that the private sector will not be revived by abolishing the Rent Acts, as we all know that the problem is more to do with housing finance than it is to do with Rent Acts. Because of that, we shall divide the House.

Mr. Simon Hughes: This is a sad occasion. The Minister and his colleagues said in the early stages of the Bill that the rights of tenants would be safeguarded. They will not. Towards the end of his speech, the Minister revealed the reality: when it comes to choosing between the rights of people and the rights of property, the Government come down on the side of property. Whatever the compromise, it is not a compromise which meets need. It is a compromise which advances profit and the rights of people best equipped to make it.

9 pm

Mr. Squire: We have had a very important debate on a matter that affects many thousands of people at some stage in their lives. The House is right to devote time to it. I recognise that the House wishes to move to a Division shortly and I shall be brief in my concluding remarks.

Ms. Primarolo: The Minister referred to succession rights as the confiscation of property from the landlord. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is the same confiscation as the Government's right-to-buy policy from council housing committees? We are just a little surprised at the Government's reluctance to split both ways and at their double standards.

Mr. Squire: I recognise a whole range of distinctions, including that between state and private ownership. Even in concluding I am anxious not to lose the support of the hon. Lady for my amendment. I very much welcome the unanimous view from the Back Benchers of different Opposition parties. There was a hint of déjà vu about the speech of the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). Those of us who heard him demonstrate his ability to speak without hesitation, deviation and above all, notes, were impressed. When I sit on a future Committee I shall scan it very carefully to see whether the hon. Gentleman is on it and if he is I shall bring my blanket and my flask of warm drink. He has the ability to talk at great length, which is a tremendous attribute.

The important and serious point is that every hon. Member who spoke stressed that the role of carers is critical in our society and that the Bill as drafted does not assist them in any way.

My hon. Friend the Minister did his best—*[Interruption.]* I am by temperament one who seeks the middle ground, as is my hon. Friend. He has given half a loaf. Indeed, mathematicians among us would demonstrate that he has given more than half a loaf in moving from five years to two years. I hope only that further reflection—clearly some reflection brought us down from five years to two years—perhaps in another place will bring us down from two years to six months where I believe it should be.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 172, Noes 243.

Division No. 348] **[9 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*

Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Widdecombe, Ann

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Schedule 4

STATUTORY TENANTS: SUCCESSION

9.15 pm

Amendments made: No. 275, in page 85, line 42, leave out '5 years"; and' and insert '2 years".'.

No. 276, in page 85, line 45, at end insert

'and

(d) at the end there shall be added the following sub-paragraph—

"(2) If the original tenant died within the period of 18 months beginning on the operative date, then, for the purposes of this paragraph, a person who was residing in the dwelling-house with the original tenant at the time of his death and for the period which began 6 months before the operative date and ended at the time of his death shall be taken to have been residing with the original tenant for the period of 2 years immediately before his death".'.

No. 277, in page 86, line 13, leave out '5' and insert '2'.

No. 278, in page 86, line 16, at end insert—

'(2) If the first successor died within the period of 18 months beginning on the operative date, then, for the purposes of this paragraph, a person who was residing in the dwelling-house with the first successor at the time of his death and for the period which began 6 months before the operative date and ended at the time of his death shall be taken to have been residing with the first successor for the period of 2 years immediately before his death.".'

No. 279, in page 86, line 19, at end insert—

'8A. At the end of paragraph 11 there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"11A. In this Part of this Schedule 'the operative date' means the date on which Part I of the Housing Act 1988 came into force.".'.

No. 280, in page 86, line 27, leave out '5' and insert '2'.

No. 281, in page 86, line 44, at end insert—

'(5C) If the original occupier died within the period of 18 months beginning on the operative date, then, for the purposes of subsection (3) above, a person who was residing in the dwelling-house with the original occupier at the time of his death and for the period which began 6 months before the operative date and ended at the time of his death shall be taken to have been residing with the original occupier for the period of 2 years immediately before his death; and in this subsection "the operative date" means the date on which Part I of the Housing Act 1988 came into force.".'.—*[Mrs. Roe.]*

Clause 38

JURISDICTION OF COUNTY COURTS

Amendment made: No. 18, in page 29, line 16, after 'III', insert 'and V'.—*[Mrs. Roe.]*

Clause 39

RENT ASSESSMENT COMMITTEES: PROCEDURE AND INFORMATION POWERS

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I beg to move amendment No. 223, in page 30, line 21, at end insert:

'(5) Proceedings for an offence committed under this section may be instituted by any of the following authorities:

(a) councils or districts and London boroughs;

(b) the Common Council of the City of London;

(c) the Council of the Isles of Scilly.'.

The amendment has had a chequered history which deserves a mention. It relates to clause 39 and sets out procedural matters in rent assessment committees. Clause 39(2) states that where an RAC has received an application to fix a market rent, it can serve a notice on the landlord

or tenant asking for information. The RAC may need to know, for example, the length of the tenancy, its terms and the details of the premises. It is possible that a landlord will seek to frustrate the proceedings by failing to provide the relevant information. Clause 39(3) states that if that person fails to provide information it will be a criminal offence. That is only right, because if the RAC is to have any credibility, it needs to have powers to ensure that its proceedings are not frustrated.

Who should prosecute such an offence? That is the crucial point. At present, councils, districts and London boroughs have powers to prosecute for similar offences under paragraphs 7(2) and (3) of schedule 11 and sections 149 and 150 of the Rent Act 1977. In Committee, I thought that we had convinced the Government of the need to incorporate this power into the Bill, which will be the primary reference point for the new private rented sector.

I had the memorable experience of being congratulated by the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe)—who I am delighted to see in her place after having enjoyed herself in the vast, deep wastes of Finland. The hon. Lady has not told us what she was doing there. Perhaps she was studying igloo construction in case the nuclear winter hits us and we have to live in them. No doubt, when she replies she will tell us exactly what she was doing, if it is repeatable in the House. I remember the hon. Lady saying:

> "I congratulate and thank the hon. Member for Newham, North-West for drawing attention to this omission in the Bill."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 4 February 1988; c. 625.]

I was grateful for such a gracious compliment. Unfortunately, it has not turned itself into a Government amendment on Report.

In an earlier exchange, the Minister said that section 222 of the Local Government Act 1972 covers what we want. I said that I would check, but my advice is that it does not. In her letter to me, the Minister said:

> "This enables an authority to prosecute in any legal proceedings where they consider it expedient for the promotion or protection of the interests of the inhabitants in their area."

[Interruption.] I realise that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has just acquired a new pair of glasses, but I did not realise that he needed a hearing aid as well. Perhaps he should try to get one before the charges for all of them go up.

The legal departments of most borough councils consider that section 222 of the 1972 Act relates to a number of the inhabitants of an area rather than one inhabitant. I do not want to push this matter too much, but perhaps the Minister could obtain some advice or look at the matter again and make it clear that section 222 could be used in respect of one inhabitant in an area. That would meet the terms of the amendment. If we wait a little longer perhaps someone will come to the Minister's assistance with that information. I hope that she will say that the terms of the amendment are acceptable to the Government or that section 222 covers a single individual.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I regret the need to interrupt the proceedings of the House but I have only just succeeded in reaching the Chamber, notwithstanding the fact that a Division was called. I discovered that the doors to Norman Shaw North were locked and hon. Members were unable to escape from the building to come and vote. Could the Serjeant at Arms be instructed to ensure that the doors are unlocked?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is probably one of the most genuine points of order that has ever been put to me. I shall certainly ensure that the Serjeant at Arms is so instructed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Marion Roe): I thank the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for welcoming me back to the House. I was on an official visit to Sweden and Finland to examine housing and planning matters on behalf of the Government.

When the hon. Gentleman raised the issue in Committee, the Government agreed to consider it. On examining the matter further, we concluded that it was unnecessary to give local authorities a specific power to prosecute offences under clause 39 because of their general power to initiate prosecutions in section 222 of the Local Government Act 1972. That empowers local authorities to prosecute proceedings when they consider it expedient

> "for the promotion or protection of the interests of the inhabitants of their area".

I have checked and I assure the hon. Gentleman that that provision also relates to a single inhabitant. I wrote to the hon. Gentleman on 5 May explaining why we did not think that an amendment was needed and I therefore hope that he will withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Tony Banks: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 40

INFORMATION AS TO DETERMINATIONS OF RENTS

Mrs. Roe: I beg to move Government amendment No. 68, in page 30, leave out line 22.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 69 and 52.

Mrs. Roe: Clause 40 as drafted provides for the president of every rent assessment panel to keep and make available information concerning determinations of rent if required to do so by the Secretary of State. There has never been any question in our mind as to the need for such an order to be made. It has always been our firm intention that the requirement to maintain a register of rents should apply as soon as the Bill takes effect. In Committee it was argued that the legislation ought to leave no doubt as to the matter and we accepted the force of that argument. Amendment Nos. 68 and 69 are therefore designed to alter the wording of clause 40(1) to remove the discretion of the Secretary of State as to whether or not an order is made.

Clause 40 as drafted refers to information relating to the determination of rents by the rent assessment committees. On further consideration, it seems to us that there is a strong case for widening the scope of the provision to take account of the distinctive procedure that will apply to rents under shorthold tenancies.

The House will recall that where a shorthold tenant refers his rent to the rent assessment committee under clause 20, the committee is empowered to make a determination only where there is evidence that the existing rent is above market level. If such evidence is

[Mrs. Roe]

unavailable, no determination is made. In those circumstances, it seems sensible that arrangements should be made for the publication of information as to rents which have been referred to rent assessment committees under clause 20 but in respect of which no determinations have been made.

Such information will constitute a source of evidence as to the level of rents prevailing in the shorthold market. I am sure that that will be of help to shorthold tenants, both actual and prospective, who seek an indication whether their rent or proposed rent is in line with the market. It will also be useful to rent officers in carrying out their assessment functions for housing benefit purposes.

With that aim in view, amendment No. 52 provides that the information kept and published under clause 40 may relate not just to rents actually determined by assessment committees but to rents which are the subject of references or applications to assessment committees. The details will be covered in the order made by the Secretary of State under the clause.

I am sure that the Opposition will welcome the amendments, which fulfil an undertaking given in Committee.

Mr. Soley: I thank the Minister for that and I accept that it is a concession.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 69, in page 30, line 24, leave out 'the order' and insert

'an order made by the Secretary of State'.

No. 52, in page 30, leave out lines 25 to 27 and insert——

'as may be so specified with respect to rents under assured tenancies and assured agricultural occupancies which have been the subject of references or applications to, or determinations by, rent assessment committees.'—*[Mrs. Roe.]*

Clause 42

Application to Crown Property

No. 61, in page 31, line 13, at end add—

'(4) Where an interest belongs to Her Majesty in right of the Duchy of Lancaster, then, for the purposes of Chapters I to IV above, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster shall be deemed to be the owner of the interest.'—*[Mrs. Roe.]*

Clause 43

Interpretation of Part I

No. 53, in page 31, line 47, at end insert—

'( ) For the avoidance of doubt, it is hereby declared that any reference in this Part of this Act (however expressed) to a power for a landlord to determine a tenancy does not include a reference to a power of re-entry or forfeiture for breach of any term or condition of the tenancy.'—*[Mrs. Roe]*

New Clause 25

Housing for Wales

'(1) There shall be a body known as Housing for Wales.

(2) Schedule *[Housing for Wales]* to this Act shall have effect with respect to the constitution and proceedings of, and other matters relating to, Housing for Wales.

(3) Housing for Wales shall have the functions conferred on it by the Housing Associations Act 1985 as amended in accordance with section *[Interpretation of Part II and amendments of Housing Associations Act 1985]* below.'

(4) All property in Wales which, immediately before the day appointed for the coming into force of this section, is held by the Housing Corporation shall on that day be transferred to and vest in Housing for Wales.

(5) Any question whether any property has been transferred to Housing for Wales by virtue of subsection (4) above shall be determined by the Secretary of State.'.

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following: Government new clauses 26 and 27.

Government amendments Nos. 240, 241, 246 to 250, 242 to 245, 251 to 253 and 239.

Mr. Grist: It gives me considerable pleasure to introduce this group of amendments, which deal principally with setting the legislative framework within which the activities of the Housing Corporation in Wales can be put on to an independent footing. Before I begin, I should like to thank my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning who, sadly, is not present at this moment, for giving notice in Standing Committee of our intention to table these amendments.

The House may be interested to hear the background to this proposal. Hon. Members will be fully aware of the importance that the Government attach to the work of housing associations, in Wales as well as elsewhere. Associations bring care and voluntary dedication to the task of providing homes for those in need in society.

To date, the role of the housing association movement in Welsh housing has been of steadily growing importance. The Housing Act 1974 was something of a watershed for the movement in that it created the present system of housing association grant and gave the Housing Corporation important new functions of administering Government financial assistance, registering housing associations and monitoring standards of probity and effectiveness. Before the implementation of the 1974 Act, housing association activity in Wales could best be described as of small scale and significance. Since 1974, however, thanks in no small part to the considerable effort put in by the existing Housing Corporation, the movement has grown considerably in strength to a point at which today there are almost 100 registered associations with a total of nearly 20,000 properties under management in Wales.

The new financial regime for associations which the Bill will help to establish will be every bit as important for the future development of the movement as were the provisions of the 1974 Act. Our firm expectation is that the new regime will result in significant increases in the contributions made by associations to meeting housing needs in this country.

9.30 pm

Against the background of the new opportunities that the Bill will herald for associations, the Government have decided that the time is now right for the work of associations in Wales to be supervised by a body that has its roots in Wales, can develop a depth of understanding about the housing problems that we face in the Principality, and is fully capable of leading the development of strategies to meet problems within a policy framework set by the Secretary of State for Wales.

Although the provisions necessary to establish Housing for Wales appear somewhat formidable, there is but a single point of principle involved, as I shall explain.

I can tell the House that the idea of establishing Housing for Wales, which will be known in Welsh as Tai Cymru, was the subject of a consultation paper issued by the Welsh Office last December. It was circulated to all local authorities in Wales, all housing associations active in Wales, and to representatives of professional and voluntary bodies with direct interest in Welsh housing, including the building industry, consumer associations, and groups concerned with the provision of housing for those with special needs.

I am pleased to inform the House that, of more than 40 substantive responses made to the consultation paper, only one was opposed to the principle of establishing the independence of the Housing Corporation in Wales. The great majority of responses proffered overwhelming support for the proposal. On the basis of that support within Wales, I ask the House to give its approval to this measure.

It might be helpful for hon. Members if I explain briefly what each of the amendments is intended to do. Before I do that, I should like to make two general points about the legislative basis that we wish to establish for Housing for Wales.

First, as I have said, Housing for Wales is intended to perform in Wales those functions that presently fall or are proposed to fall to the Housing Corporation as a result of this Bill. We are not seeking to give Housing for Wales any more or any fewer powers to exercise in Wales than the Housing Corporation will have to exercise in England.

Secondly, where the legislation gives the Secretary of State powers to introduce directions governing the exercise of their functions by the corporation, it will be possible for different directions to be proposed for Housing for Wales. Whether or not that is done will initially be a matter for consideration by the Secretary of State, in consultation with Housing for Wales and other relevant groups within Wales as necessary.

New clause 25, together with amendment No. 240, the new Schedule entitled "Housing for Wales", establishes Housing for Wales as a body corporate, controlled by a board of members appointed by the Secretary of State, and effectively with the same powers and functions as the Housing Corporation. The schedule sets out the detailed provisions relating to the status, membership, staff and proceedings of Housing for Wales. With the exception of certain matters concerning the board and dealing with staff —paragraphs 7 to 11—for which there are no comparable provisions relating to the Housing corporation, the schedule mirrors schedule 6 to the Housing Associations Act 1985, which sets the constitution of the Housing Corporation. The provisions relating to staff follow closely the relevant proposed provisions relating to the transfer of the Housing Corporation's functions in Scotland to Scottish Homes.

New clause 26 provides for the transfer of registered housing associations in Wales from the register of the Housing Corporation to that of Housing for Wales at an appointed time. Housing for Wales will thus assume the role of registration, funding, and monitoring body for those associations from then on. The primary responsibility of Housing for Wales will be in relation to associations registered with it—that is, with associations based in Wales. That does not mean, however, that English-based associations working in Wales must return to the other side of the border. Their contribution to meeting housing need in Wales has been greatly valued and, where appropriate, efforts will be made to encourage them to continue their operations in Wales.

New clause 27 replaces clause 54 as it appears in the Bill, as amended in Standing Committee. It revises the definition of "corporation" to include Housing for Wales. It also introduces a new schedule—listed as amendment No. 241—which brings together all the proposed amendments to the Housing Associations act 1985 needed to facilitate the establishment of Housing for Wales and Scottish Homes, which is being established by the Housing (Scotland) Bill 1988. More specifically, the schedule brings together the amendments to the 1985 Act that were previously set out in schedule 12 to this Bill, amendments to the act arising from the establishment of Housing for Wales, and amendments that reproduce the effect of amendments made by schedule 3 to the Housing (Scotland) Bill to allow for the creation of Scottish Homes.

The schedule also contains several provisions that make detailed amendments to strengthen the Housing Corporation's powers of supervision over registered housing associations. Such powers will, of course, also be available to Housing for Wales and Scottish Homes.

Under the new housing policies in the Bill, the supervisory role of the corporations will become even more important. In particular, potential private financiers will be looking for a reassurance that mechanisms are in place that will ensure standards of probity and allow prompt action against misdemeanours. The existing powers have served us quite well since 1974, but experience has brought a number of gaps and deficiencies to light.

The changes in this schedule are of a technical nature, drawing in some instances on precedents in other legislation. They relate primarily to the corporations' powers to conduct formal inquiries under section 28 of the Housing Associations Act 1985 into the affairs of associations and act on the findings of those inquiries. Since 1974, the Housing Corporation has set up about 20 inquiries, either prompted by indications of malpractice or arising from serious financial or management difficulties. In some cases, the corporation has found that the restrictions on its powers have made it more difficult to establish the facts and have prevented it from acting quickly to put matters right.

Those amendments do not represent an accretion of power to the corporations. They merely close a number of gaps which the Government believe ought to be closed in order to ensure that the corporations are properly equipped to supervise that important and growing area of financial activity.

There are in addition a whole raft of consequential amendments arising from the Housing for Wales proposals. I will deal with them briefly.

Amendment 239 amends the long title of the Bill to make reference to the establishment of Housing for Wales.

Amendments 242 to 244 relate to the amendments to be made to schedule 12 in order to accommodate those which relate specifically to the establishment of Housing for Wales; while amendment 245 lists those consequential amendments which are required to various Acts to take account of the fact that Housing for Wales will in future be undertaking the functions in Wales which are presently undertaken by the Housing Corporation.

[Mr. Grist]

Amendment 246 deletes the specific reference to the Housing Corporation in clause 45, and replaces it with "corporation" as the generic term to be used in the legislation for both the Housing Corporation and Housing for Wales.

Amendment 247 enables the two corporations to agree between themselves what proportion of grant should be deemed to have been paid to an association if a grant-aided property is transferred from an association registered with one corporation to an association registered with the other.

Amendment 248 deletes clause 52. That is a drafting amendment consequential on the provisions contained in the clause now appearing in paragraph 34 of the new schedule detailing amendments to the Housing Associations Act 1985.

Amendment 249 deletes clause 54. That allows the introduction of new clause 27, dealing with the interpretation of part II and amendments to the Housing Associations Act 1985.

Amendment 250 brings Housing for Wales within the scope of clause 98. That deals with disposals of property under tenants' choice. Once properties have been acquired under tenants' choice, their subsequent disposal will be subject to the Secretary of State's consent. The effect of this amendment is to place a obligation on the Secretary of State to consult Housing for Wales if he receives a proposal to dispose of land in Wales owned by a registered housing association.

Finally, amendments 251 to 252 make additions to the schedule of repeals consequent upon the terms of the various amendments I have already mentioned.

The amendments I have outlined are necessary to give Wales its own housing corporation to help tackle its own housing problems. I urge all hon. Members to agree to their addition to the Bill.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I say at the outset that I regard new clause 25 and the other schedules and amendments in the context of Welsh housing as a whole. A cursory glance at the Government's own financial statistics reveals the cut in resources and the neglect of the past nine years. Homelessness in Wales now sticks out like a sore thumb.

The important point is that the Housing Bill has been through its Standing Committee. Now, at this late stage, the Housing Corporation has had its Welsh arm lopped off, to be created into a new body called Housing for Wales. Why should that new development be sprung on the people of Wales so belatedly? Housing for Wales will essentially be a quango. There are hordes of them in Wales. They are thoroughly undemocratic, unrepresentative bodies, which are unduly open to governmental interference and pressure. What is more, there was no opportunity in Committee to discuss the proposal in depth.

It could be said that Scotland has had a fairer deal because the proposal for the Scottish body, to be called Scottish Homes, was included in the original draft of the Bill. Wales has again been neglected, largely because the Conservative party has such a negligible following there. Our English Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) has considerable powers under the proposals. As the Under-Secretary of State has already said, those powers extending to the appointment of staff, including the chief executive, are laid down in statute. Housing for Wales will have far fewer staff than its English equivalent. The Under-Secretary of State told us that it will be called Tai Cymru. However, I tend to think of it as "Walker's poodle".

The predecessor of the present Secretary of State for Wales had quite a long run at the Welsh Office—eight years. He regularly and systematically stuffed bodies throughout Wales with Conservative placemen who are unrepresentative of the people of Wales. Lord Crickhowell has now departed to a new and highly remunerative life in quango-land. Perhaps the belated nature of new clause 25 is due to the sensational proposals which have been reported as being in the mind of the present Secretary of State. He is reported as speaking about getting rid of council housing in Wales. Apparently, he spoke about properties being sold to their sitting tenants for £1 a time. Those are the sort of gimmicks that we have come to expect from the right hon. Member for Worcester.

In fairness to the Under-Secretary of State, he touched on the issue of staff. The people who will be transferred from the Housing Corporation to Housing in Wales will be encouraged to stay in Wales. I fully appreciated that point, but we would like assurances that those transferred will receive the same pay and conditions as hitherto.

In conclusion, and bearing in mind the criticism that I have made, we broadly support the creation of this new body for Wales, but I repeat that we deeply resent the way in which it has been introduced.

Mr. Wigley: I should like to extend a welcome to this initiative of Tai Cymru. Although many people would have liked greater discussion as the ideas were being developed, that is not a reason for being against the ideas when they do arise. That initiative is taken against a background of pretty appalling housing in Wales. There are housing problems in the old industrial valleys of south Wales, in the slate quarrying towns of north Wales and also in many rural areas. In the Dwyfor area in my constituency, the worst figures were revealed in the recent housing condition survey published by the Welsh Office. The relevance of housing associations and therefore the relevance of Tai Cymru arises in terms of the difficulties facing local people in securing adequate housing for their needs.

9.45 pm

The problems are different in many areas in Wales. I can speak from experience of my constituency where more and more local people find it almost impossible to buy houses because of the pressure of people moving into the area who can pay enormous sums for houses. More and more people understandably want to leave the south-east of England to go to the beautiful country in Gwynedd. They can sell a house down here for £200,000 or £250,000 and buy a house in my area for £50,000 or £60,000. They can then bank about £200,000 and live off the difference. Down here, £50,000 or £60,000 may be cheap for a house, but that is a large sum in areas like mine, where salaries of £5,000 or £6,000 a year may be the norm and where the mortgage capacity might be £20,000 to £25,000. In other words, people find that they cannot compete in the open market to buy houses.

In recent weeks, many constituents have told me that their children cannot afford a house when they get

married. That runs side by side with the fact that the rented housing stock has been sold off. Very few new rented units have been built, so waiting lists for houses in towns like Pwllheli in my constituency have increased substantially. I have received complaints from people in Pwllheli that it is very difficult to obtain rented accommodation, even though this winter the total male unemployment level in Pwllheli was 24·7 per cent. That was one of the worst levels in Wales. If people cannot afford to compete to buy houses and if there is no rented housing available, we will build up an enormous problem. The Government must be aware of that problem and the magnitude of what it could lead to in future.

The relevance of housing associations is considerable. If they have the resources—I emphasise that, because the amount of resources available to Tai Cymru is critical—they may be able to move into the private housing sector to buy up some houses that need to be renovated and repaired, use public sector resources for that purpose and therefore let those properties optimistically at a rent that people can afford. Housing associations have warned of the dangers from the present legislation. Rent levels might be so high as to be out of the reach of ordinary people.

The average income of people living in housing association houses in Cymdeithas Tai Eryri, a housing association in my constituency, has been calculated at under £60 a week. That is the income level per household. If that level has to finance a rent which must attract capital from the private sector, there could be considerable problems.

One would not expect rent to be more than 25 per cent. of total income. That suggests a rent capability in many housing association houses of about £15 a week. However, we know that, if housing associations have to go to the private sector for part of their capital, the pressure will be for higher rents.

Housing associations in Wales have an opportunity, to make a considerable impact on the problems of homelessness and poor housing. However, that can be achieved only if housing associations have adequate resources to buy in the housing stock they need and to repair it, and if they can do that job with public funds in a way that enables them to charge a rent that their tenants looking for housing can pay. Those are the challenges facing those who are to be involved in Tai Cymru.

If they are afforded sufficient resources and are allowed enough flexibility to get on with the job, those people can make a considerable contribution. In no way do I wish to belittle the part played by housing associations. Some of them are first-class, not only in rural areas but also in dealing with the disabled and the elderly. There are a number of Welsh housing associations doing excellent work. However, they will have to work within the confines of both the Bill and the finances which the Government make available.

I acknowledge the problems to which the hon. Member for Newport East (Mr. Hughes) referred, when he spoke of establishing another quango. It will be another quango, and that will create problems—but until we have an elected democracy in Wales, I suspect that we shall have to live with quango Wales. It has become a feature of our lives. Meanwhile, the question is whether the new body can do some reasonable work. I believe that it provides an opportunity, and when the Under-Secretary of State winds up I should like to hear from him more commitment in terms of the resources which are to be made available, to ensure that the housing associations looking to Tai Cymru for a lead will be able to respond in a way that is meaningful, in meeting the needs of the people they serve. If the associations can do that, it will be a tremendous opportunity. If they cannot, it will be merely window dressing.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): This is a nominal attempt to create a Welsh body, which is obviously essential, but what will it do to improve the Welsh housing situation? It will be in the hands of the Secretary of State for Wales, and he will continue to decide matters and not the new body, given the stranglehold of nomination and controls he will have over it.

Ministers have had to be reminded by their own Back Benchers that small housing associations must be able to do their job, but what are the Government trying to do with this new body and with other amendments before the House? Will they place unrealistic expectations on housing associations through the new body in Wales, so as to cover up the Government's lack of a real housing policy? The Minister spoke of the new body having roots in Wales, but it will be dominated to the point of dictatorship by a Secretary of State whose roots are not based in Wales.

Housing associations which are small and community based, and which are sensitive to specific community or special needs, can do a tremendous job. I know of many such examples in Cardiff. However, is the new body meant to preside over the replacement of public sector housing run by councils until now? If that is the intention, the new body cannot do that job. I and many of my hon. Friends would not pretend that public sector management of council houses has been perfect over the years, but neither has it been as bad as Conservative Members seem to believe. I served on the local housing authority for 15 years and saw the situation improve over a period.

The real hurt has been the lack of Government resources since 1979, giving rise to unacceptable distortions, family pressures and homelessness. What will the creation of Housing for Wales do for housing in Wales? The intentions of the Secretary of State for Wales and the Government are unclear. There is in the Bill a black hole which cannot be disguised by amendments such as this. What will the Government do to support housing associations and to provide sufficient housing to meet the needs of the Welsh people?

There is an English document relating to the transfer of housing from the council sector. We are told that there will be a significantly different document for Wales. That is just as well, because the English document is appalling, based on a sectarian and narrow view. Where and when will the announcement about the policy for Wales be made? That will surely provide the meat for a great deal of the activity to be supervised by the new body.

The Government's intentions are unclear. For the Minister to refer to the technicalities of the amendments without explaining what the Secretary of State will do through this body—how he will enable housing associations to do a real job for Wales—is entirely inadequate. The Minister has not made a case for the body; he has merely said that it would be advantageous to have such a body for Wales. We all agree with that, but where is the real direction and policy for it and for housing associations in Wales? We have heard nothing of that.

Mr. Morgan: I have two major criticisms to put to the Minister in the brief time that remains. One relates to my experience as the only Welsh Opposition Member on the Standing Committee. I feel intense resentment, as will every member of the housing profession in Wales. The equivalent body for Scotland, Scottish Homes, was introduced at the proper time so that the legislation could be gone through line by line and proper consultation could take place with the local authorities, the Institute of Housing and the National Federation of Housing Associations about the powers and resources that it would be given. However, the Government are willing to try to get away with things in Wales. They consider Wales to be an afterthought.

If the Minister is honest, he will have to admit that the Government would not have tried this with Scotland. Such "afterthought" treatment produces intense anger among tenants and housing professionals in Wales—and, above all, among Opposition Members who, having submitted their names for membership of the Standing Committee, find that key items of legislation for Wales are left out until the Report stage.

We are not willing to put up with that. The amendments contain 12 pages of detailed verbiage on the setting up of Housing for Wales, but there is no chance for proper line-by-line examination in Committee, although that is what a Committee stage is for. That is appalling treatment of the Principality. Rather than the lame excuses that the Minister of State has given so far, we need proper treatment of Welsh legislation in Committee. We shall not stand for this again. I put that on record as a member of a Committee that considered a very long Bill.

I also object to the way in which the Minister has introduced the content of the Bill. He has said—with the Welsh Office's now familiar line in hubris—"We are setting up a new housing corporation to deal with Wales's housing needs." But there has been no word of how the corporation will match those special needs. Everyone who lives in Wales knows what they are. We know that Welsh housing tends on average to be much older than housing in England, because of the absence of any development in Wales between the wars. We also know that the social characteristics of Wales have made it the United Kingdom region which depends most on traditional heavy industries and that it tends to have a higher proportion of housing without the basic amenities. Moreover, incomes are insufficient for householders to carry out improvements of their own accord in the free market way possible in other parts of the United Kingdom. Wales depends much more on the public sector for the finance needed to bring Welsh housing up to standard.

There are many other problems. For instance, Wales has heavy rainfall and high winds, and hilly slopes cause damp to penetrate. Are the Government telling us that the resources available to Housing for Wales—or Tai Cymru, to use its short title—will be adequate? If so, will the Minister tell us what kind of problems he is talking about, rather than merely say that the body will deal with Wales's housing needs? Which needs is he talking about and how will it deal with them? So far he has given us shrinkage masquerading as growth. The funds available to Housing for Wales and the Housing Corporation for England, will be 10 per cent. less than those currently available to the Housing Corporation for England and Wales.

In his grand introduction the Minister told us that Housing for Wales will do the job. We strongly resent the implication that Housing for Wales will be capable of handling the growing housing needs of Wales. Much of the housing in Wales was built about 100 years ago and it is beginning to crumble. There was a massive expansion of housing between 1870 and 1914, from Cardiff to Blaenau Ffestiniog. It will land us with appalling problems over the next 20 to 30 years.

I welcome the fact that we have a new Secretary of State for Wales. He says that he will not choose the members of the quango from the Abergavenny triangle, which the previous Secretary of State for Wales tended to do. He believed that the members of all quangos should belong to the same cocktail party set so that the lines of communication would be short; they would then be able to communicate easily with each other. There will be different faces on the quango, but it will still be a quango.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Housing Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Morgan: If the words Tai Cymru are to mean anything, the body must expand. It must be capable of handling the massive housing needs of Wales. If not, it will be given the title of Ty Bach Cymru because it will be unable to carry out the job.

Mr. Simon Hughes: My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) is far away on Welsh Grand Committee business.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Where is he?

Mr. Hughes: He is with his colleagues in the far east. My hon. friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) said that when he served on the Welsh Grand Committee he never went further than Aberystwyth, so something has obviously changed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor referred in Committee, as did other Opposition Members, to the need for the provision of an independent housing organisation for Wales. We on these Benches welcome the creation of Tai Cymru, or Housing for Wales. I do so as an expatriate Welshman by name, by blood and by upbringing.

We now have a shell and a structure, but it will not meet the substantial housing needs of rural Wales unless it is provided with sufficient finance to do the job. Those who seek homes in Wales, particularly those who depend on housing associations when they begin married life, need homes at rents that they can afford to pay. That need is increasing in the disadvantaged rural areas, particularly in the north and the west of the Principality.

I hope that the precedent of Scottish Homes and Housing for Wales will be followed in England by devolution to the regions. The Housing Corporation should cease to be an ever-growing central quango. Devolution should lead to management being near to the services and to the people. I welcome the creation of Housing for Wales, and I hope that it means that the management of housing throughout England will soon be devolved. The Government must put their money where their words are, behind Housing for Wales. They must not allow it to become a token gesture towards alleviating the substantial housing crisis in the Principality.

Mr. Grist: It is a pity that the official Opposition so typically mean-minded and ungenerous about a proposal that has been welcomed by the local councils, the building industry, the building societies, the Housing Corporation and the housing associations. It is a pity that they cannot welcome bringing home to Wales the control over housing that at present is controlled by a quango in London. They complain about it being a quango. It is a quango now. I do not understand their approach.

The approach of the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) was particularly pernicious. He complained that we had not given enough time to the Opposition, but we certainly gave enough time to the people of Wales, and to those who are most closely involved with housing in Wales to make their opinions known. We provided sufficient time for constituents to contact their Member of Parliament and tell them what they thought, if they had any fears about the proposal. I have absolutely no hesitation in saying that it received the wholehearted support of the vast majority of the people of Wales. I am sorry that it has not had the support of those who sit on the Opposition Benches.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 26

TRANSFER TO HOUSING FOR WALES OF REGULATION ETC. OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS BASED IN WALES

'(1) Every registered housing association which, immediately before the appointed day,—

(a) is a society registered under the 1965 Act and has its registered office for the purposes of that Act in Wales, or

(b) is a registered charity and has its address for the purposes of registration by the Charity Commissioners in Wales,

shall on the appointed day cease to be registered in the register maintained by the Housing Corporation under section 3 of the Housing Associations Act 1985 and, by virtue of this subsection, be deemed to be registered in the register maintained by Housing for Wales under that section.

(2) Not later than one month before the appointed day, the Secretary of State shall notify every registered housing association which appears to him to be one which on that day will be deemed to be registered as mentioned in subsection (1) above of that fact and of the effect of that subsection.

(3) As soon as may be after the appointed day, Housing for Wales shall give notice of any registration effected by virtue of subsection (1) above,—

(a) if the housing association is a registered charity, to the Charity Commissioners; and

(b) if the housing association is a society registered under the 1965 Act, to the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies.

(4) All rights, liabilities and obligations to which, immediately before the appointed day, the Housing Corporation was entitled or subject in relation to—

(a) any registered housing association to which subsection (1) above applies, and

(b) land in Wales held by an unregistered housing association,

shall on that day become rights, liabilities and obligations of Housing for Wales.

(5) Any question whether any rights, liabilities or obligations have become rights, liabilities or obligations of Housing for Wales by virtue of subsection (4) above shall be determined by the Secretary of State.

(6) In this section—

"the 1965 Act" means the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965: and

"the appointed day" means the day appointed for the coming into force of this section.'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 27

INTERPRETATION OF PART II AND AMENDMENTS OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS ACT 1985

'(1) In this Part of this Act—

(a) "the 1985 Act" means the Housing Associations Act 1985;

(b) "the Corporation" means the Housing Corporation or, as the case may be, Housing for Wales; and

(c) subject to paragraph (b) above, "the Corporation" and other expressions used in this Part have the same meaning as in the 1985 Act.

(2) The 1985 Act shall have effect subject to the amendments in Schedule [*Amendments of Housing Associations Act 1985*] to this Act, being amendments—

(a) extending the supervisory powers conferred by Part I of the 1985 Act,

(b) making provision incidental to and consequential upon the establishment by this Part of this Act of Housing for Wales and the establishment by the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 of Scottish Homes; and

(c) making provision incidental to and consequential upon other provisions of this Part of this Act and the provisions of Part IV of this Act.

(3) In Schedule [*Amendments of Housing Association Act 1985*] to this Act,—

(a) Part I contains amendments of Part I of the 1985 Act, including amendments which reproduce the effect of amendments made by Schedule 3 to the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 with respect to Scottish Homes; and

(b) Parts II agd III contain amendments of Parts II and III respectively of the 1985 Act.

(4) Without prejudice to the operation of Schedule 3 to the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 in relation to anything done before the day appointed for the coming into force of this section, for the purpose of giving effect to the amendments in Part I of Schedule [*Amendments of Housing Association Act 1985*] to this Act, the said Schedule 3 shall be deemed never to have come into force.'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Brought up, read the first and Second time, and added to the Bill.

'HOUSING FOR WALES

Status

1.—(1) Housing for Wales is a body corporate and is in this Schedule referred to as "the Corporation".

(2) The Corporation is a public body for the purposes of the Prevention of Corruption Acts 1889 to 1916.

(3) The Corporation shall not be regarded—

(a) as the servant or agent of the Crown; or

(b) as enjoying any status, immunity or privilege of the Crown; or

(c) as exempt from any tax, duty, rate, levy or other charge whatsover, whether general or local;

and its property shall not be regarded as property of, or held on behalf of, the Crown.

Membership

2.—(1) The members of the Corporation shall be—

(a) not less than six nor more than eight persons appointed by the Secretary of State; and

(b) the chief officer of the Corporation appointed under paragraph 7 below;

and the members appointed under paragraph (a) above are in this Schedule referred to as the "appointed members".

(2) Before appointing a person to be a member of the Corporation the Secretary of State shall satisfy himself that he will have no financial or other interest likely to affect prejudicially the exercise of his functions as a member; and the Secretary of State may require a person whom he proposes to appoint to give him such information as he considers necessary for that purpose.

3.—(1) The appointed members shall hold and vacate office in accordance with the terms of their appointment, subject to the following provisions.

(2) A member may resign his membership by notice in writing addressed to the Secretary of State.

(3) The Secretary of State may remove a member from office if he is satisfied that—

(a) he has been adjudged bankrupt or made an arrangement with his creditors;

(b) he is incapacitated by physical or mental illness;

(c) he has been absent from meetings of the Corporation for a period longer than three consecutive months without the permission of the Corporation; or

(d) he is otherwise unable or unfit to discharge the functions of a member, or is unsuitable to continue as a member.

(4) The Secretary of State shall satisfy himself from time to time with respect to every appointed member that he has no financial or other interest likely to affect prejudicially the exercise of his functions as a member; and he may require an appointed member to give him such information as he considers necessary for that purpose.

Chairman and Deputy Chairman

4.—(1) The Secretary of State shall appoint one of the appointed members to be Chairman and may appoint one to be Deputy Chairman; and the members so appointed shall hold and vacate those offices in accordance with the terms of their appointment, subject to the following provisions.

(2) The Chairman or Deputy Chairman may resign by notice in writing addressed to the Secretary of State.

(3) If the Chairman or Deputy Chairman ceases to be a member of the Corporation, he also ceases to be Chairman or Deputy Chairman.

Remuneration and allowances

5.—(1) The Secretary of State may pay the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and appointed members such remuneration as he may, with the consent of the Treasury, determine.

(2) The Corporation may pay them such reasonable allowances as may be so determined in respect of expenses properly incurred by them in the performance of their duties.

Pensions

6.—(1) The Secretary of State may, with the consent of the Treasury, determine to pay in respect of a person's office as Chairman, Deputy Chairman or appointed member—

(a) such pension, allowance or gratuity to or in respect of that person on his retirement or death as may be so determined; or

(b) such contributions or other payments towards provisions for such pension, allowance or gratuity as may be so determined.

(2) As soon as may be after the making of such a determination the Secretary of State shall lay before each House of Parliament a statement of the amount payable in pursuance of the determination.

(3) Sub-paragraph (1) does not apply in the case of a member who has been admitted in pursuance of regulations under section 7 of the Superannuation Act 1972 to participate in the benefits of superannuation fund maintained by a local authority.

(4) In such a case the Secretary of State shall make any payments required to be made to the fund in respect of the member by the employing authority and may make such deductions from his remunerations as the employing authority might make in respect of his contributions to the fund.

Staff

7.—(1) There shall be a chief executive of the Corporation.

(2) After consultation with the Chairman or person designated to be chairman of the Corporation, the Secretary of State shall make the first appointment of the chief executive on such terms and conditions as he may, with the consent of the Treasury, determine.

(3) The Corporation, with the approval of the Secretary of State, may make subsequent appointments to the office of chief executive on such terms and conditions as the Corporation may, with the approval of the Secretary of State given with the consent of the Treasury, determine.

8.—(1) The Corporation may appoint, on such terms and conditions as it may, with the approval of the Secretary of State, determine, such other employees as it thinks fit.

(2) In respect of such of its employees as it may, with the approval of the Secretary of State, determine, the Corporation shall make such arrangements for providing pensions, allowances or gratuities as it may determine; and such arrangements may include the establishment and administration, by the Corporation or otherwise, of one or more pension schemes.

(3) The reference in sub-paragraph (2) above to pensions, allowances or gratuities to or in respect of employees of the Corporation includes a reference to pensions, allowances or gratuities by way of compensation to or in respect of any of the Corporation's employees who suffer loss of office or employment or loss of diminution of emoluments.

(4) The Secretary of State with the consent of the Treasury may, by statutory instrument subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament, make regulations providing for—

(a) the transfer to, and administration by, Housing for Wales of any superannuation fund maintained by the House Corporation in terms of the provisions of any scheme made under section 7 of the Superannuation Act 1972; and

(b) the modification, for the purposes of the regulations, of that section or any scheme thereunder.

(5) If an employee of the Corporation becomes a member of the Corporation and was by reference to his employment by the Corporation a participant in a pension scheme administered by it for the benefit of its employees—

(a) the Corporation may determine that his service as a member shall be treated for the purposes of the scheme as service as an employee of the Corporation whether or not any benefits are to be payable to or in respect of him by virtue of paragraph 6 above; but

(b) if the Corporation does so determine, any discretion as to the benefits payable to or in respect of him which the scheme confers on the Corporation shall be exercised only with the approval of the Secretary of State.

(6) Any reference in the preceding provisions of this paragraph to the approval of the Secretary of State is a reference to that approval given with the consent of the Treasury.

9.—(1) Not later than such date as the Secretary of State may determine, the Corporation shall make an offer of employment by it to each person employed immediately before that date by the Housing Corporation in connection with functions in Wales; and any question as to the persons to whom an offer of employment is to be made under this paragraph shall be determined by the Secretary of State.

(2) The terms of the offer shall be such that they are, taken as a whole, not less favourable to the person to whom the offer is made than the terms on which he is employed on the date on which the offer is made.

(3) An offer made in pursuance of this paragraph shall not be revocable during the period of 3 months commencing with the date on which it is made.

10.—(1) Where a person becomes an employee of the Corporation in consequence of an offer made under paragraph 9 above, then, for the purposes of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, his period of employment with the Housing Corporation, shall count as a period of employment by the Corporation, and the change of employment shall not break the continuity of the period of employment.

(2) Where an offer is made in pursuance of paragraph 9 above to any person employed as mentioned in that paragraph, none of the agreed redundancy procedures applicable to such a person shall apply to him; and where that person ceases to be so employed—

(a) on becoming a member of the staff of the Corporation in consequence of that paragraph, or

(b) having unreasonably refused the offer,

Part VI of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 shall not apply to him and he shall not be treated for the purposes of any scheme under section 24 of the Superannuation Act 1972 or any other scheme as having been retired on redundancy.

(3) Without prejudice to sub-paragraph (2) above, where a person has unreasonably refused an offer made to him in pursuance of paragraph 9 above, the Housing Corporation

shall not terminate that person's employment unless it has first had regard to the feasibility of employing him in a suitable alternative position with it.

(4) Where a person continues in employment in the Housing Corporation either—

(a) not having unreasonably refused an offer made to him in pursuance of this paragraph, or

(b) not having been placed in a suitable alternative position as mentioned in sub-paragraph (3) above,

he shall be treated for all purposes as if the offer mentioned in paragraph 9 above had not been made.

11.—(1) Any dispute as to whether an offer of employment complies with sub-paragraph (2) of paragraph 9 above shall be referred to and be determined by an industrial tribunal.

(2) An industrial tribunal shall not consider a complaint referred to it under sub-paragraph (1) above unless the complaint is presented to the tribunal before the end of the period of 3 months beginning with the date of the offer of employment or, in a case where the tribunal is satisfied that it was not reasonably practicable for the complaint to be presented before the end of the period of 3 months, within such further period as the tribunal considers reasonable.

(3) Subject to sub-paragraph (4) below, there shall be no appeal from the decision of an industrial tribunal under this paragraph.

(4) An appeal to the Employment Appeal Tribunal may be made only on a question of law arising from the decision of, or in proceedings before, an industrial tribunal under this paragraph.

Proceedings

12.—(1) The quorum of the Corporation and the arrangements relating to its meetings shall, subject to any directions given by the Secretary of State, be such as the Corporation may determine.

(2) The validity of proceedings of the Corporation is not affected by any defect in the appointment of any of its members.

13.—(1) Where a member of the Corporation is in any way directly or indirectly interested in a contract made or proposed to be made by the Corporation—

(a) he shall disclose the nature of his interest at a meeting of the Corporation, and the disclosure shall be recorded in the minutes of the Corporation; and

(b) he shall not take any part in any decision of the Corporation with respect to the contract.

(2) A general notice given by a member at a meeting of the Corporation to the effect that he is a member of a specified company or firm and is to be regarded as interested in any contract which may be made with the company or firm is a sufficient disclosure of his interest for the purposes of this paragraph in relation to a contract made after the date of the notice.

(3) A member need not attend in person at a meeting of the Corporation in order to make any disclosure which he is required to make under this paragraph provided he takes reasonable steps to secure that the disclosure is brought up and read at the meeting.

14.—(1) The fixing of the Corporation's seal may be authenticated by the signature of the Chairman or of any other person authorised for the purpose.

(2) A document purporting to be duly executed under the seal of the Corporation shall be received in evidence and be deemed to be so executed unless the contrary is proved.'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Schedule

'AMENDMENTS OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS ACT 1985

PART I

AMENDMENTS OF PART I WITH RESPECT TO THE HOUSING CORPORATION, HOUSING FOR WALES AND SCOTTISH HOMES

1. After section 2 there shall be inserted the following section—

"The Corporation

2A.—(1) In relation to a housing association which has its registered office for the purposes of the 1965 Act in Scotland, "the Corporation" means Scottish Homes.

(2) In relation to a housing association—

(a) which is a society registered under the 1965 Act and has its registered office for the purposes of that Act in Wales, or

(b) which is a registered charity and has its address for the purposes of registration by the Charity Commissioners in Wales,

"the Corporation" means Housing for Wales.

(3) In relation to any other housing association which is a society registered under the 1965 Act or a registered charity, "the Corporation" means the Housing Corporation.

(4) Subject to subsections (1) to (3), in this Act, except where the context otherwise requires, "the Corporation" means the Housing Corporation, Scottish Homes or Housing for Wales and "the Corporations" means those three bodies."

2. Except as provided below, for the words "Housing Corporation", in each place where they occur in Part I, there shall be substituted "Corporation".

3.—(1) In section 3 (the register), in subsection (1)—

(a) for the words "the Housing Corporation" there shall be substituted "each of the Corporations"; and

(b) after the word "Corporation", in the second place where it occurs, there shall be inserted "by which it is maintained".

(2) After subsection (1) of that section there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(1A) In this Act "register", in relation to the Corporation, means the register maintained by the Corporation under this section."

(3) In subsection (2) of that section the words "of housing associations maintained under this section" shall be omitted.

4.—(1) In section 5 (registration) for subsection (2) there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(2) Nothing in subsection (1) shall require the Corporations to establish the same criteria; and each of them may vary any criteria established by it under that subsection."

(2) For subsection (4) of that section there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(4) Where at any time a body is, or was, on a register maintained under section 3, then, for all purposes other than rectification of that register, the body shall be conclusively presumed to be, or to have been, at that time a housing association eligible for registration in that register."

5. In section 6(4) (removal from register) for paragraphs (a) to (c) there shall be substituted the following paragraphs—

"(a) a grant under section 41 (housing association grants),

(b) a grant under section 54 (revenue deficit grants),

(c) any such payment or loan as is mentioned in paragraph 2 or paragraph 3 of Schedule 1 (grant-aided land),

(d) a grant under section 2(2)(a) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988,

(e) a grant under section 45 of the Housing Act 1988 (housing association grants), or

(f) a grant under section 46 of that Act (revenue deficit grants)".

6. In section 7 (appeals against removal from the register), in subsection (1) for the words from "to the High Court" onwards there shall be substituted,—

"(a) where it is a decision of Scottish Homes, to the Court of Session; and

(b) in any other case, to the High Court".

7.—(1) In section 9 (control by Corporation of disposition of land by housing associations) for subsection (1) there shall be substituted the following subsections—

"(1) Subject to section 10, the consent of the Corporation is required for any disposition of land by a registered housing association except where the Secretary of State has given his consent to the disposition, or dispositions of the same class or description, in accordance with section 98(3) of the Housing Act 1988 (disposal of property acquired from a public sector landlord under Part IV of that Act).

(1A) Subject to section 10, the consent of the relevant Corporation is required for any disposition

of grant-aided land (as defined in Schedule 1) by an unregistered housing association; and for this purpose 'the relevant Corporation' means,—

(a) if the land is in England, the Housing Corporation;

(b) if the land is in Scotland, Scottish Homes, and

(c) if the land is in Wales, Housing for Wales.".

(2) In subsection (3) of that section—

(a) for the words "the consent of the Corporation", in the first place where they occur, there shall be substituted "consent"; and

(b) for the words "the consent of the Corporation", in the second place where they occur, there shall be substituted "that consent".

(3) After subsection (5) of that section there shall be added—

"(6) References in this section to consent are references,—

(a) in the case of the Housing Corporation or Housing for Wales, to consent given by order under the seal of the Corporation; and

(b) in the case of Scottish Homes, to consent in writing.".

8.—(1) In section 10 (dispositions excepted from section 9), in subsection (1) for the words from "the Charity Commissioners", in the second place where they occur, onwards there shall be substituted "before making an order in such a case the Charity Commissioners shall consult,—

(a) in the case of dispositions of land in England, the Housing Corporation;

(b) in the case of dispositions of land in Scotland, Scottish Homes, and

(c) in the case of dispositions of land in Wales, Housing for Wales.".

(2) In subsection (2) of that section at the end of paragraph (b) there shall be inserted "or

(c) a letting of land under an assured tenancy or an assured agricultural occupancy, or

(d) a letting of land in England or Wales under what would be an assured tenancy or an assured agricultural occupancy but for any of paragraphs 4 to 8 of Schedule 1 to the Housing Act 1988, or

(e) a letting of land in Scotland under what would be an assured tenancy but for any of paragraphs 3 to 8 and 12 of Schedule 4 to the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.".

9. For section 15A (which was inserted by section 14 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1986) there shall be substituted the following section—

"*Payments etc. in community-based housing associations in Scotland.*

15A.—(1) In relation to a community-based housing association in Scotland the following are also permitted, notwithstanding section 15(1)—

(a) payments made by the association in respect of the purchase of a dwelling, or part of a dwelling, owned and occupied by a person described in subsection (2) who is not an employee of the association; but only if—

(i) such payments constitute expenditure in connection with housing projects undertaken for the purpose of improving or repairing dwellings, being expenditure in respect of which housing association grants may be made under section 41(1); and

(ii) the purchase price does not exceed such value as may be placed on the dwelling, or as the case may be part, by the district valuer;

(b) the granting of the tenancy of a dwelling, or part of a dwelling, to such a person; but only if the person—

(i) lives in the dwelling or in another dwelling owned by the association; or

(ii) has at any time within the period of twelve months immediately preceding the granting of the tenancy lived in the dwelling (or such other dwelling) whether or not it belonged to the housing association when he lived there.

(2) The persons mentioned in subsection (1) are—

(a) a committee member or voluntary officer of the association; or

(b) a person who at any time in the twelve months preceding the payment (or as the case may be the granting of the tenancy) has been such a member or officer; or

(c) a close relative of a person described in paragraph (a), or (b).

(3) For the purposes of subsection (1), a housing association is "community-based" if—

(a) prior to the specified date, it was designated as such by the Housing Corporation; or

(b) on or after that date, it is designated as such by Scottish Homes;

and, in this subsection, "specified date" has the same meaning as in section 3 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.

(4) Scottish Homes—

(a) shall make a designation under subsection (3) only if it considers that the activities of the housing association relate wholly or mainly to the improvement of dwellings, or the management of improved dwellings, within a particular community (whether or not identified by reference to a geographical area entirely within any one administrative area); and

(b) may revoke such a designation (including a designation made by the Housing Corporation under subsection (3) above as originally enacted) if it considers, after giving the association an opportunity to make representations to it as regards such revocation, that the association's activities have ceased so to relate."

10. In section 16 (general power to remove committee member), in subsection (4) for the words from "order to the High Court" onwards there shall be substituted "order,—

(a) if it is an order of the Housing Corporation or Housing for Wales, to the High Court, and

(b) if it is an order of Scottish Homes, to the Court of Session."

11. In section 17 (power to appoint new committee members) at the end of subsection (1) there shall be added the words "and the power conferred by paragraph (c) may be exercised notwithstanding that it will cause the maximum number of committee members permissible under the association's constitution to be exceeded".

12.—(1) In section 18 (exercise of powers in relation to registered charities), in subsection (1) immediately before the entry relating to section 41 of the 1985 Act there shall be inserted the following entries—

"section 45 of the Housing Act 1988 (housing association grants).

section 46 of that Act (revenue deficit grants)".

(2) In subsection (3) of that section (appointment by Corporation of trustees of associations which are registered charities: appointments not to exceed maximum number of trustees) the words from "and the Corporation" onwards shall be omitted.

13. In section 19 (change of rules under the 1965 Act), in subsection (3) for the words "given by order under the seal of the Corporation" there shall be substituted "given,—

(a) in the case of the Housing Corporation or Housing for Wales, by order under the seal of the Corporation; and

(b) in the case of Scottish Homes, by notice in writing."

14. In section 21 (amalgamation and dissolution under the 1965 Act), in subsection (6) for the words from "are to an order" onwards there shall be substituted "are,—

(a) in the case of the Housing Corporation or Housing for Wales, to consent given by order under the seal of the Corporation; and

(b) in the case of Scottish Homes, to consent given in writing."

15. In section 22 (Corporation's power to petition for winding up), in subsection (1) after the word "applies" there shall be inserted "(a)" and at the end there shall be added "or

(b) on the ground that the association is unable to pay its debts within the meaning of section 518 of the Companies Act 1985.".

16.—(1) In section 24 (general requirements as to accounts and audit), in subsection (2) after the word "association" there shall be inserted "which is a registered charity".

(2) In subsection (5) of that section after the words "different areas" there shall be inserted "or for different descriptions of housing associations or housing activities".

(3) After subsection (5) of that section there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(6) For the purposes of subsection (5)(a), descriptions may be framed by reference to any matters whatever, including in particular, in the case of housing activities, the manner in which they are financed."

17. In section 27 (responsibility for securing compliance with accounting requirements), in subsection (2) at the end of paragraph (c) there shall be added "or

(d) section 50(9) of the Housing Act 1988 is not complied with".

18.—(1) In section 28 (Corporation may appoint a person to inquire into the affairs of a registered housing association), in subsection (1) for the words "the Corporation's staff" there shall be substituted "staff of any of the Corporations" and at the end of that subsection there shall be added "and, if the appointed person considers it necessary for the purposes of the inquiry, he may also inquire into the business of any other body which, at a time which the appointed person considers material, is or was a subsidiary or associate of the association concerned".

(2) In subsection (2) of that section at the end of paragraph (b) there shall be added "or

(c) any person who is, or has been, an officer, agent or member of a subsidiary or associate of the association; or

(d) any other person whom the appointed person has reason to believe is or may be in possession of information of relevance to the inquiry".

(3) After subsection (3) of that section there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(3A) Where, by virtue of subsection (2), any books, accounts or other documents are produced to the appointed person, he may take copies of or make extracts from them.

(3B) The appointed person may, if he thinks fit during the course of the inquiry, make one or more interim reports to the Corporation on such matters as appear to him to be appropriate."

(4) After subsection (5) of that section there shall be added the following subsections—

"(6) In this section, in relation to a housing association, "subsidiary" means a company with respect to which one of the following conditions is fulfilled,—

(a) the association is a member of the company and controls the composition of the board of directors; or

(b) the association holds more than half in nominal value of the company's equity share capital; or

(c) the company is a subsidiary, within the meaning of the Companies Act 1985 or the Friendly and Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1968, of another company which, by virtue of paragraph (a) or paragraph (b), is itself a subsidiary of the housing association;

and, in the case of a housing association which is a body of trustees, the reference in paragraph (a) or paragraph (b) to the association is a reference to the trustees acting as such and any reference in subsection (7) to the association shall be construed accordingly.

(7) For the purposes of subsection (6)(a), the composition of a company's board of directors shall be deemed to be controlled by a housing association if, but only if, the association, by the exercise of some power exercisable by the association without the consent or concurrence of any other person, can appoint or remove the holders of all or a majority of the directorships.

(8) In this section, in relation to a housing association "associate" means—

(a) any body of which the association is a subsidiary; and

(b) any other subsidiary of such a body.

and in this subsection "subsidiary" has the same meaning as in the Companies Act 1985 or the Friendly and Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1968 or, in the case of a body which is itself a housing association,

19. In section 29(1) (extraordinary audit) after the words "section 28" there shall be inserted "into the affairs of a registered housing association".

20.—(1) In section 30 (general powers of Corporation as a result of an inquiry or audit) after subsection (1) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(1A) If at any time the appointed person makes an interim report under section 28(3B) and, as a result of that interim report, the Corporation is satisfied that there has been misconduct or mismanagement as mentioned in subsection (1),—

(a) the Corporation may at that time exercise any of the powers conferred by paragraphs (b) to (d) of that subsection; and

(b) in relation to the exercise at that time of the power conferred by subsection (1)(b), the reference therein to a period of six months shall be construed as a reference to a period beginning at that time and ending six months after the date of the report under section 28(4)."

(2) In subsection (4) of that section (appeal against certain orders) for the words from "order to the High Court" onwards there shall be substituted "order,—

(a) if it is an order of the Housing Corporation or Housing for Wales, to the High Court; and

(b) if it is an order of Scottish Homes, to the Court of Session."

21.—(1) In section 31 (exercise of powers in relation to registered charities), in subsection (1) immediately before the entry relating to section 41 of the 1985 Act there shall be inserted the following entries—

"section 45 of the Housing Act 1988 (housing association grants), section 46 of that Act (revenue deficit grants)".

(2) At the end of subsection (2)(b) of that section there shall be added the words "and such other activities (if any) of the association as are incidental to or connected with its housing activities".

22. In section 33 (recognition of central association), in subsection (1) after "housing associations" there shall be inserted "in Great Britain or in any part of Great Britain".

23. In section 39 (minor definitions) before the definition of "mental disorder" there shall be inserted—

""assured tenancy" has, in England and Wales, the same meaning as in Part I of the Housing Act 1988 and, in Scotland, the same meaning as in Part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988;

"assured agricultural occupancy" has the same meaning as in Part I of the Housing Act 1988."

24. In section 40 (index of defined expressions in Part I)—

(a) after the entry relating to "appropriate registrar" there shall be inserted—

""assured agricultural occupancy"	section 39
"assured tenancy"	section 39";

(b) after the entry relating to "the Companies Act" there shall be inserted—

""the Corporation"	section 2A"; and

(c) in the entry beginning "register", in the second column for "3(2)" there shall be substituted "3".".

PART II

AMENDMENTS OF PART II WITH RESPECT TO THE HOUSING CORPORATION AND HOUSING FOR WALES

25.—(1) In section 63 (building society advances) for the words "the Housing Corporation", in each place where they occur in subsections (1) and (2), there shall be substituted "one of the Corporations" and in subsection (1)(b) for the words "the Corporation" there shall be substituted "that one of the Corporations which is concerned".

(2) After subsection (2) of that section there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) In this section "the Corporations" means the Housing Corporation and Housing for Wales".

26.—(1) In section 69 (power to vary or terminate certain agreements) at the end of subsection (1)(a) there shall be added "(including such an agreement under which rights and obligations have been transferred to Housing for Wales)".

2. After subsection (2) of that section there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) In the case of an agreement under which rights and obligations have been transferred to Housing for Wales, the reference to a party to the agreement includes a reference to Housing for Wales.".

27. In section 69A (land subject to housing management agreement) for the words "housing association grant, revenue deficit grant or hostel deficit grant" there shall be substituted "grant under section 45 (housing association grant) or section 46 (revenue deficit grant) of the Housing Act 1988".

28.—(1) In Part I of Schedule 5 (residual subsidies)—

(a) in paragraph 5(3) the words "at such times and in such places as the Treasury may direct" and "with the approval of the Treasury" shall be omitted; and

(b) at the end of paragraph 6(2)(b) there shall be added "or Housing for Wales".

(2) In Part II of that Schedule, in paragraph 5(3) the words "at such times and in such places as the Treasury may direct" and "with the approval of the Treasury" shall be omitted.

PART III

AMENDMENTS OF PART III WITH RESPECT TO THE HOUSING CORPORATION AND HOUSING FOR WALES

29.—(1) In section 74 (constitution of Housing Corporation etc.), in subsection (1) after the words "Housing Corporation" there shall be inserted "and Housing for Wales, each of".

(2) In subsection (2) of that section for the words "the Corporation" there shall be substituted "the Housing Corporation".

(3) At the end of that section there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(3) In this Part "registered housing association" in relation to the Corporation, means a housing association registered in the register maintained by the Corporation.

(4) In this Part,—

(a) in relation to land in Wales held by an unregistered housing association "the Corporation" means Housing for Wales; and

(b) in relation to land outside Wales held by such an association, "the Corporation" means the Housing Corporation."

30. In section 75 (general functions), in subsection (1)(c) for the words "a register of housing associations" there shall be substituted "the register of housing associations referred to in section 3".

31. At the end of section 77 (advisory service) there shall be added the following subsection—

"(3) The powers conferred on the Corporation by subsection (1) and (2) may be exercised by the Housing Corporation and Housing for Wales acting jointly".

32.—(1) In section 83 (power to guarantee loans), in subsection (3) (maximum amount outstanding in respect of loans etc.) for the words "the Corporation", in each place where they occur, there shall be substituted "the Housing Corporation".

(2) After subsection (3) of that section there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3A) The aggregate amount outstanding in respect of—

(a) loans for which Housing for Wales has given a guarantee under this section, and

(b) payments made by Housing for Wales in meeting an obligation arising by virtue of such a guarantee and not repaid to Housing for Wales,

shall not exceed £30 million or such greater sum not exceeding £50 million as the Secretary of State may specify by order made with the approval of the Treasury".

(3) In subsection (4) of that section (procedure for orders of Secretary of State) after the words "subsection (3)" there shall be inserted "or subsection (3A)".

33.—(1) In section 93 (limit on borrowing), in subsection (2) for the words from "shall not exceed" onwards there shall be substituted "shall not exceed the limit appropriate to the Corporation under subsection (2A)".

(2) At the end of subsection (2) of that section there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) The limit referred to in subsection (2) is,—

(a) in the case of the Housing Corporation, £2,000 million or such greater sum not exceeding £3,000 million as the Secretary of State may specify by order made with the consent of the Treasury; and

(b) in the case of Housing for Wales, £250 million or such greater sum not exceeding £300 million as the Secretary of State may specify by order made with the consent of the Treasury".

(3) In subsections (3) to (5) of that section for "(2)", in each place where it occurs, there shall be substituted "(2A)".

34. In section 106(1) (minor definitions: general) for the definition of "housing activities" there shall be substituted the following—

""housing activities", in relation to a registered housing association, means all its activities in pursuance of such of its purposes, objects or powers as are of a description mentioned in section 1(1)(a) or subsections (2) to (4) of section 4.""—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Clause 45

HOUSING ASSOCIATION GRANTS

Amendment made: No. 246, in page 33, line 41, leave out 'Housing Corporation ("the Corporation")' and insert 'Corporation'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I beg to move amendment No. 82, in page 33 line 43. at end insert—

'Where the expenditure incurred has been financed by a loan from a local authority, the grant shall be paid to the local authority'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider new clause 33—*Housing association grant on schemes sponsored by local authorities*—

'.—(1) Housing association grants shall be available under section 45 of this Act for housing associations schemes funded by local housing authorities within the meaning of section I of the Housing Act 1985.

(2) The terms under which housing associations grants are available for such schemes shall, taken as a whole, be not less favourable to housing associations than the terms in respect of schemes directly funded by the Housing Corporation.

(3) The Housing Corporation shall consult on grants for housing association schemes funded by local housing authorities with such associations as appear to them to be representative of such housing authorities and housing associations as regards:

(a) the amount of grant available;

(b) the procedures to be followed in relation to applications for grant;

(c) the circumstances in which grant is payable;

(d) the method for calculation and any limitations on grant;

(e) the manner in which and time or times at which grant is paid.'.

Mr. Howarth: The Government have tried to constrain or prevent local authorities from funding housing associations directly. It seems rather strange that the Government should try to carve out a new role for local authorities as a strategic authority—they do not envisage

local authorities being landlords on any great scale—while removing their ability to fund other bodies such as housing associations.

Many of us who have been deeply involved in housing for many years—as I have been, on Merseyside—have witnessed the good results of local authority funding of housing association schemes for the elderly and general family need, for example.

There is a more alarming point. I have here a letter from the chief officer, programme and operational support division, in the Housing Corporation, who was asked to comment on whether the Housing Corporation would be able to fund housing co-operatives. Housing co-operatives involve the same funding mechanism as housing associations. In reply to the National Federation of Housing Co-Operatives, he concluded in his letter dated 9 May 1988:

"In these circumstances, given the potential magnitude of calls upon our ADP resources, we have concluded that we have no option but to draw the line. Our present view is that we will not use ADP funds to enable council tenants to opt out of council housing through the formation of housing co-operatives or indeed through other housing association mechanisms."

In other words, the Housing Corporation's ability to fund housing associations to help council tenants, who often live in dreadful conditions or in bedroom spaces which are in short supply, will be constrained, so quite where the new initiatives in council estates and inner cities will come from, I am at a loss to understand.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I strongly agree with the hon. Gentleman. Does he agree that, on Merseyside, there are some good examples—especially in the city of Liverpool—of people grouping together to form a housing co-operative with help from housing associations? Without the funding that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, which can act as a catalyst and get them off the ground, there is no way in which people will be able to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. It is not good enough to express the sentiment—the cash is needed as well.

Mr. Howarth: That is absolutely right. The hon. Gentleman will remember the tenant rehousing programme in the city of Liverpool, which was a good example of what he describes. The local authority funded people to establish a co-operative scheme. That will not be possible under the new arrangements. The Housing Corporation has confirmed that it will not substitute those resources. I find that staggering and worrying. The Government support such initiatives, but they are removing all the funding mechanisms which go through the Housing Corporation or local authorities as a result of which those initiatives can come to fruition. Quite frankly, I am not quite sure that the Government realise the difficulties that they will create on the outer estates and in the inner cities. Even at this late hour, I hope that they will reconsider their position and produce a positive response to genuine fears.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman raised points about resources which are at the heart of a great deal of the measure. We are continuing our debate in Committee, which was a good debate, about what mechanism should be used and whether our original suggestion that the disadvantages of double scrutiny in Housing Association grant funding between the corporation and local authorities were so severe that we should cut through that by centralising it in the Housing Corporation. That had administrative gains, but there was the loss of pluralism in not having local authorities leading schemes. I well understand that everyone's capacity to do that depends on the resources available to them.

We are discussing the mechanism. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the clause as drafted enables local authorities to continue leading HAG-funded schemes and for the corporation to give the grants. It is our intention, as I announced on 23 May, that that should continue. We shall try to deal with the problem of double scrutiny that has irritated everyone, probably including the hon. Gentleman in the past when he was involved in these matters, by putting all that in the hands of the corporation.

Mr. George Howarth: Just to get the matter absolutely clear, is the Minister of State saying that the new clause as drafted will mean that local authorities can directly fund housing associations or co-operatives to house their tenants or anyone else in housing need?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Bill as drafted enables the Housing Corporation to fund housing association schemes which have been established by local authorities, as in the past. It makes no change to those arrangements except that the corporation alone will be responsible for vetting the scheme for grant which will help to speed things up. That will be done by the administrative arrangements. The local authority alone should be responsible for deciding whether public resources should be committed to it. Of course, they will be subject to normal capital controls, and there is also the separate argument about resources.

The Bill enables them to say, "We want to fund this housing association scheme to our housing investment programme allocation," as many boroughs in London, most famously the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea, have done for many years, and, "We shall have only single letting." I take it that my hon. Friend's new clause and the Opposition amendment were really probing amendments to make sure that that will continue to be possible. I can repeat the assurances which I gave in Committee and there is no question about them.

Mr. George Howarth: Will the Minister answer another of my points? As recently as 9 May, the Housing Corporation said that it will not use ADP funds to support schemes that essentially rehouse local authority tenants. Therefore, in many cases the Minister's assurances will not apply. People in housing that is inadequate in one way or another will not be able to get housing association or housing co-operative schemes funded.

Mr. Waldegrave: The schemes will be for the local authority to decide, as at present, and the Housing Corporation will pay HAG funding as in the past. The only change is that the vetting and scrutiny will be done only by the Housing Corporation.

New clause 33 sought to give local authority associations the same right to be consulted on the HAG rules for local authority sponsored schemes as the housing association movement, which does not seem to be right. It should be for the local authority to lead on the schemes and for the housing association movement and for the Housing Corporation to decide on the details of the funding arrangements that finance the schemes. I hope that my assurances which meet the points that were raised

[Mr. Waldegrave]

in Committee and the points raised by the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) tonight will enable my hon. Friend and the Opposition to withdraw the amendments.

10.15 pm

Mr. Alton: Before we move on, I should like to comment on one or two of the points made by the Minister. From my experience in Liverpool, where I was a housing committee chairman for some time and where we initiated a number of housing co-operative ventures, I am disappointed that the Government are not putting as much emphasis on the autonomous status of housing co-operatives as they are on housing associations. I agree with what the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said about the general role of housing associations and how they can act as useful catalysts. I am an enthusiast for housing associations, but I would prefer to place the emphasis and the money on groups of tenants who would like to take control for themselves through the establishment of housing co-operatives.

I am disappointed that we are not creating mechanisms that give tenants a chance to take over for themselves and to be able to establish and manage their housing co-operatives. We ought not to be placing obstacles in their way. I should like to see more resources allocated through the housing investment programme direct to council tenants. I do not believe that the Government have thought the matter through sufficiently.

There is the problem of recalcitrant local authorities which do not agree with the Government's position. My authority was an example of that. For two years, it adamantly refused to allow groups of tenants who wanted to establish housing co-operatives to do so. I introduced a ten-minute Bill to give tenants the right to establish co-operatives in the communities in which they live. Only last week the Bishop of Liverpool, David Sheppard, and the Archbishop, Derek Worlock, presided over the opening of the Eldonians, a housing co-operative in the heart of Liverpool. It is on a site that the tenants had to fight tooth and nail to acquire. They had to fight against all the odds, including the local authority, which tried to prevent them from obtaining the site. Now, the old Tate and Lyle site at Love lane in Liverpool is an exciting new housing co-operative. I pay tribute to the Government for their part in helping the tenants achieve that.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman was generous enough to forestall me. I had an exciting visit to the Eldonians the other day. Ironically, I was pressed strongly —we were able to accede to the request—to have the land transferred into the development corporation areas because it was felt that there would be much more co-operation. I hope that that will be the case.

Mr. Alton: I do not deny that there will probably be greater co-operation. However, there is no local accountability through the Housing Corporation. The problem is that the tenants were not able, within their local authority, to establish a housing co-operative and obtain direct funding. It is not a question of coming under a development corporation or a local authority. The tenants wanted to be able to take control and establish their housing co-operative.

That is a good illustration of all the obstacles that can be placed in the way of tenants. I pay tribute to the Merseyside improved housing association for providing advice and helping the tenants through the minefield that they had to negotiate. These tenants are a classic example of what can be achieved by unemployed people most of them were unemployed—living in a rundown tenement block in the heart of one of the worst inner-city areas in the country. They were able to take over, but how much better it would have been if the resources, power and control had been given to that self-help group early on. How much better it would have been if the bureaucracy, red tape and obstacles placed in their path by the local authority and through the various planning consents they had to acquire could have been removed. A golden opportunity that could have been taken in the Bill has been lost.

Mr. George Howarth: The Bill seems to be moving from muddle to chaos. Our amendment seeks to mitigate that. Therefore, we will press the amendment to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 184, Noes 234.

Division No. 349] **[10.18 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted

Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Thorne, Neil
Twinn, Dr Ian

Waddington, Rt Hon David	Widdecombe, Ann
Waldegrave, Hon William	
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*	Tellers for the Noes:
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*	Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Wheeler, John	Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Further consideration of the Bill adjourned.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Bill as amended (in the Standing Committee), to be further considered tomorrow.

ELECTRICITY (FINANCIAL PROVISIONS) (SCOTLAND) BILL [MONEY]:

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Electricity (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(a) any increase which is attributable to provisions of the Act raising to £3,000 million the limit imposed by and by virtue of section 29(1) of the Electricity (Scotland) Act 1979 in the sums payable out of National Loan Fund under section 24 of the said Act of 1979;

(b) payment out of Consolidated Fund of any increase so attributable in the corresponding sums which may require to be paid by way of guarantee under section 25 of the said Act of 1979; and

(c) payment of any sums into the National Loans Fund

PETITION

Opencast Mining (Mastin Moor)

10.32 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The petition is signed by Mr. and Mrs. J. Bowler of 7 Miller avenue, Mastin Moor, Chesterfield and by a further 694 of my constituents in Derbyshire, North-East who live in the Mastin Moor area. The petition has my full support. It says:

"To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of the residents of Mastin Moor Derbyshire

Sheweth

That proposals to introduce opencast mining on the Pinnock Site would

Bring increased subsidence to the area resulting in further deterioration of your Petitioners' homes.

Result in a devaluation of your Petitioners' homes.

Be nuisance to your Petitioners by reason of the operation of plant and machinery 24 hours a day causing noise, dust and pollution.

Mean that the Countryside and many forms of wildlife will be destroyed and local walks will be lost for ever.

Cause an increase in heavy traffic thereby being a danger to pedestrians especially children and the elderly.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will take measures to prevent the development of the Pinnock Site.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will pray that your Honourable House will take measures to prevent the development of the Pinnock Site."

To lie upon the Table.

Council Estates (Security Patrols)

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

10.34 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I begin by quoting the report of the chief constable of Hampshire for 1987, which contains some chilling figures. One paragraph states:

"Public disorder on the streets of Southampton has manifested itself in serious wounding offences including four murders."

As there were only 14 murders—if I may say "only"—throughout the length and breadth of Hampshire, the House will appreciate the seriousness of the offences taking place because so many young people now carry knives. In Hampshire there were 95,267 crimes, a recorded increase of 2,726, with a detection rate of 32,618 or 34·4 per cent.—just one out of every three crimes.

I called this debate because I felt that if even a small proportion of the thought, time and money expended on the terrible national problem of football hooliganism were spent on the seemingly insoluble problem of estate hooliganism, that problem would swiftly be solved. At present, we are just sitting down and letting it happen.

Great concern has been shown about the problem. The Home Office has produced an excellent booklet, "Practical Ways to Crack Crime", which I hope will be the subject of mass distribution throughout the United Kingdom. Other elements in that concern include a one-day seminar in London on Tuesday 28 June on "Combating Vandalism to Public Services". The seminar is financed by TVS and British Telecom and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will be speaking at it.

There is clearly a hiatus somewhere. We are all becoming aware of the problems, unfortunately, but more through watching football matches than through watching the vandalism on council estates. I believe, therefore, that it is time to go round the estates again. In 1978 I put forward a programme for security patrols on housing estates. These were intended not to take over the duties of the police but to supplement them and to convey information to the police between the hours of 4 pm and midnight each day.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and some chief constables are firmly convinced that neighbourhood watch schemes are a good thing. There are currently about 50,000 such schemes covering more than 3·5 million households and they seem to be doing a worthwhile job. I am worried, however, because this aspect is left entirely to the discretion of the chief constable concerned and I must tell the House with some regret that Southampton does not enjoy neighbourhood watch schemes of any importance.

Community policing is extremely worth while but, as every Member of Parliament knows, each year brings requests for further increases in establishment.I have here a plea from the Hampshire police authority for an increase of 47 in the establishment for next year. From year to year, I have been perfectly willing to support the police in lobbying the Home Secretary.

I am particularly concerned in that problem areas such as Lord's hill have not received any increase in police establishment. The chief constable of Hampshire and the Hampshire police authority are worried about manning levels. They wish next year to take the full establishment to 3,175 men. Also, to enable experienced police officers to re-join the beat and be released from administrative tasks, they are continuing their programme of recruiting civilians. We need more civilians in police headquarters, and we need more security services provided by the private sector.

If neighbourhood watch schemes will not work on large council estates—due to harassment of committee members or, perhaps, because of the feeling about "grassing" to the police—we must think of the next move. The next move is to encourage civilians to take part in neighbourhood watch schemes, to observe, distribute leaflets, and to communicate with the police—to become almost a civilian arm of the police force. If neighbourhood watch schemes cannot be set up in certain neighbourhoods, it is perfectly logical for the relevant local authority to set up a similar watching patrol. When I suggested that alternative some years ago, there was a good deal of acceptance by those living on council estates.

Estate officers would have a terrible task. They would need to have a high profile, prevent vandalism and the incidence of graffiti and anti-social behaviour. They would have to try to prevent abuse of amenity areas, underpasses and play areas. They would have to establish links with tenants and their problems. They would have to identify problem areas and families for committee action as appropriate. They would have to be a liaison force with the police. If they found poor maintenance or vandalism—on some estates, whole brick walls have been pushed over—they would have to take the problems to the relevant part of the housing management and, of course, report repairs when needed. They would have a primary role.

I have often thought that it is quite wrong for local authorities of whatever colour and persuasion to build estates worth many millions of pounds and then to say, "That is it. Put the people in and let them get on with it. If they do not get on with each other, so what?" As we all know, even if one asks for an unneighbourly family in a row of houses to be moved because they do not get on well with their neighbours, it is almost impossible to remove the rotten apple from the barrel.

We have created vast concrete estates—I shall not call them jungles, as they are beautifully laid out, but many safety measures were not built into the architectural brief. We developed such estates throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Thank goodness many local authorities, including my own, stopped high-rise building in the 1960s. Of course, the great problem in moving a man, his wife and a couple of little babies to a new estate is that, 15 years later, we shall have an army of teenagers. Some of them may be the most upright citizens in the world, but many of them join gangs.

My supposition is that those gangs are a microcosm of the football hooligan group. If a person is to learn the basic arts of gang warfare, what better place than on a council estate—such as Lord's hill in Southampton—where the only opposition is one policeman? It is hard for my hon. Friends to believe, but there is only one policeman on a bicycle, who is the sole communicator with the police station almost two miles away. Of course, those gangs of youths, even if they are moved on because someone has phoned the police, re-form in a few minutes.

Those gangs harass the elderly by their presence, by the bricks and rubble that they throw at windows and by the disgusting materials that they push through people's letter

[Mr. James Hill]

boxes; and, of course, the least word that is said by those elderly people against them is greeted with a complete conversation of four-letter words.

When helping the BBC and the ITV to make a programme on the estates so that they could see what was happening, there were many complaints but practically no one wanted to be identified. No one wanted to stand up and say, "Those hooligans are here every evening and I am not afraid of them." What they actually said was, "I will tell you everything, but I do not want my name and address to go forward." That is the first time that I have ever seen the British public afraid of the television camera. Normally, they gather around TV cameras like bees around honey. But the fear on the estate was radiated through to the television cameras. That is something that cannot be allowed to continue.

Of course, if there are young children of five, six and seven developing this trend, it is they who will eventually become the teenagers who are the muggers, the rapists or the murderers. We have to think long and hard whether we will allow the collective strength of those groups—unopposed by any real force—to destroy children's playgrounds, pull down massive fences, kick in doors, smash windows and push unspeakable objects through letter boxes.

I have great regard for the police, but even if the incidents are reported to the police, they can do little or nothing about most of them. Until a physical act takes place and the person can be identified—which is so difficult when dealing with a group—the police are helpless. That is why security patrols should come on to the council estates.

Hon. Members may ask who will pay for this. In the days when I first suggested those security patrols, the council tenants were willing to pay 4p, 5p or 6p a week for them. Now the picture has slightly changed. We have sold off a lot of the council houses and it would be a terrible problem collecting a levy from every person who would be safeguarded by those security patrols.

That may be one sector in law and order that the Home Secretary might wish to look at, with the idea of making it mandatory for local government to safeguard its own property—shops as well as flats and houses—but, most of all, its tenants. That can only be done by way of a subsidy. It would be a small sum and it could be taken out of the capital receipts from the sale of council houses. Although it would be a small sum, it would go a long way towards assisting the police. I hope that if my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary gives the Hampshire police authority 47 more established places next year he makes sure that most of them are in the black areas that I have described.

I should like to leave plenty of time for my hon. Friend the Minister of State to reply. I know that I have not given him warning of some of the points that I have raised, but as passionate Conservatives we must deal with the harassment that I have described. If that means spending a little money outside the police area, it would be well worth spending.

10.50 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) is well known to the people of Southampton for the interest that he takes in such issues as this. I am advised that, for the three or four years that he was the distinguished chairman of the housing committee of Southampton city council, he took a special interest in trying to arrange the sorts of security and anti-vandal patrols on our great housing estates which he believed then and believes now—I have more than a shred of belief myself—could under certain circumstances, perhaps when all else has failed, have an effect.

I welcome very much the welcome that my hon. Friend gave to what the Home Office is trying to do on crime prevention and the tribute that he paid to those who composed the booklet, "Crime—Together We Can Crack It". My hon. Friend asked how many of those booklets have now been distributed around the country. I advise him that demand has almost outstripped supply. We have distributed about 1 million copies of the booklet and will shortly have to reprint a revised and updated version. It has had a warm welcome.

Many crimes in this country are eminently preventable—for example, one quarter of all domestic burglaries and perhaps one in five of all car crimes. People must and should, take more care of their property because one of the things that so contribute to the feeling of fear and uncertainty on our great housing estates is the fact that people read in the headlines that hundreds of thousands of crimes are being reported. However, many of those crimes are petty, and many are avoidable.

About 95 per cent. of all crime is not against the person, but against property. However, crimes against the person, such as my hon. Friend referred to in Southampton, are important, as were the remarks made in the chief constable's report about violent crime. I was extremely disturbed to learn from my hon. Friend the facts about the incidents, which I judge to be stabbings and woundings, which have caused so much trouble in the streets of his beautiful and prosperous city.

I advise people who go about armed with sharp-bladed instruments such as knives, stilettos, Stanley knives and other implements of wounding—and sometimes, alas, murder—that the Criminal Justice Bill, which returns to the Floor of the House on Thursday this week, introduces severe new penalties for those who are caught, not just using but even carrying sharp-bladed instruments in the streets without due reason. Over the years, the classic defence of the yob and the bully when he has been searched and found to have a knife on his or, more rarely her, person has been, "Oh, I use it for peeling oranges, guv, —or constable." That has been used time after time, but will no longer apply, and people will be severely treated for the offence.

In the Criminal Justice Bill, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department is bent on introducing for the first time the prosecution right of appeal through our right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General against allegedly over-lenient sentences. That is something that people who go about armed, bent on causing trouble, in our great cities such as Southampton, should face up to.

There are severe new penalties in the Criminal Justice Bill which I hope will act as a deterrent. I hope that, in a year or two, the chief constable's report will not need to refer to such tragic events. So much depends on excellent policing and the work of those who police cities such as Southampton. I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to

those who police our cities. I know that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is looking forward very much to the TVS semipar to which my hon. Friend referred.

Law and order and crime are at the centre of public debate, and we must realise that. As I have said, so much is prevertable. The effort that can be made, sometimes on very difficult housing estates is formidable where neighbourhood watch schemes have been started up and successfully implemented. When the Government came to power in 1979, there were no neighbourhood watch schemes. In 1982, the first such scheme was started, and now, in 1988, there are some 50,000. The number is growing fast; the momentum is unstoppable. I hope that my hon. Friend will correct me if I am wrong, but I was sorry to hear that neighbourhood watch schemes in some parts of Southampton at least had not been progressing as fast or developing as well as my hon. Friend had hoped. However, perhaps I misunderstood my hon. Friend.

Mr. Hill: My hon. Friend understood me very well. I have asked numerous questions to try to get the Home Secretary to ensure that the chief constable of Hampshire was happy to set up the neighbourhood watch schemes. He is more concerned with community policing. As we cannot set up neighbourhood watch schemes on the vast estates, we shall have to try another method.

Mr. Patten: Those are operational matters for the chief constable to decide. Although the police have the primary role to play in crime prevention, they need not necessarily have the major role to play in setting up neighbourhood watch schemes. In many parts of the country, the local community has taken the lead and demanded neighbourhood watch schemes in those areas. I have seen that on numerous visits around the country.

It is clear from recent published research—and by recent I mean within the past 14 days—that, on some of the most difficult housing estates in the country, concentrated neigbourhood watch schemes can produce radical reductions in crime. I do not think that neighbourhood watch works only in the leafy suburbs or in middle-class, well organised areas; it works extremely well in many areas where there are housing estates. The research to which I have referred deals with an estate in Rochdale. That estate suffered from difficulties similar to those experienced on the housing estate referred to by my hon. Friend. The estate in Rochdale housed 2,000 people, but in only seven months under an intensive neighbourhood watch scheme, domestic burglaries were reduced by 60 per cent. That depended a great deal on the commitment of local people and the police. It also depended on the commitment of all the people involved in running the estate.

That is important, and that is where my hon. Friend's experience showed as a distinguished ex-chairman of housing in Southampton. He is aware how complex and difficult the problem is and how good management is at the root of so much that can be done on our estates to provide better housing that is desperately needed and a better environment, a better neighbourhood and a safer community in which people can grow up.

The work being carried out by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning is very important. The Department of the Environment has assisted local authorities to try to manage estates better through the priority estates project, and a similar project is sponsored by the Welsh Office. The priority estates project has achieved remarkable improvements in some very difficult estates through the twin process of devolving responsibility for essential management functions to the estate, rather than doing everything through the town hall, and involving residents as fully as possible in the running of estates.

I am convinced that, in improving the environment, the neighbourhood and community safety, it is critical to use the active citizens who are to be found on all of our estates as much as possible. That is why my Department is impressed by what has been achieved and has mounted its own study into the effects of the approach I have mentioned on the level of vandalism on a sample of estates.

I am delighted that the Department of the Environment in particular can give such formidable help to a number of local schemes around the country, in terms of additional finance, and that the Estates Action programme run by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is contributing so much to, for example, the arrangements to put caretakers into blocks of flats so that they may be properly guarded and secure, with entry and exit made fast.

That has greatly turned around a number of high-rise blocks and estates which were hitherto very rundown. A recent pilot scheme in west London showed what can be achieved. It involved a typical, system-built block of flats, of the kind which can, I know, be found in my hon. Friend's constituency too, which suffered high levels of vandalism and other crime.

The experiment was terribly simple but very effective. Two receptionists were installed. I greatly prefer the term "receptionists", which is a good English phrase, to "concierge"; I do not see why we should use "concierge" in our housing language. Those two receptionists working in shifts and operated a controlled scheme, monitoring those entering and leaving the block. It sounds simple but it was astoundingly effective. They also ran errands for the elderly living in the block and made sure that the lifts worked properly.

As a result, vandalism there went right down, there were no personal attacks during the period of the experiment and there was only one burglary. That experiment has been linked to high levels of crime in blocks of flats not very far away. I have seen a similar scheme operate in Wolverhampton, where the crime rate in the block concerned was cut, but when I walked into other tower blocks in the area I was surrounded by residents screaming, "When are you going to do something about it?"

That is not to say that under certain circumstances the security patrols suggested by my hon. Friend cannnot be of use. I am advised that they are being tried out in some of our midlands cities such as Nottingham, where they have been effective. One wants to go step by step, trying to do all that one can through neighbourhood watch, which I believe has enormous untapped potential, and through the introduction of receptionists, caretakers and intensive management. If necessary, perhaps one can then introduce patrols—but that must be a matter for local decison. In that way, substantial sums of money can be saved. In the case of the one block of flats I mentioned, in Brent, west London, there was an estimated net saving of £17,000 because vandalism, graffiti and other gratuitous damage were reduced. There are considerable lessons for local authorities to learn from that experiment.

[Mr. Patten]

Ultimately, the local community must take responsibility. I would dearly like to see in Southampton, and in other areas suffering from similar problems, the local communities themselves, with the encouragement of all involved, banding together to defeat these problems. One should not be afraid, from time to time, of looking back to practices 20, 30 or 40 years ago, when there was greater social control and more people prepared to say, "Oi! Don't do that!" when someone—perhaps a very young child—was about to cause trouble. Perhaps one of the keys for our great housing estates, such as those in Southampton, would be for people—be they patrols, receptionists, caretakers, community policemen or community leaders involved in neighbourhood watch to say, "Oi! Don't do that." In that form of social control, which is not a case of people being nosey parkers but of being good neighbours to one another, we are likely to find some of the roots of a successful anti-crime drive in this country.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at four minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 14 June 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (BARROW) BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time upon Thursday.

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday.

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL

Ordered,

That the Committee on the City of London (Spitalfields Market) Bill have leave to visit and inspect the present site and environs, and the proposed future site, of Spitalfields Market, provided that no evidence shall be taken in the course of such visit and that any party who has made an appearance before the Committee be permitted to attend by his Counsel, Agent or other representative.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

1. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the special unit dealing with transitional protection in respect of housing benefit to be in full operation.

9. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the special unit dealing with transitional protection in respect of housing benefit to be in full operation.

12. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the special unit dealing with transitional protection in respect of housing benefit to be in full operation.

15. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the special unit dealing with transitional protection in respect of housing benefit to be in full operation.

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. Nicholas Scott): Urgent cases are already in payment. The unit is already building up to strength, and I expect it to be fully operational in two to three weeks' time.

Mr. Corbett: Can the Minister explain what people entitled to this relief, but unable to get it yet, are supposed to do in the meantime? Will he give the House a date by which this office will be fully manned, with all the staff properly trained? Will he confirm that after this modest relief many people will still be substantially worse off, faced with higher rents as a result of the cuts that the Government have made in housing benefit?

Mr. Scott: I wrote to the hon. Gentleman and to all colleagues in the House explaining what people should do to obtain help if they needed it. The unit should be fully operational in two to three weeks' time, but applications are already being received. We had no fewer than 5,000 applications in the post today, so the message is getting across. In my letter to all hon. Members I mentioned the Freephone and post facilities. Anybody who needs urgent help can make special arrangements with Glasgow to obtain it quickly.

Mr. Barnes: It is possible for people to receive emergency payments through the DHSS if they qualify later for them. What will happen to those people in future, because it is possible that some will receive emergency payments, but, when the unit is established, will then lose them?

Mr. Scott: The object of the emergency payments is to help people who might be in danger of losing their home if they are not helped immediately. For example, it should be perfectly possible for a local authority tenant to make it clear that he or she has applied for transitional protection, and for the local authority to check his or her entitlement and no doubt postpone the arrangements for the collection of rent until the help becomes available.

Mr. Cohen: The Minister will know from correspondence that many of my constituents have lost up to £26 a week because of the Government's changes in April. For many of them that means acute hardship and rising debt. Will the heating charge rebate, which was payable before April, be covered by the transitional arrangements? That is not in the DHSS guidance form, and my local citizens' advice bureau says that that costs some 80-year-old pensioners up to £7 a week. Is that covered for them and people on income support?

Mr. Scott: This question applies to housing benefit. I think that the hon. Gentleman is asking about income support.

Mr. Stern: Is my hon. Friend aware of the considerable difficulty in getting through to this office on the telephone? Several of my constituents have been unable to get through, and I have yet to meet a constituent who has got through to anyone or anything but an answering machine. Is he sure that sufficient communications equipment has been installed in the office to meet the demand?

Mr Scott: If it is felt necessary to install additional lines we shall do that, but we have sent out 22,000 copies of form RR4, which is the application form in the form of a leaflet, in response to calls on the Freephone system.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will the special unit urgently get in touch with Norwich city council, which appears to be slow in arranging these transitional payments for many of my constituents? After all, it received the information from the DHSS as early as 1 June, yet many people are suffering because of the slow response of the council.

Mr. Scott: We have sent out information to all local authorities so that they can advise people about their rights. When working the system of transitional protection, I hope that local authorities will show the same level of co-operation and efficiency and commitment as they showed over the transition to the new system of housing benefit, on which they were complimented.

Mr. Wigley: In my constituency a 56-year-old widow's payable rent has gone up from £7 to £21 a week because of reductions in housing benefit and she has only minumum income over and above her widow's pension. Will she be helped by the transitional arrangements, or will she have to trust to luck?

Mr. Scott: I find it difficult to imagine that transitional protection would not extend to the hon. Gentleman's constituent. I have heard too many cases, which have been traded backwards and forwards across the Floor of the House, in which the facts sometimes are not exactly as stated. I am not accusing the hon. Gentleman of misleading the House in any way—I know him too well for that—but if he cares to write to me about the specific case I shall make sure that he gets an answer.

Mr. Robin Cook: I wish to refer the Minister to last week's judgment from the appeals tribunal, which said that the Minister had acted outwith his powers by scrapping housing benefit supplement. Will he take this opportunity to correct the bold view of his Under-Secretary that the judgment applied to the four pensioners only and not to the 440,000 others in identical circumstances? Is he aware that there is no better formula for clogging up every tribunal in the land until the end of the year? Now that the Government have been caught out, will he have the grace to accept this verdict and pay to all those affected the money that he had no right to take from them in the first place?

Mr. Scott: Many of the people who were reported in the press as having lost—if the judgment were to apply across the board; I do not accept for one moment that it does—would, in any case, through other parts of the benefit system, be assured of losing absolutely nothing.

The chairman of the tribunal said that in reaching that conclusion he was not declaring a result, but starting a process in train and that it would be for the chief adjudication officer to decide in due course whether to appeal against the decision. I am certain that that officer will want to study the considered judgment and the written findings of the tribunal. We took careful advice and the regulations were, of course, considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments before they were laid.

Benefit Offices (Computers)

2. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many computers have been installed in benefit offices in the period for which complete records are available.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Michael Portillo): We have installed more than 3,000 micro-computers in the Department's local offices so far, and at least one computer in each of the Department of Employment's unemployment benefit offices. Within the next 12 months we will start linking all local offices to mainframe computers, providing a fully-computerised service for pensions and income support.

Mr. Field: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is extraordinary that the Opposition continually claim a monopoly for caring and sharing, but that they totally failed to modernise the system? Will my hon. Friend confirm that it is the largest computerisation programme in Europe?

Mr. Portillo: In common with my hon. Friend I certainly wish that we had made an earlier start, but progress is now extremely good. I believe that the result will be a great success in the quality of service to claimants. I confirm that it is the largest civil programme outside the United States.

Mr. Madden: Will the programme also gain the reputation as an even bigger administrative shambles than that over which the Home Office presides at Lunar house? Is it not a fact that £8 million has been spent on this computer system, but that, even today, the DHSS is unable to place in the Library information for the first month or, indeed, the second month of the operation of the social fund? When will the DHSS get its act together, answer questions on these matters, and get the information to the Library, which it has been promising for the past three months?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman and I have corresponded about this matter. Within the next day or so

I hope to place in the Library the social fund data for May. Today is 14 June. I do not believe that a two-week delay in producing the data for May is untoward.

Mr. Patnick: Will the computerisation programme benefit my constituents who receive benefit?

Mr. Portillo: I am convinced that it will provide a quicker and more accurate service. It will mean that in due course claimants will be able to go to a local office and discuss all their benefits. They will be able to call at any office in the country and obtain information about their claiming position. Those are all great advances.

Mr. Kennedy: When installing the new system, has the Department taken account of the warning expressed several years ago in evidence to a Special Committee of the House that if the configuration involved in the computer system was not of a certain type any subsequent Administration would be unable to adapt the system—for example, for the purpose of merging or integrating tax and benefits? Can the Minister assure us that this computer system will leave open that practical possibility, in case a subsequent Administration wish to pursue such a policy?

Mr. Portillo: We have certainly pursued the issue of equipment with a view to making it highly compatible. The hon. Gentleman can rest assured about those points.

Regional Health Authorities (Allocation of Funds)

3. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps have been taken to ensure that the resource allocation working party formula takes fully into account the proportion of funds which have to be devoted to wages, salaries, and so on in his Department's allocation of funds to regional health authorities.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): The formula, which is about distribution of resources within an agreed national allocation, needs to reflect pay separately only to the extent that significant pay variations between regions occur. Thus, there are adjustments for London weighting and a specific market forces element for London. Thereafter, each authority is free to decide how to spend its allocation.

Mr. Chapman: I appreciate that answer, but is my right hon. Friend aware that if the Government decide to increase the resources and funding of the NHS nationally by 2 per cent. in real terms, the net effect, because of RAWP, in health authorities such as Barnet will be to be left with minus 2 per cent.? Given that three quarters of Barnet's budget goes on wages and salaries, which are increased by much more than the going rate of inflation, that leads to significant cuts in services, facilities and equipment in the NHS in Barnet or to a reduction in staff. Both things have been happening systematically over the years. Does my right hon. Friend accept that this is grossly unfair and unreasonable, and that radical changes should be made to the RAWP formula?

Mr. Newton: I shall carefully study the somewhat complicated proposition that my hon. Friend has put to me. I make two points in immediate response. First, the distribution of funds to Barnet depends not on the RAWP formula in the straightforward sense but on the judgments that North West Thames region makes within its allocation.

Secondly, the RAWP formula contains an allowance for what is called the market forces factor, which seeks to reflect the extent to which pay rates are higher in London than elsewhere.

Ms. Walley: Will the Minister take on board the comments made to me by the chairman and members of the North Staffordshire district health authority when I met them on Wednesday last? They are most concerned about proposed changes in the RAWP formula which may well lead to North Staffordshire ending up with an even worse allocation than it now has. If inner-city areas such as this are to be protected and safeguarded, the Minister should consult them before coming up with new proposals for the RAWP formula.

Mr. Newton: The working party that has been examining the RAWP formula has been extensively representative of regions throughout the country. That is not to say that everyone will be pleased by its proposals, in advance of whose publication I cannot speculate further.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the RAWP formula takes into account the excellent work done by war memorial and cottage hospitals in serving their local communities? Will he reverse the decision of the Macclesfield health authority and ensure that the diminution of GP beds is reversed, and that the twilight hours services for the minor injuries unit in Congleton war memorial hospital are retained, so that that hospital can extend its useful work?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that the RAWP formula can be expected to take account of particular patterns of service as distinct from the needs of an area. It sounds to me as if the specific proposals to which my hon. Friend refers would be likely to be opposed by the Community Health Council and then come to Ministers, in which case I should not comment.

Mr. Morley: In the context of the RAWP formula proposals, will the Minister also take into account the fact that my health authority in Scunthorpe is embarking on a major council programme, with new wards and a new AED? The district health authority is worried that there may not be sufficient fund allocations to staff those new wards, because of the resource implications compared with the capital implications.

Mr. Newton: That is a matter for the regional health authority rather than the RAWP formula. Most authorities, in determining their allocation to the districts, take account of what are called the revenue consequences of capital schemes. That explains some variations in distance from target.

Mr. Bowis: My right hon. Friend will know of the wide welcome given to the generous pay settlement for nurses. Will he bear in mind the effect of that settlement on the hospice movement, which is not centrally funded and for which, because of the workings of RAWP, the local district health authority is not able to provide extra money for nurses' pay?

Mr. Newton: The RAWP formula is being blamed for an enormous amount. I must repeat the answer that I have given on previous occasions. Health authorities have been given substantial additional funding in connection with

the nurses' pay award and they need to take that into account when considering their arrangements for hospices. Those arrangements vary from place to place.

Competitive Tendering

4. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much health authorities have saved to date as a result of competitive tendering.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. John Moore): Our latest estimate, for the quarter ending 31 March, shows that annual savings of about £106 million have been generated from contracts awarded for domestic cleaning, catering and laundry services during the initial round of competitive tendering, now virtually complete.

Mr. Page: Does not the size of those savings show how wise those people have been in insisting that the tendering process be introduced? Has my right hon. Friend any idea of how much more could be saved if all services capable of being tendered were put out to tender?

Mr. Moore: I am conscious of the amount that has been saved. It is an important addition to health care spending in the National Health Service. Only 75 per cent. of catering, 95 per cent. of domestic services and 97 per cent. of laundry services are out to competitive tender. Therefore, there is still some space for further savings in the areas that are already out to competitive tender.

Mr. Nellist: Has the Secretary of State investigated to find out how many jobs have been lost because of the introduction of competitive tendering? Has he investigated the consequences of that for the payment of benefits by the other side of his Department—the social security offices? Is it not often the case that the introduction of competitive tendering results not in a net saving for his Department, but merely in a transfer of profits to the firms, many of which are represented by Tory Members of Parliament?

Mr. Moore: I never cease to be bewildered by the way in which Opposition Members, and especially the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), seem to forget that the purpose of the National Health Service is to look after patients. Patients are the prime interest of the National Health Service. So utterly trapped are some Opposition Members by their relationship with their trade union bosses that they fail to understand that savings of about £100 million have gone to additional patient care. We should all welcome that.

Mr. Rathbone: With savings such as those and more expected, will my right hon. Friend consider making more resources available to meet the urgent recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the Misuse of Drugs contained in its report "Aids and Drug Misuse"? Some of my hon. Friends feel that unfortunately the Government are doing too little too late.

Mr. Moore: I am filled with admiration for the legitimate way in which my hon. Friend makes his point. We are looking at the Advisory Committee on the Misuse of Drugs recommendations and will come to the House with the advice that we receive. I cannot accept my hon. Friend's implied criticism that the Government have not been vigorous in trying to ensure that we attack the awful problem of drug abuse.

Mr. Battle: Will the Minister confirm that in the Leeds Western health authority area the laundry services that were privatised under the direction of his Department are running at a loss? If so, is that not an indictment of the privatisation policy, because it undermines economic efficiency?

Mr. Moore: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will ask himself who is losing money in that instance. I imagine that it is a private sector company. He should be glad to see the efficient work that is being done through tenders that have gone out. I know that he will be interested to know that 85 per cent. of competitive tenders that have saved money have gone to in-house contractors who have improved the way in which they deliver their services and have therefore provided more money for the Health Service.

NHS Waiting Lists (Northern Region)

5. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on National Health Service waiting lists in the northern region.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): The latest figures show that waiting lists in the northern region have been dropping sharply, from about 50,000 in September 1982 to about 36,000 now. Nine of the 16 districts report continued steady falls. This reflects commendably on all concerned.

Mr. Fallon: I thank my hon. Friend for an answer that is even more encouraging than I expected. Does that not show the success of the Government's initiatives in this area? Will she reassure Conservative Members that the current NHS review will have as its priority the interests, not of NHS staff or professionals, but of the customers, who in some areas are still waiting far too long for the treatment that they deserve?

Mrs. Currie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I am sure he realises that we have been exceptionally helpful to the Darlington health authority, which covers his constituency, by allocating £200,000 this year to help it to clear nearly 1,000 people from its waiting list. That was on top of the £160,000 extra that it received last year.

I note my hon. Friend's remarks at the end of his question, but point out that of those admitted to hospital half are admitted at once and the remainder within seven weeks.

Mr. Fearn: How many hospitals in the northern region are working under capacity? Are people on waiting lists from other areas being passed to those hospitals?

Mrs. Currie: I confess that I did not hear the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question. We remain convinced that a number of hospitals in different parts of the country could use their capacity more productively.

Mr. Jopling: Does my hon. Friend agree that the waiting list figures are hugely encouraging? Will she ensure that the excellent new hospital being built in Kendal, south Cumbria, is completed on time so that those figures can come down even more rapidly?

Mrs. Currie: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently laid the foundation stone for that hospital, and we look forward to it continuing its good work. As I am sure my right hon. Friend will know, in south Cumbria the cost per case is well below the national average.

Ms. Armstrong: What is the cost to the Northern regional health authority of farming out work to the private sector?—[HON. MEMBERS: Waiting lists."] I understand that the way that the Government have brought down waiting lists is by farming out work to the private sector, and the cost is incredible.

Mrs. Currie: The vast majority of the patients that I have just mentioned have been dealt with in the National Health Service, and we expect that broadly to continue. However, if a health authority finds that it can contract out some of its patients to the private sector, I think that those patients generally are pleased with the result.

Dame Jill Knight: Every right hon. and hon. Member in the House is aware of the importance of the northern region. However, will my hon. Friend give the rest of the country a word of encouragement on the vital matter of waiting lists?

Mrs. Currie: I am delighted to do so. In-patient waiting lists for England fell by about 1 per cent. between March and 30 September, and by about 12 per cent. since March 1979. That is a reduction of 90,000.

Ancillary Staffs (Pay and Conditions)

6. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to meet representatives of the ancillary staffs in the National Health Service to discuss pay and conditions.

Mr. Newton: The pay and conditions of service of NHS ancillary staff are matters for negotiation in the ancillary staffs Whitley council. I have no plans at this stage to meet staff representatives.

Dr. Reid: The Minister's answer is less than revealing. Is it not a fact that as late as yesterday he refused a formal request to meet the ancillary staff representatives? Was that not because he would have found his miserable 4·8 per cent. pay offer indefensible?

Is the Minister aware that 400,000 ancillary staff are excluded from the nurses' pay review and that they earn less than £80 for a 40-hour week? Is he further aware that 40 per cent. of male ancillary staff and 70 per cent. of female ancillary staff earn less than £6,000 a year? Has he no compassion for both patients and staff? What will he do to rectify that pathetic level of wages?

Mr. Newton: I have three points to make. First, I have not refused to meet the staff side. I said that I did not think it appropriate at the moment. However, I would not rule it out later.

Secondly, the offer is not 4·8 per cent., it is 5·4 per cent., which is significantly more than ancillary workers received last year.

Thirdly, we have offered to talk about a reduction of one hour in the working week, together with other changes. The hon. Gentleman should get his facts right before he starts attacking me.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it might solve a great many problems if the ancillary workers' pay review was carried out on a local rather than a national basis? Would that not mean that local health authorities could take the local conditions into account, especially for clerical and secretarial work?

Mr. Newton: We have said, in general terms, that we want to move towards greater local flexibility within a centrally determined structure. However, that is under discussion more in respect of administrative and clerical staff than ancillary workers. Of course, a great deal of flexibility is already reflected in local bonus schemes and other arrangements.

Mr. Robin Cook: Will the Minister take this opportunity to put it on record that the nurses and doctors cannot run the hospitals without domestics, laboratory staff and medical secretaries, who are all part of the health team? How can he claim that it is purely a matter for the Whitley council when, after the talks broke down last month, the health authorities made it plain that they could not fund an improved offer without more money?

As the right hon. Gentleman has responsibility for the money available to the health authorities, why does he not face up to that by meeting the staff side and explaining why he thinks that some of the worst-paid people in Britain should settle for a wage increase that is well below the national average?

Mr. Newton: I have already said that the pay offer to ancillary staff is larger than they received last year. I must make it clear that the staff side has attached particular importance to a reduction in the working week, and the Government have made a suggestion about that that needs to be talked through.

Housing Benefit

7. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to extend beyond one year the period of transitional protection for claimants of housing benefit announced on 27 April.

Mr. Scott: Like all transitional payments, these will be phased out as circumstances change and other benefits increase. However, the payments will not be limited to one year, and they may last for several years in cases where the reduction in benefit is substantial.

Mr. Bowden: I am most grateful for that encouraging answer. Will my hon. Friend always bear in mind that he is dealing with a war-time generation of pensioners, especially war widows, some of whom have had their incomes cut this year? Is he aware that some of those war widows are not treated as well as they would be in other nations? I hope that he will bear that in mind.

Mr. Scott: I shall bear that in mind. It is worth mentioning that those on income support will be fully protected during the transitional period. We have introduced a new housing benefit scheme and will monitor that carefully. I am, of course, conscious of the fact to which my hon. Friend alluded.

Mr. Steinberg: Is the Minister aware that a number of old-age pensioners in my constituency receive a coal allowance because they worked in the pits all their lives? Previously, that allowance has not been assessed for

housing benefit purposes. Is he further aware that some pensioners have moved to gas-heated houses and receive a monetary allowance from British Coal, which is being assessed for housing benefit purposes? Some of them are worse off by more than £6 a week. As I am sure that the Minister does not want such a vindictive anomaly to continue, will he put it right as quickly as possible?

Mr. Scott: Any concessional coal would be covered by the transitional protection.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."]

Mr. Hind: Will my hon. Friend confirm that war pensioners will benefit under the transitional arrangements?

Mr. Scott: Of course.

Mrs. Beckett: Will the Minister confirm that, despite transitional protection, millions of people still face a drastic cut in their standard of living, which will merely be phased rather than immediate? Even if the Government maintain the concessions forced on them this year, will not the substantial rent rises that follow the enactment of the Housing Bill next year mean losses as enormous as those from which the Government abruptly retreated?

Mr. Scott: It must be clearly understood that there will be full protection of housing benfit for rent rises that occur next year. In any case, there is full and absolute protection for income support beneficiaries.

I am absolutely convinced—as, I think, the House is —that the new system of housing benefit is vastly preferable to the one that went before. We have ensured that those affected unduly harshly by the transition will be protected in cash terms. That is surely worthy of praise rather than of criticism.

Maternity Benefits

8. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many mothers in the last 10 years have been disqualified from receiving maternity benefits; and how many of these had 49 stamps or credits in the appropriate qualifying year.

Mr. Portillo: Between April 1983 and December 1986, the earliest and latest dates for which figures are available, 395,500 were disallowed. Only during the short period between October 1986 and April 1987 would a woman with a record of 49 contributions paid or credited have been disqualified from receiving maternity allowance. The number so affected must be very small indeed.

Mr. Holt: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. As the exact numbers are not known and very small indeed, it is possible that my constituent, Mrs. Watson, is the only woman in the country who has been so affected and will be the only woman so affected because the Government have since changed the law, so that people who would have lost benefit simply because they were paid monthly rather than weekly will not be denied benefit. Will my hon. Friend reconsider giving that lady the benefit to which she would have been entitled if her employer had paid her weekly rather than monthly?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is right in saying that the system has changed so that what now matters is whether the lady was recently in employment. I hope my hon. Friend will welcome that change, but I should point out that, in the case of his constituent, it was not just a matter of the way in which we applied the rules. We had also to bear in mind the fact that, while the lady was unemployed, she went abroad for two weeks and was therefore unable to have the credit. If she had not gone abroad, she would have had 51 credits.

Ms. Mowlam: Does the Minister agree that the problem would not have arisen if the situation in which someone could make reduced contributions and pay slightly less than the full contribution in terms of the stamp had not been changed in the Social Security Act 1986? Will the Minister further explain how much money the Government have saved by scrapping that reduced rate?

Mr. Portillo: Maternity benefit should be paid to people who leave work because they are pregnant and are used to receiving their money from work. The new statutory maternity payment system and the maternity allowance address that need. The old system, under which we went back to some distant year to see what national insurance contributions had been paid, was much less effective in meeting that need.

Prematurity and Low Birth-weight

10. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the main known factors in prematurity and low birth-weight in babies.

Mr. Moore: The cause of prematurity or low birth-weight in babies is in most cases not known. Apart from clinical factors of various kinds relating to the pregnancy, it is becoming increasingly clear that smoking by pregnant women and significant consumption of alcohol may be important in some cases.

Mr. Shaw: Despite those disadvantages in mothers' health, is it not true that under this Government infant mortality has reduced considerably and that we have a much improved situation, which must be partially due to the fact that there has been a considerable increase in the first rate technological equipment now available in hospitals as a result of the Government's initiatives? My local hospital in Dover has some first-rate examples of such equipment, which I saw recently.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right. The figures show that the infant mortality rate has fallen from 12·9 per thousand births in 1978 to 9.1 in 1987, which is a reduction of 29 per cent. while the Government have been in office.

Mrs. Wise: Does the Minister acknowledge that cot deaths are increasing? Will he give due consideration to the submission from the National Childbirth Trust, which asks him to consider some possible causes of that, including excessive obstetric interference and bad housing and poverty?

Mr. Moore: I shall certainly consider the points to which the hon. Lady referred. More work is clearly needed in this area, but she may not be aware that recent work confirms part of the point that she is making about the increase in the sudden infant death syndrome. She may not be aware that, contrary to what she implied, the studies in relation to 1986 show that the increase in cot deaths is, if concentrated in any social class, concentrated in social class V among boys. The hon. Lady's point is certainly

important and we must look further into this matter, but, on the evidence so far, the increase does not relate to social class variations.

Cervical Cancer

11. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the progress of the cervical cancer screening programme.

Mrs. Currie: By the end of April all 190 district health authorities in England had implemented a computerised call and recall system for cervical cancer screening. The programme will make a major contribution to the health of our women and will save many lives in the years to come.

Mr. Arbuthnot: As most deaths from cervical cancer occur in women who have never had a smear test and as, if they had had a test, the chances are that the condition would have been 100 per cent. curable, does my hon. Friend agree that the areas on which the Government should be concentrating are, first, to encourage women to register with general practitioners and, secondly, to publicise the effective success of smear tests?

Mrs. Currie: Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. In those parts of the country where the response rate is not as high as we had hoped, one reason is that the registers are not accurate. We urge all women who move house to tell their GPs and to ensure that the address on the register is correct.

Mr. Duffy: Is the Minister aware that Sheffield health authority has encountered some centrally determined constraints in the direction of its cervical cancer screening programme, notably computer software which does not enable the health authority to call clients and search for them on a postcode basis? Is he further aware that although that needs only a small modification, and although the authority has made many representations, nothing has been done?

Mrs. Currie: Yes, and we are working on some aspects of the software. We are content that we have a system that works throughout the country and we are now seeing what improvements and modifications we can make.

Pensioners (Savings)

14. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of pensioners receive income from savings.

Mr. Moore: The proportion of pensioners with income from savings has risen from 62 per cent. in 1979 to over 70 per cent. in 1985. Over that period incomes from that source went up by over 52 per cent. in real terms, compared with a decrease of 16 per cent. under the previous Administration. By 1985 the proportion of recently retired pensioners with some form of income other than state benefits had risen to over 85 per cent.

Mrs. Bottomley: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that that is all part of a picture of growing prosperity and choice for pensioners and that, as a whole, pensioners' incomes have risen twice as fast as those of the population generally since this Government came to power?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is entirely right. In fact, pensioners' incomes have increased in percentage terms faster than those of people in work and are now worth 60 per cent. of the incomes of the working population, which is higher than in 1979.

Disabled People

16. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services by how much spending on benefits for disabled people has changed since 1979.

Mr. Scott: Spending on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people has increased by £3 billion in real terms since 1978-79. This is a real increase of over 80 per cent.

Dr. Twinn: I thank my hon. Friend for that significant contribution. Will he confirm that the Independent Living Fund will not be confined to those on income support?

Mr. Scott: Yes, I can confirm that. Independent Living Fund assistance will go to those above income support level who need help, because they are severely disabled, to maintain their place in the community or to avoid institutionalisation.

Ms. Primarolo: Will the Minister please explain how a single parent with a 20-year-old mentally handicapped son has lost £3 per week because of the flat-rate surcharge that the Government have introduced? How can he square that with saying that the Government are targeting assistance on those who are most vulnerable and most in need in our society when that single parent family is £3 per week worse off because of the Government's target? I suggest that that is not good aim.

Mr. Scott: If I recognise the case to which the hon. Lady has referred, it involves the impact of non-dependent deductions. The House will recognise that as a principle it is right that such deductions should take place, but because of the special circumstances affecting the lady in that case the non-dependent deductions are set at a lower level.

Mr. Rowe: The Government are to be congratulated on the considerable improvement in the standards of living of disabled people, but does my hon. Friend agree that a further improvement in their standard of living could be achieved if builders were more ready to build houses which, from the beginning, could be lived in easily by disabled people, rather than expecting disabled people, at the height of their disability, to incur enormous expenditure in adapting a house?

Mr. Scott: Yes, except that I believe that disabled people should have as much freedom of choice in the location in which they live as other citizens, as far as that is possible. Therefore, it is right that either they or the local social services department, where appropriate, should move swiftly to provide the adaptions that are necessary for them.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Can the Minister tell the House when the Government expect to achieve the objective of the Disability Income Group, which aims to persuade the Government that people should receive benefit regardless of how their disability arose, whether from birth or

through an accident at work or at home? In short, when will the Government end discrimination against people with disability?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman, if he listened to my original answer, will realise that, far from being discriminated against, disabled people have been treated particularly favourably throughout the lifetime of this Government. The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that the OPCS findings will be coming out in the course of the next few months, and we shall then be looking at the whole range of disability benefits in the light of its findings.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including a meeting with the President of Malawi. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Coombs: Following the recent agreement with the Irish Government on new extradition rules, does my right hon. Friend agree that yesterday's extraordinary decision by an Irish court to refuse to extradite Patrick McVeigh, the suspected terrorist, is bound to raise considerable suspicions in this country about the Irish commitment to stamp out terrorism? Will she agree to see the Irish Prime Minister to ensure that this kind of extraordinary and capricious legal decision is not repeated, and ensure that in future suspected terrorists are not protected from being brought to justice?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will be making a full statement later. I agree with my hon. Friend that the judgment of the district court is deeply dismaying, because we had thought that effective extradition arrangements now existed. The Crown Prosecution Service expressly asked whether further evidence from the United Kingdom on identification was needed, and was told that it was not. We are holding urgent consultations with the Irish authorities to deal with the implications of the decision. I understand that the Irish Minister of Justice will be making a statement in the Dail this afternoon. I believe that we shall defeat terrorism only when the overwhelming majority of people on both sides of the border are actively committed to doing so.

Mr. Kinnock: May I first share the Prime Minister's sense of dismay at the confusion that arose and her hope for an outcome that will ensure that there is an even more effective set of measures against terrorism or suspected terrorism?

Following the judgment of the Social Security Appeals Tribunal last Friday that the Government have acted illegally in depriving over 400,000 low-income pensioners of housing benefit supplement, will the Prime Minister give an undertaking that she will not appeal against the judgment and that she will not introduce legislation to reverse the effects of that judgment? The Government have fouled up. Will they pay up?

The Prime Minister: No. We have not seen the tribunal's written decision, which may not be available for some weeks, but it will be for the chief adjudication officer to decide whether to appeal once the decision is available. It is worth remembering that an appeals tribunal decision is only the first step, and I am advised that, contrary to what the right hon. Gentleman said, it applies only to the individual cases decided—*[Interruption.]*—yes, indeed—and does not constitute a precedent. It is a matter for the chief adjudication officer to decide whether to appeal to a court of law.

Mr. Kinnock: When we are talking about low-income pensioners, that attitude in that answer manifests the mentality of a persecutor. It also manifests, if the right hon. Lady insists on confining the judgment to just four people, a very extraordinary sense of justice and of precedent. These people are by definition already on very low incomes. Why does the Prime Minister not simply obey the law of the land as it stands and the law of common humanity and ensure that these people lose absolutely nothing, even in the wake of the loss of housing benefit supplement?

The Prime Minister: Having for years handled some of these things as a junior Minister in that Department, may I point out that these are the statutory independent adjudicating authorities, not the High Court? The independent adjudicating authorities give verdicts on individual cases. That is why at present the verdict applies only to those cases. It is for the top of those independent adjudicating authorities, the chief adjudicating officer, to decide whether to take it to a court of law. That is the law.

Mr. Kinnock: We know that the word "independence" has different meanings for the Government in different sets of circumstances. Sometimes the Government treat the law in the same way as children treat Ludo: if they win that is the end of the matter; if others win it is the best of three. Will the Prime Minister realise the circumstances, the anxieties and the low incomes of these people and ensure that none of them will be losers?

The Prime Minister: It remains as I said earlier. It is the law that—*[Interruption.]* Yes, it is for the law, and we on this side obey the law. That is what the rule of law is all about. It will be for the chief adjudicating officer to decide whether to appeal once the decision is available. The right hon. Gentleman jumps to his conclusion before we have even seen the tribunal's recommendation.

Sir Anthony Grant: Will my right hon. Friend reassure the House that relations between herself and her Secretary of State for Defence are wholly harmonious, that he will not be humiliated and that, therefore, the Press Association can retire to bed at a reasonable hour?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes the point more effectively than I could. Relations between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and No. 10 are excellent, as is the defence of the country under a Conservative Government.

Q2. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kennedy: In view of the weekend reports concerning likely Government legislation on official secrets, can the Prime Minister give both sides of the House an assurance that in cases such as the Clive Ponting trial, for example, trial by jury will remain the norm, and that the Government will not seek to legislate in such a way as to make it impossible for a defence based on the concept of the public good to be mounted, as there are many on both sides of the House who believe that the political interest of a Government and the overriding public interest of the state must never be regarded as synonomous?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the Government are considering a revised Bill. Before that is published, a White Paper will of course, be published for debate in the House.

Q3. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hind: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the scenes of football hooliganism that we have seen recently at home and in Europe will lead to the destruction of football as a sport as we know it? If there is no improvement, will she consider advising the Football Association not to allow English clubs to compete in European competitions?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the scenes we have seen on our television screens again are a disgrace to civilised society and made us all feel thoroughly ashamed if any of our people were involved in them. I looked back this morning over the Popplewell report to see whether all the steps which were then recommended had been taken at home and in connection with international competitions, and to see whether we were getting—*[Interruption.]* This is a matter that greatly concerns the Government and we want to see whether all the proposed steps towards international co-operation are taken. I shall be having a meeting with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport on Thursday morning. Of course, it is easier to pose the question than it is to find a sure way of stopping what is happening, catching and convicting the criminals, and having them strictly sentenced. I agree with my hon. Friend that the survival of football as a spectator sport is in question.

Mr. Molyneaux: In view of yesterday's extradition failure, will the Prime Minister consider convening a meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council established in 1981 to consider all those non-Northern Ireland matters and disputes which the present Anglo-Irish Agreement is far too narrow to resolve?

The Prime Minister: No, I see little point in convening that intergovernmental council. As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, one is much more likely to be convened under the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Before deciding on any further steps we should hear what my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has to say today and what is said in the Dail later.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the Prime Minister assure the House that the outcome in the Dublin court yesterday was not the result of confusion on this side of the water, that the papers were in order, and that everything was done under the recent agreement, but that the judge still refused to give the proper sentence that should have been passed? Will she assure the House also that it will be the policy of her Government to have the same extradition treaty with the Republic of Ireland as has been operated between the United Kingdom and every other part of the European Community?

The Prime Minister: We had thought that effective extradition arrangements existed, which is why we were deeply dismayed at the decision of that particular court. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the Crown Prosecution Service did everything that it could. It expressly asked whether further evidence on identification was needed from the United Kingdom and was specifically told that it was not. There was no fault on this side of the water or on this side of that border. That the extradition did not go through was not our fault.

Q4. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Leighton: Has the Prime Minister noticed that, after eight years of her government of Britain, where private greed is now the official religion, and where we are told that society no longer exists but only the individual, the result has been a rising flood of crime, violence, City fraud, family breakdown, homelessness, drug addiction and football hooliganism? When the Prime Minister surveys that social sickness and disorder, of which is she most proud?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will read the Popplewell report on football hooliganism he will see that the problem originated very much earlier this century, and it has been the subject of a number of previous reports. The hon. Gentleman will see also in the sections relating to violence that there has always been, and always will be, violence. The question is how to contain that violence, catch those who are guilty, convict them, and give them stiff sentences. We are very much better off with more, better-paid and properly equipped police in Britain than we would have been had the Opposition been in power and we had fewer police.

Mr. Hayes: When my right hon. Friend next sees her right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, will she ask him to ring the Press Association and make a statement explaining that missile-for-missile reduction is not a very good idea if the other side has more missiles?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his own point. There is no use whatsoever in following what was proposed at one stage and having a kind of multilateral disarmament agreement with the other side. That would involve giving up 100 per cent. of our Trident missiles in return for the Soviet Union giving up 3 per cent. of her strategic weapons.

Q5. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martin: May I tell the right hon. Lady that I have a constituent, John Callaghan, who, as a young man, served this country with distinction? In 1939 he served in the desert, in Italy, and from Normandy right through to Germany. After retiring recently, until two months ago he enjoyed a rent rebate, but because of Government measures he now has to find another £30 per month. Is that not a shameful way to treat a man who has served this country so well?

The Prime Minister: I do not know the case to which the hon. Gentleman is referring. I do know that there is a case, which may or may not be the same, which has received a great deal of publicity recently, which was not to do with the reforms, merely with the change from invalidity benefit to retirement pension, which always takes place at 65. I am not certain whether that is the particular case to which the hon. Gentleman is referring, but, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, if he has a case to raise he should take it up with my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Health and Social Security.

Valleys Programme

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will those hon. Members who are not remaining for the statement, please leave the Chamber quietly?

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the valleys programme.

I have today published a programme for the south Wales valleys. Copies of the programme document have been placed in the Library of the House and the Vote Office.

I would like to thank the local authorities, the Welsh Development Agency, the Wales Tourist Board, the Training Commission, the public utilities, the health authorities, the CBI, the Welsh TUC, the voluntary organisations and the industrialists and business men who have been consulted to produce a comprehensive programme—*[Interruption.]*—a programme that will significantly improve the economy and the quality of life in the Valleys over the next few years.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is an important statement for Wales, but I regret that we cannot hear the Secretary of State.

Mr. Speaker: I repeat—will those hon. Members who are not remaining please leave quietly?

Mr. Walker: In recent years many new factories have been built and occupied. Inward investment has been attracted, many thousands of homes have been improved, and many acres of derelict land have been cleared.

The objective of the programme is to accelerate these improvements to create a viable and diverse economy, and to create conditions that provide a good quality of life for the people of the valleys.

Over several decades the decline in the numbers employed in the coal and steel industries has created high levels of unemployment. These industries have also left serious dereliction which we are now tackling.

The programme I have announced is without parallel in the history of the valleys—a 15-point programme for new and small businesses which includes two new loan schemes, new training schemes and a new technology development fund. A new quality and design centre will be established. This will serve all Wales, but be based in the valleys.

The Welsh Development Agency's advance factory and workshop building programme will be trebled. Advance factories, together with special purpose factories, and around 140 new workshop units will in combination provide by far the biggest factory building programe in the history of the valleys. A new business centre and WDA regional office will be created at Merthyr Tydfil.

Regional assistance in the financial year 1988-89 will be more than a third up on the previous year. I am delighted to tell the House that, in the 15 months ending 31 March this year, 1,333 applications were received for regional development grants in the valleys. The applications represent an investment of £620 million creating 23,460 new jobs. Some of these applications might be rejected and others not fulfilled. What is certain is that the valleys are involved in an unprecedented level of industrial investment.

The levels of Government aid envisaged over the next three years would on past experience create over £1 billion of private investment and 25,000 to 30,000 additional jobs.

The Training Commission, which I have consulted, intends to spend an average of £1 million per week over the next three years on training and educational programmes in the valleys. We intend to create in each and every valley new and close links between the schools and commerce and industry.

The Welsh Development Agency will treble its programmes to provide education advice and enterprise training for those in the valleys who wish to become self-employed and create new businesses.

A new drive will be made for the tourist industry. Apart from the substantial investment in the Ebbw Vale garden festival, we will proceed with the development of the Rhondda heritage park and many other developments. The private sector will be investing heavily in the tourist industries, and two major firms alone intend to invest £40 million over the next three years. Action will be taken to create a number of excellent venues in the valleys for music and the arts.

Expenditure on the clearance of derelict land in 1988-89 will be 50 per cent. more than last year, and £42·5 million will be spent over the full three years in the biggest derelict land clearance programme in the history of the valleys. A wide range of schemes will be provided for improving shopping centres and retailing. A range of further investments will be made in hospitals and health centres, and schemes will be pursued to assist the elderly particularly, and to improve primary health care.

In housing, we hope to increase substantially the number of house improvements under enveloping schemes, to increase the activities of the housing associations and to double the number of private sector new housing starts over the next three years. Altogether 32,000 houses should be improved and more than 10,000 new homes built over the next three years.

This is a programme that will bring substantial improvements to the economy, the environment and the quality of life in the valleys—a programme that contains within it the largest derelict land clearance programmes, factory building programmes, training programmes and boost to tourism in the history of the valleys. It is also a programme that will bring about a further substantial improvement in the quality of health care, and that recognises the strong community and cultural tradition of the valleys. It is a programme that will provide a fine foundation for future activity—a foundation that will give the people of the valleys an opportunity to see that their efforts, enthusiasm and enterprise will result in a strong economy and good quality of life with which to enter the next century.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): May I thank the Secretary of State for making this statement, rather belatedly, and regret that it was not made here in the House before he had his press conference this morning in Wales?

May I also say that we all want more resources and a solution to the problems of the valleys, but that having looked at the press releases that the Secretary of State issued today, I feel that most seem to be a combination of the ancient, the inadequate and the irrelevant? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with the diagnosis that we are

[Mr. Alan Williams]

talking about an area of unusual poverty, an abnormally high incidence of ill health, abnormal unemployment and desperately inadequate housing?

Will he confirm that the £500 million that the Government have announced for the next three years for this area of severe deprivation is the same amount that the Porsche-driving yuppies of the south-east will receive every six months as a result of the Chancellor's Budget? Will he also confirm that £250 million of this money is merely giving back to the valleys money that was stolen from them in the alteration of the rate support grant under the present Administration?

Does the Secretary of State remember his own Department's report—he should, as it is only a couple of weeks old—which showed that £400 million is needed for house repairs and renovation alone in these areas, that one in 10 houses in Mid Glamorgan are unfit, and that in the Cynon valley as many as one in six are unfit? Against that massive £400 million need, how does the right hon. Gentleman justify a mere £8 million extra for house repairs in this announcement? Will he confirm that, even taken with the £20 million already announced for enveloping for the valleys, the total house repair finance that he is providing is well below the £40 million that the brewers are providing for pub restoration in the valleys of Wales? Will he confirm that the two companies that he is talking about which are about to invest £40 million in the valleys are the brewers?

May I tell the right hon. Gentleman that I welcome the refurbishment of the miners' institutes? At least that will give a pleasant surrounding for the miners whom he has made redundant to sit and contemplate their continuing unemployment. Does he recollect his boast in *The Observer* that he obtained every penny that he asked for from the Cabinet? Will he tell us whether in this package there is any new money at all from the Government for Wales? If so, how much? If not, why not? Did he ask for it, or did he not? If he did not, why not? If he did, what happened?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that, although he claims to have had every penny he asked for, he did not obtain any money at all for the new hospital for Mid Glamorgan, which is desperately needed in an area with the second highest mortality rates in the United Kingdom and with the highest percentage of the permanently sick?

I welcome, as I am sure do all hon. Members, the new WDA factories. Will the Secretary of State confirm that the WDA formula of three jobs for every 1,000 sq ft of factory space will provide fewer than 4,000 jobs in an area with more than 40,000 unemployed?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree also that the increased applications for regional development grants, to which he referred and about which he boasts, are actually the result of a panic rush to beat the deadline for the abolition of regional development grants on 31 March and that some of them have been made as insurance applications and many of them will never take place? Alternatively, is he saying that he now is so convinced of the effectiveness of the regional development grant that he has come here today to announce that he intends to restore it?

I have seen reports in the press that the Secretary of State hopes to cut unemployment in the valleys by 26,000. Is that a firm target? Is it a target that he is willing to state here today? Is he willing to stand by its achievements?

Mr. Walker: No wonder there was virtually not a murmur from the Opposition Benches when the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) sat down. For a representative of the Labour party whose Members represent the valleys to greet a programme of this scale and dimension in that way was quite a remarkable performance.

Taking the items that the right hon. Gentleman has mentioned, with regard to house improvements in the valleys, yes, the housing conditions are very bad. They were very bad in 1979, when this Government came to power. The reality is that, in one year, this Government improved more houses than in the whole five years of a Labour Government. How remarkable it is that now we announce that we are going to improve another 32,000 houses, the right hon. Gentleman says that that is not enough.

The £500 million to which the right hon. Gentleman referred is not the totality of public expenditure. Public expenditure in the valleys—aside from the £500 million —on education, health and local government services, is £50 per week per household, quite apart from the £500 million on the specific items that I have mentioned today.

This is the biggest factory building programme—to which the right hon. Gentleman says, "But it provides only 4,000 new jobs." That is the WDA factory building programme. A massive factory building programme will take place as a result of the enormous investment taking place. In that programme, I mentioned just 11 companies, none of them brewing companies, in the valleys.

In the next three years, 11 valley companies will invest £200 million in capital investment. As a result of the Government's decision, we therefore have the biggest ever derelict land clearance programme; the biggest ever factory building programme; the biggest ever total of applications for regional assistance; and an enormous programme for house improvement. If the Labour party does not greet that, the people of the valleys will.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): The people of Wales will be saddened, but in no way surprised, by the mean-spirited and pettifogging response by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Willliams) to this most imaginative and far-reaching proposal which has brought fresh hope to the people of south Wales. If the information is available, will my hon. Friend say how much money is being made available for industrial expansion and economic recovery?

Now that my right hon. Friend has set south Wales firmly back on the road to economic recovery, will he pay some attention to the problems of small but obstinate areas of dereliction and industrial decay in north Wales, particularly in the west end of Rhyl in my constituency?

Mr. Walker: The derelict land clearance programmes and the urban renewal programmes will take place throughout the Principality, including north Wales. Over three years, £500 million will be spent on schemes which can be described as having a direct economic impact—the urban aid programme, Government grants for regional assistance, the factory building programme and the

derelict land clearance programme.That works out at £1,900 for each household in the valleys or £13,500 for each person currently unemployed.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): After the 15 years that I have had the privilege of representing a Welsh constituency, as a Liberal, I believe that we are honourbound as politicians to say thank you now and again to the Secretary of State for Wales, whether he is a Socialist or a Conservative; and over the years I have done just that. I welcome this initiative for south Wales as a step in the right direction, although it may be long overdue and the present aid may be insufficient. Will the Secretary of State assure the Welsh people and those responsible for this initiative in the valleys that, if the scheme goes well during the next two years, he will give extra financial aid to those responsible? The state of Welsh language and culture causes great anxiety to many of us in Wales. Can the Secretary of State give an assurance that he will make a proviso to look after those interests?

Mr. Walker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks. I believe that in the valleys, people of every political persuasion will be pleased with the dimensions of the programme. More needs to be done through the educational system and elsewhere to encourage the Welsh language and culture. When the hon. Gentleman examines the detail of the programme, he will see that one of the exciting developments is for six major buildings in the valleys which will become important locations for the performance of music and the arts, which are important to valley communities.

The problems of the valleys are of considerable dimensions. It will take time to change the area, which has faced difficulties, dereliction, unemployment, and a lack of training for the diverse economy that is now developing, into an active successful commercial area. I shall always endeavour to take decisions to invest in doing just that.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Like other Conservative Members, I was astonished at the sour reaction of the Labour party to the announcement of this initiative, which will certainly bring fresh vigour to those living in the valleys. When, in 1970, I stood as a candidate in Islwyn, the people of that district never dreamt of opportunities like this, but I suppose that it was not surprising, when they had been in the total grip of the Labour party for so long, that the future looked completely bleak.

Mr. Walker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I made the announcement in the valleys because I wanted to make it to the people of the valleys. In all my consultations and talks, local authority leaders, many of whom are of the opposite persuasion, were completely collaborative. I am sure that they will welcome many of these proposals.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I am the first valley Member of Parliament to speak on this statement. I listened with interest to the Secretary of State boasting about these home improvement moneys and the great burst of effort in one year, which he described as involving far more investment than ever before. Why is the Secretary of State now turning off the tap? It is acknowledged in the report that owner-occupation has increased from 59 per cent. to 66 per cent. My constituency has the highest owner-occupation rate in the United Kingdom, which is about 79 to 80 per cent. There are 18,000 houses that are substandard and need improvement grants. The report is not enough. More is needed in this vital area.

The valley people are a proud people. We have a culture, a tradition and a structure which is specially ours. People want to stay in the valleys, which is why they are purchasing their homes, but they need help. Why is the Secretary of State not investing money to give help in that area?

Mr. Walker: This morning, one of my pleasant tasks was to open a new housing development in the constituency of the hon. Member for Rhonda (Mr. Rogers). I am glad to say that, during that ceremony, the people involved announced that they intended to embark upon two similar projects in the valleys.

As regards housing, the enveloping schemes have been extremely successful and within the next three years we intend substantially to increase such schemes. Our target for improvement is 32,000 more houses. That will mean that, since this Government came to power, 77,000 houses will be improved in the valleys—that is, approaching one in three of all homes. It is, of course, an important programme. Apart from housing, I know that the hon. Gentleman will be delighted at the decision on the Rhondda heritage park and the fact that in the coming year land reclamation in the Rhonda will be worth £1 million and that £650,000 of factory building will take place.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): My right hon. Friend will be aware that much of the success of the scheme depends upon the response from the south Wales valleys. I was born in south Wales and spent most of my life there, and I urge my right hon. Friend to adopt initiatives to encourage skills and self-employment in the valleys.

Mr. Walker: The Training Commission will spend £1 million a week in the valleys in the next three years. I am also pleased to say that the advice and assistance given by the WDA to those who wish to become self employed and start their own business will be trebled in that period. There is a 15-point programme to encourage small businesses in the valleys.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): I am pleased to note that the report in *The Guardian* of this morning concerning the area of the initiative—a band from Gwent in the east to Afan in the west—has proved to be unfounded. Frankly, if that band had obtained, it would have been a disaster because it would have left out the most important valleys. What projects will the money attract? Will it mean that the road improvement schemes in the Neath and the Swansea valleys will be expedited? Will the geological conditions that have caused such trouble in places such as Panteg in the Swansea valley, also qualify for funding by the initiatives?

Mr. Walker: With regard to funding schemes, it should be noted that the urban development programme will be increased by 38 per cent. We shall consider all the projects and applications to that programme carefully and objectively to get the best value for money. There will be a substantial increase in such urban development activities.

Obviously, I am delighted that the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) approves of the final map upon

[Mr. Walker]

which we decided, which includes the valleys he mentioned. This year, a whole range of projects will take place in his constituency.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I grew up in the Welsh valleys, but was obliged to leave because of lack of employment opportunities as a Conservative Member of Parliament. I welcome the initiatives that my right hon. Friend has announced today. Is he rather surprised at the somewhat ungenerous response from the Labour party, considering that, in its day, it arranged neither a press conference nor a statement in this House because there were no initiatives? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the most successful forms of regeneration are those that harness the huge resources of the private sector to the public sector, as with the London docklands? What part will the private sector play in the initiative that my right hon. Friend has announced?

Mr. Walker: The most important aspect of this initiative is that one is moving from an economy that was totally dependent upon a couple of nationalised industries and local government employment to a diverse free-enterprise economy. If my hon. Friend studies the full programme, he will note that we analyse 11 firms in the valleys. Three of those companies are inward investment firms, two come from Japan, and one from Germany and they are large, medium and small firms. In total those 11 firms alone will invest £200 million of their money in the next three years. The applications for regional development grant and regional selective assistance will provoke at least £1 billion of private investment. So we are moving towards a diverse, privately owned free enterprise economy in the valleys.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): How much new money is involved? How does the right hon. Gentleman propose to strengthen the WDA, which is the powerhouse of his scheme, in salaries, manpower and training? How will he assure county councils such as those of Clwyd and Gwynedd that the necessary investment in the valleys is not the precursor of a famine of funds for the north?

The valleys deserve social justice, and the objectives of the initiative are to be welcomed. The Secretary of State should remember that it was the valleys, with their coal and steel production in the last century and early in this, that made our nation a front-rank power—and they should have social justice.

Mr. Walker: I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman. In view of the damage done and the problems that have been caused to the valleys in the course of this century, there is a national duty to tackle this problem. I assure him that the activities of the WDA and the factory building and urban development programmes in north Wales will be unaffected by these proposals; they will, I am glad to say, go ahead at an accelerated rate.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The Secretary of State will know that I represent the major opposition party in the valleys. On behalf of all our councillors in local authorities there, I say that he certainly has their support for carrying out this programme. We welcome its concept and framework; it is a broad-ranging programme that takes in cultural as well as economic activity.

I want to ask, first, about the availability of commercial capital, about which the right hon. Gentleman has been a little coy. In other regional initiatives in England by development corporations, there is much more commercial funding up front—and it is clearly stated as such. It does not seem to be available in this programme.

Secondly, how does the right hon. Gentleman intend to ensure that there will be additional European Community funding for this? Can he give us any news about the integrated operation programme for the valleys? We warmly welcome the IOP announced for other parts of Wales.

Mr. Walker: On the latter point, I think that £25 million has already been allocated to one part of the valleys, and we are hoping that at least another £100 million will become available in the forthcoming period. Of course, that is subject to negotiations in Brussels.

I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said about the scheme in general. In the context of commercial funding, there are two important aspects for smaller businesses: the two new loan schemes that the WDA operates which are mentioned in the programme. I am also glad that the 3i's—Investors in Industry—the major source of venture capital, has decided to increase its investment in the valleys by two thirds.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Does the Secretary of State understand that many of us who represent valley communities have been waiting patiently for this statement? Some of us are sad about it because we feel that he has not taken the initiative we thought he would.

I ask first about a matter that was not clear from answers to questions asked earlier. A point of order was raised yesterday about the public expenditure White Paper published in February, and page 35 was mentioned. Has the Secretary of State been able to persuade the Cabinet to allow new money for this valleys initiative? When I looked at the map and read hurriedly through his statement, I found that the Ogmore constituency, which contains the four valleys of Maesteg, Ogmore, Garw and Gilfach Goch, had been neglected. The only addition shown in the initiative is some funding for the refurbishment of the Blaengarw workman's institute. What will that do to help the 5,000 miners—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman please be brief?

Mr. Powell: With respect, Mr. Speaker, this is a valley initiative for the whole of my constituency. It is very important.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that it is very important to the hon. Gentleman, but we are to have two other statements.

Mr. Powell: I shall not be much longer, but I must emphasise to the Secretary of State that since 1979, 5,000 miners have been put on the dole in the Ogmore constituency. In addition, 5,000 steelworkers have been thrown out of work. That means that in my constituency 10,000 people have been put out of work. The whole initiative would not employ all those people.

Mr. Walker: I can understand the hon. Gentleman being interested in the detail of the programme and in how it affects his constituency. I agree that his constituency has all the problems. He may be pleased to know that, in the

financial year 1988-89 alone, £685,000 will be spent on continued work on the Maesteg town centre, that £400,000 will be spent on land reclamation in his constituency, and that £500,000 will be spent on new factory building.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): In constituency terms I welcome the Pentrebach-Dowlais road development. It is an important link and I have written to the Minister on numerous occasions about it. Will he confirm that the British Coal Opencast Executive proposals will now fall because they totally impede that development?

Why has the Minister not listened to us on the central question of home improvements and housing repair? Individuals, as opposed to enveloping schemes, now have a backlog of requests and applications that go back four years. Why will the Minister not unlock this backlog? Mid Glamorgan area health authority has one of the most pressing demands in Wales, yet health matters make up the weakest part of the Minister's initiative. Wards such as the St. Tydfil ward remain closed and the initiative does not address hospital capital and current requirements. We are deeply disappointed with that part of the initiative.

Mr. Walker: As one of the hon. Members who represents part of the valleys, the hon. Gentleman has no right to be disappointed with the initiative. Apart from the major road improvement scheme about which he rightly says he has constantly pressed and which he says is very important, in the current financial year £2,700,000 will be spent on new factory building and £500,000 will be spent on clearing derelict land. In addition, £947,000 will be spent on the continuation of improvements to Merthyr town centre. In total, the impact on Merthyr in one year alone will be considerable. The hon. Gentleman spoke about housing improvements. Since 1979, we have improved 45,000 houses, and in the next three years we intend to improve another 32,000.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I wish I could share the Secretary of State's considerable euphoria about his statement, but unfortunately I cannot. There will be £8 million for housing. In my constituency, where more than half the private housing is unfit for human habitation, we need £64 million to improve it. He is offering £8 million for the whole of the valleys, and that puts the matter in context. He has made great play of land reclamation. There are 34,000 acres of derelict land in Wales and the Secretary of State is offering money to improve 2,500 acres. We lag far behind England and Scotland in the clearance of derelict land. Since 1979, the Welsh Office has cut the programme of land clearance in Wales.

The Minister is making available £30 million of public money for the Cardiff bay development. I do not begrudge Cardiff that money, but were it not for the valleys, Cardiff would not exist at all. Of all the indices, the argument on social and economic grounds for improving the situation in the valleys is enormous. The Secretary of State is following his mistress's philosophy, which is to give to the rich and to take from the poor.

Mr. Walker: Now that the hon. Lady is so much in favour of home improvements and the clearance of derelict land, I hope that she will explain to her constituents why she disapproves of a programme that is far bigger than any programme that a Labour Government ever envisaged or put into practice. In her constituency alone in this financial year, £1,100,000 will be spent on land reclamation and £683,000 will be spent on improvements to the town centre. I am glad to say, as I know that the hon. Lady will be glad to say, that her local authority has now agreed a housing strategy. I hope that it will carry it out.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I thank the Secretary of State for including the Amman and Gwendraeth valleys in his initiative. Why does the initiative not contain some European money? Last week we had the Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys initiative and half the money for that came from the European Community. Surely the regional fund should provide back-up for this inadequate initiative. How much of this money is recycled? I have a strong feeling that it is the same old shop and that the goods in the window have been rearranged. I shall quote one example from my area. The Amman valley hospital modernisation programme was announced six months before the last election. In September, immediately after the election, it was postponed. Now I find out what we knew anyway, that a modernisation programme which was in the pipeline is in this new initiative. These are recycled goods.

Mr. Walker: I discussed with the health authority the projects mentioned in this initiative. I cannot give the go-ahead until the people responsible have agreed that the projects should be part of their strategy. I think that this is a correct list of the proposals that appear to them and to us to be the ones likely to develop. The hon. Gentleman asked about European assistance. Under the Mid Glamorgan national programme of community interest, an estimated £26 million from the European regional development fund is likely to be distributed to projects in the valleys. The proposed integrated operations programme for industrial south Wales may also attract aid of about £100 million. Of course, the decisions will be taken in Brussels.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): While inwardly digesting the Secretary of State's rather touching belief that £37 million-worth of improvements in the valleys will open the door to greater prosperity, I must tell him that it takes both Courage and Brains to believe that this is the way to give the valleys Allbright future. Will he comment on the figures that he has given for manufacturing development in the valleys, including the great announcement that British Telecom will bring telephone ownership to the valleys? Can he tell us whether manufacturing employment as a whole in the valleys is likely to increase over the next 10 years, or whether it will hold its own or decline?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman should look at the potential of £1 billion of investment in regional development, at the £200 million investment by just 11 firms in the valleys, and at the £92 million of capital investment by the public utilities. That will show him that major investment is taking place. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is cynical about the £40 million of investment by the two main brewers in the valleys. That will considerably help the tourist industry, will make far more attractive buildings than the existing ones, and will create a great number of jobs. I welcome that as an addition to the whole substantial programme.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Can—*[Interruption.]* Can my right hon. Friend say—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has every right to ask a question.

Mr. Jessel: My wife is half Welsh and her uncle sings in a Welsh choir—*[Interruption.]* Can my right hon. Friend say whether the new music centres and arts centres that he has proposed for the valleys will be used to promote the work of Welsh male voice choirs, whose marvellous standards and world-renowned quality deserve a wider hearing? Will he consult the Minister for the Arts and the Foreign Secretary to see whether the number of engagements on the continent can be increased?

Mr. Walker: Yes.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): When the Secretary of State made his statement, he welcomed the full co-operation that he said he had received from Welsh local authorities, from the Wales TUC and from employers. I hope he realises from the reception for his proposals in the House that there is a great deal of disappointment. That disappointment stems from the fact that in past months the Secretary of State has deliberately been raising expectations in Wales. The statement has failed to meet those expectations and that is why there is bitterness and disappointment.

Why have we not heard about any new investment in manufacturing industry? Why have we not had any firm forecasts of jobs to be created or locations where those jobs will be created? We have heard no mention of one new hospital bed, let alone a new hospital ward or the new hospital that is desperately needed for mid-Glamorgan. No provision has been made for improving the standards of public health. No mention has been made of the need to improve the infrastructure in the valleys, especially the need to improve the quality and standard of our drainage and sewerage systems. There has been no mention of the opportunities that this initiative could have presented to improve the quality of Welsh drinking water.

The Minister has not shown that he will lift the shackles on local authorities when they try to improve our housing stock. We have had no indication at all that new money will be available either to repair the rotting fabric of our schools or to provide the additional teachers who are desperately needed.

The Secretary of State said in his new initiative document:

> "Unemployment is too high. The Valleys remain scarred by derelict pit heads and slag heaps. Much of the housing is still bad, some of it still failing to provide even the basic amenities of a bathroom or inside toilet. The health of the people also continues to suffer."

It is the misfortune of the people of the valleys that the Secretary of State has identified the problem, but he is a member of a Government who do not have the political will to address themselves to it.

Mr. Walker: It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman wrote that piece before hearing the statement or reading the document. The reactions of the House have been interesting. From the Opposition Front Bench, the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) has declared his party's hostility and has said how bad it thinks it is. The Liberal party, Plaid Cymru and Conservative Members have expressed their approval. Perhaps the Labour party has a nasty hang-up because, where it did so little for the valleys, the Tory Government are doing so much. All the items that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned—industrial and manufacturing investment and investment in water supplies, clearing derelict land and the environment—will be at record levels as a result of the programme, seemingly to the distress of the Labour party.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory replies from the Secretary of State for Wales on the entire issue, I intend raising the matter in the Adjournment tonight.

Mr. Speaker: This is not the proper time to raise that matter.

Agriculture (Set-Aside)

4.12 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about set-aside of agricultural land.

A new European Community scheme to reduce surplus agricultural production by set-aside of agricultural land was agreed in principle at the European Council in February, together with the stabilisers package. It is compulsory for member states to introduce the scheme for the 1988-89 crop production year, but participation is voluntary for farmers. Under the scheme, farmers prepared to take 20 per cent. or more of their arable land out of production for five years will receive compensation payments, part of which will be funded by FEOGA.

In view of the very tight timetable that we face, I am announcing the broad outlines of the United Kingdom scheme now, so that farmers can start taking it into account in drawing up their plans for the next cropping year. The details of the scheme must, however, under the Community legislation be scrutinised by the European Commission, which may ask for some changes, and I will then put before both Houses a statutory instrument for its implementation.

The main components of the scheme will be, first, that premiums will be available to farmers prepared to reduce their area of supported arable crops by 20 per cent. or more. The farmer must take on an obligation for five years, but can opt out after three. Farmers setting aside at least 30 per cent. of their arable land will be exempted from co-responsibility levy on a maximum of 20 tonnes of grain sold.

Secondly, land set aside will have to be maintained as fallow with a green cover crop, put to woodland or used for non-agricultural purposes. The Community rules provide that land put to fallow must be kept in good agricultural condition, whether the fallow is permanent or rotated around the farm. In regard to non-agricultural use, land developed for residential, industrial, retail or similar purposes will not be eligible, but the scheme will not include other limitations on non-agricultural use—although, of course, planning controls will continue to apply.

Thirdly, the rates of payment will vary according to the different uses and according to whether the land is in the lowlands or in a less favoured area. For land that is managed as permanent fallow with a green cover crop, the rate will be £200 per hectare per year except in the LFAs, where the rate will be £180 to take account of their lower average yields. There will be a reduction of £20 in either case if the fallow area is rotated round the farm. Those payments take account of the cost of maintaining a green cover and the benefit of rotation.

Farmers adopting the woodland option may plant trees under the Forestry Commission's woodland grant scheme, in which case they will receive a set-aside payment of £200 per hectare per year or £180 in the LFAs. Alternatively, they may enter the farm woodland scheme, which is due to come into effect later this year under the Farm Land and Rural Development Act that has just received the Royal Assent. For non-agricultural use, bearing in mind that the land could be expected to yield some form of income to offset the costs of maintenance, the set-aside payment will be reduced by £50 per hectare.

Fourthly, there is an option under the Community rules to permit land set aside from arable crops to be grazed by livestock, subject to limits on numbers. I have decided not to take up that option in the United Kingdom because of the difficulties of ensuring proper controls and the adverse effects that such an option could have on existing livestock producers, especially in the upland areas. In reaching that decision, I took into account the many representations I received—including, in particular, the views expressed in the House.

Fifthly, set-aside payments in this and future years will be based on farmers' arable crop pattern in 1987-88. Farmers entering the scheme will be required to provide evidence of that pattern. That will create no difficulty for those entering this year, but many farmers may not wish to enter the set-aside scheme at once, and I want to safeguard their ability to enter the scheme in later years, when the evidence of the crop pattern in 1987-88 may otherwise have disappeared.

I am therefore providing for farmers who do not wish to enter set-aside this year, but wish to keep their options open, to register their 1987-88 crop pattern with the agriculture Departments this summer. Some farmers have put forward suggestions for additional payments for particularly environmentally friendly practices on the farm. We have not been able to establish whether a scheme on those lines is viable, but we will be undertaking a careful study of it. I am placing in the Library a document giving fuller details of the scheme.

As I have emphasised in the House previously, the Government regard set-aside as an important new instrument of CAP reform, complementary to action on price. Its aims are to assist in getting more arable land out of production, to provide an alternative source of income for farmers most affected by reductions in CAP support and to give reasonable payments to farmers in recognition of the environmental services they are providing to the community at large in keeping such land in attractive condition and capable, if necessary, of returning to agricultural use. I hope that farmers will now look positively at the possibilities it offers them, both in the coming and future cropping years.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I thank the Minister for coming to the House this afternoon to make this statement. However, it does not begin to show the awful cost of the Prime Minister's cave-in in Brussels last February when those agreements were initially laid. It is obvious to all that the common agricultural policy is in a state of crisis and in need of drastic reform. The position has deteriorated so far that the total public resources spent on agriculture through Community national budgets have now reached a level practically equivalent to the net income of that sector. Those were the sentiments of the European Commission this year, which described the industry as being almost totally subsidised.

The set-aside proposals are no more than damage limitation measures. They seek merely to tackle the effect of surpluses, not their causes. In the way that they have been presented this afternoon, they are extremely disappointing.

The proposals are so limited that the Minister has not even taken the opportunity to link environmental and low-input farming into the system. He could have taken the opportunity to change the gear of agriculture to

[Dr. David Clark]

something less intensive. It is a great pity that he did not do that at the outset, although I am pleased that he appears to have an open mind on the matter.

In view of the new planning circular on opencast coal mining last week, will the Minister clarify whether land set aside will be eligible for such non-agricultural uses?

The Minister emphasised that the proposals are to be voluntary. Can he explain why one of his officials, Tony Lester-Card—a senior agricultural adviser—last week warned that the voluntary approach would not work and that the scheme would probably be made compulsory? Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify whether that senior civil servant was speaking for the Government, or does the Minister disagree with his remarks? After all, the report of Mr. Lester-Card's comments in *Farmers Weekly* last week had the credibility of containing most of the information that the Minister has given the House this afternoon.

Has the Minister any figures for the total amount that he anticipates being spent on the scheme this year? How many hectares of arable land does he envisage being taken out of production? Has he estimated the amount of slippage? Has he estimated the impact of his proposals on employment in agriculture? How many agricultural workers does he envisage losing their jobs because of the set-aside scheme? What plans, if any, does he have financially to compensate those who lose their jobs?

How does the Minister intend to ensure that his proposals are monitored effectively? Does he appreciate that it is essential that no fraudulent claims are made, because the general public simply will not stand for that? They have enough difficulty understanding why, in their view, farmers are paid for, in effect, doing nothing.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman has raised a large number of points, but the one with which he began is not appropriate for discussion this afternoon—that is, the wider question of tackling the causes of surpluses. We have often debated that issue and I reject the idea that there was any cave-in at the February summit. Indeed, we achieved significant reforms, a great many of which were due to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

For a variety of reasons, set-aside has an important part to play complementary to those reforms. First, if we are to tackle surpluses, more land must come out of agricultural production, and we want to assist that process. Secondly, many farmers will face quite severe difficulties because of the structural changes in the industry, yet they have to manage the land. We want to give them an alternative option through the set-aside scheme, where that is relevant.

I reject the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that the scheme does not tackle a number of issues such as the environment. Although its primary purpose is to tackle the problems of surplus production, it has a substantial number of important environmental benefits. The Community insists that the land is left in agronomic condition, and we shall encourage good management in the interests of wildlife and the environment generally. There are six or seven ways in which that will be furthered under the scheme.

The hon. Gentleman knows that low-input farming is not appropriate to the scheme; nor is organic or any other form of more extensive farming. A decision was taken earlier this year to concentrate first and foremost on the set-aside scheme to get land out of production, and then to find other ways to deal with more extensive farming in arable crops and beef. However, because of its rotational and permanent fallow proposals, the set-aside scheme will have an indirect impact that should prove helpful to low-input and even organic farming.

There are a whole variety of ways in which non-agricultural use can be generated, and I shall certainly consider the hon. Gentleman's suggestion of opencast mining.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the advice that the Government had taken, and complained about the proposed level of rates. That is one of the most difficult areas to decide in a pioneering, experimental scheme, and I gave a considerable amount of thought and study to that aspect. We need to strike a balance between reasonable compensation for loss of income and the costs of farmers in managing the land, and the over-compensation that could occur for some producers. The hon. Gentleman would be immediately critical if there was over-compensation from public money.

The proposed rate is at the very top of the scale set out in the consultation document, and it was determined after expert advice from ADAS and our economists. The gentleman to whom the hon. Gentleman referred certainly was not speaking for the Government. No member state, and certainly not the Commission, is in favour of a compulsory set-aside scheme. There would be significant difficulties with compulsion, and it would not be a political proposition.

The hon. Gentleman referred to money spent this year, but I am sure that he realises that the money is spent at the end of the year in question, so I imagine that he was in fact referring to 1989-90. We have set aside—if that is the right description—what I believe to be sufficient funds, some £16 million, to deal with 1989-90. Because of the late start following delays in the European Council decisions and the discussions on drawing up the Commission's regulations, we might not meet all that this year. However, we have made adequate provision.

I have not taken a view on the number of hectares, because that will depend on the response. However, the number taken out of production actually has nothing to do with slippage—another point to which the hon. Gentleman referred—because we would not get the equivalent amount of production that we would get from the amount of land taken out. Inevitably, there will be some slippage in any set-aside scheme, and we have taken account of that in the proposed rate of payment.

It is not possible at this stage to estimate the scheme's effects on agricultural employment, but I suspect that it will be slight and may even be favourable. Given the payments to farmers for continuing to manage the land, I do not believe that there will be much reduction in employment. Indeed, by encouraging non-agricultural use, there may be quite an increase.

We shall, of course, have effective monitoring. As with all schemes, I am determined to crack down hard on any fraudulent claims. I beg the hon. Gentleman to recognise that it is not, as he concluded, a scheme to pay farmers for doing nothing—far from it. We shall be paying them to manage the land. There is a cost to farmers in managing land and keeping it in good condition and environmentally attractive. We will not be paying farmers for doing nothing; we will be paying them in recognition of the effect that dealing with surpluses will have on some farm

incomes. We are also recognising that they have a role to play in keeping our countryside attractive, something that they do magnificently well. The set-aside scheme will help them to do that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I realise the great importance of the statement, but I remind the House that there is another statement to follow and then a heavy day's work. I ask hon. Members to be brief.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement is welcome because of the voluntary nature of the scheme, and especially because of his decision to exclude grazed fallow, something that will be met with great relief in the grassland areas? Is he further aware that the scheme will be especially welcome to those farmers currently in difficulty because they grow only low yields of cereals? Will not the scheme also be attractive to taxpayers, whom my right hon. Friend did not mention, as they will be supporting farmers' incomes at a much lower cost than if they had been allowed to continue to create larger and larger surpluses?

Will my right hon. Friend review the acreage payments in the light of those to be paid by other member states, so that our farmers are treated with similar generosity to that shown to those in other countries?

Mr. MacGregor: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend, and I pay tribute to his early and important work in developing this scheme. I listened especially to the views of people like himself when I made my decision on grazed fallow; I am glad that he supports my decision.

I entirely agree that we should be helpful to farmers with low yields of cereals. That is one of the great merits of the scheme, and the rate of payment has been particularly directed at that. I am sorry that I omitted to refer to the taxpayer in my opening remarks, but my right hon. Friend is entirely right to say that this is a very cost-effective scheme in that respect.

Finally, it would not be right to have a review of rates as a result of action taken by other member states this year. One or two member states may make larger payments in some circumstances. It is likely that the West German Government will do so because they have a different form of land classification, which enables them to gear the scheme to the different levels of profitability of different cereal farmers, whereas we cannot do that.

I do not rule out reviews of various aspects in due course. After all, I favour the principle of monitoring and evaluation of all grant schemes wherever appropriate. That would apply equally to rates, although they may have to be revised downwards as well as upwards to take account of price reductions under the stabiliser arrangements, but any reductions would certainly not apply to those farmers already in the scheme.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Does the Minister intend this United Kingdom scheme, as he calls it, to apply automatically and simultaneously to Northern Ireland, or will the colonial regime in the Northern Ireland Office drag its feet for the usual 18 months?

Mr. MacGregor: That would have to be a matter for the statutory instrument, but I have taken note of the right hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many farmers will consider these measures inadequate, and that the take-up will be very small? What will be done with the green crop cover, if grazing is not allowed? Is the exclusion of grazing not a further disadvantage to British farmers in comparison with European farmers? How does the £200 maximum compare with that which will be received by the French and German farmers?

Mr. MacGregor: We had to direct the rates of payment to certain groups of farmers. The £200 figure is directed at some of the more marginal cereal producers. That will nevertheless benefit all cereal producers if it helps to cut cereal production, but the problem in setting what my hon. Friend would perhaps regard as a generous rate is that it could heavily over-compensate other producers. That would not be the best use of taxpayers' money and the public would not regard it as the right decision.

Experience of set-aside schemes in other countries has shown that, in the early period, take-up is slow because of farmers' natural caution. Through nobody's fault, we are coming forward with a scheme rather later in the year than usual, so some farmers may find that they simply cannot take decisions for the coming year. I do not expect a rapid take-up, but I hope that it will be considered favourably by those to whom the rates of payment will be attractive. Green crop cover is a Community condition of the scheme, but we have taken that fact into account when setting the rate of payment.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Despite the fact that there is no Scottish Office Minister on the Front Bench at present, may we take it that this statement also applies to Scotland? Although I understand why the Minister has decided not to permit grazing of arable land set aside under this scheme, what is his understanding of the likely application of the scheme in other Community countries? Does he acknowledge that the exercise of that option in other Community countries could further discriminate against the British meat industry in all its forms?

Mr. MacGregor: One has to make judgments about those matters and we will find that, where there is an option, member states come to different conclusions about grazed fallow and, where there are no Community conditions, will reach their own conclusions too. That is what I have done. I have listened to our farmers and all those who represent them and, in the light of those representations, have reached my decision about grazed fallow.

I closely consulted my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland on this subject and I know very well what the National Farmers Union of Scotland has been saying. I have seen a letter to my right hon. and learned Friend from the president of the Scottish NFU.

In response to that representation, I wish to emphasise that I am not closing the door permanently on that option. I would be willing to monitor the position with the industry, in which there are some divided views, to see whether the grazed fallow option should be introduced in some form at a later date, but certainly not this year. I have come to a clear decision for this year, but obviously, if conditions and people's views change, I am prepared to reconsider the matter.

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): Although I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement that fallow ground may not be used for grazing, will he confirm that the green crop grown on that land will not be allowed to be used for conservation for livestock feeding purposes, as that would drive a coach and horses through the policy? Although I welcome his policy for the United Kingdom, will it not create problems for the remainder of Europe if other European countries allow the grazing of that land by livestock or the conservation of crops for livestock purposes? Will that not shuffle off cereal problems into livestock areas and create anomalies for British livestock producers by putting them in an unfair position in comparison with livestock producers in Europe?

Mr. MacGregor: I confirm that the position in respect of the green crop cover is as my right hon. Friend said. There will be divided views about grazed fallow in other member states. That was clear from our discussions in the Agriculture Council, and other Ministers shared my worry and concern about the possible impact of unfair competition on their livestock producers. I am sure that there will be an active debate in the farming communities of other member states.

It is important that there should be strict conditions where grazed fallow is taken up as an option in respect of the number of livestock allowed, for the reasons given by my right hon. Friend. I insisted on that in my discussions about that option in the Agriculture Council, and there are now strict conditions regarding the number of livestock. One of the problems is how to control that. That was one of the reasons why I reached my decision. We shall watch carefully what happens in other member states.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I welcome the Government's scheme. They have learnt a great deal from their mistakes in 1983, when they introduced compulsory legislation for dairy farmers. I am sure that the cereal growers of this country are glad that they have had a voluntary scheme, but I should like to ask the Minister a number of questions.

Does the Minister honestly believe that he can achieve a 20 per cent. reduction in three or four years by voluntary methods? I should like further clarification about the conditions regarding farmers opting out after three years, when the scheme is obligatory for five years. In view of paragraph 7 of the statement, I am surprised that the less favoured areas are included in the scheme. To what extent are cereals grown in the less favoured areas of this country? The figure is bound to be very small. Perhaps the Minister will reconsider withdrawing the less favoured areas from the scheme.

Finally, hon. Members on both sides of the House, and especially livestock and sheep farmers, are anxious that the Minister should give an assurance to United Kingdom sheep farmers that he will consider the scheme annually and consult the farmers' unions in each country of the United Kingdom to ensure that he produces a scheme that will benefit the farmers concerned.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks. I am glad that he asked his first question, because it enables me to clear up a misunderstanding in his mind, which is widely held elsewhere. The 20 per cent. limit is not designed to reduce cereal or arable production generally by 20 per cent. over a period. It offers farmers the opportunity to reduce their production if they are prepared to take 20 per cent. of their land out. It follows clearly from that that it is a voluntary scheme and that there will be some slippage in the amount of land that they take out. It also follows that the reduction of cereal production will be well short of the 20 per cent. Indeed, it was always designed to be so.

As for farmers opting out after three years, that is a Community permission. Provided that the farmer has abided by all the conditions in the three years, he will not be required to repay his premium for those three years, he would then opt out, and no longer remain in the scheme.

The answer to the question about less favoured areas is that cereals are grown there and I do not wish to deny farmers in LFAs the opportunity to participate in the scheme. I suspect that some of the more marginal growers who will be most attracted to the scheme and who are most under pressure will be in the LFAs. It would be quite wrong of us not to give them the option. The lower rate of payment—lower by 10 per cent.—reflects the fact that I have been advised by all my expert ADAS advisers that, broadly speaking, yields in LFAs are 13 to 14 per cent. lower than elsewhere.

Finally, having in mind the position of sheep farmers in areas such as the hon. Gentleman's and other upland areas, I took the decision not to take up the grazed fallow option in the United Kingdom. Sheep farmers would be most concerned about the prospects of increased competition in lowland areas from people who took up a grazed fallow option.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): I begin by welcoming the fact that my right hon. Friend has come to the House so early to make this statement, because it gives arable farmers the opportunity to plan for the future. I welcome also his refusal to allow the green cover, as he has described it, to be grazed. I should like to ask two questions about that. The first relates to the timing of the payments for set-aside, because cash flow is as important to farmers as it is to those involved in other businesses. If my right hon. Friend could state when the payments will be made, that would be helpful.

Secondly, when my right hon. Friend refers to 20 per cent. of a farmer's ground, what is the position if the farmer occupies more than one holding? Is it 20 per cent. of the acreage, spread over all the holdings, or can it be 20 per cent. of the entire acreage farmed, all on one holding?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those questions. I understand his point about cash flow, but I advise him that the payments will be made at the end of the year as that is a condition of the scheme. On his second point, I shall have to consider the kind of cases that he has in mind but, broadly speaking, it would normally be 20 per cent. of the actual holding.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does the Minister recognise and accept that those who farm the difficult areas of this country, where grazing is the only option, will welcome the implications of the early part of his statement, but have some doubts about his reservations and his subsequent commitments to reconsider the matter? Obviously, those people have only one choice. The Minister also suggested that there might be other means of reducing crop output. Is his Department prepared to continue to consider those methods, because some may be far more environmentally acceptable?

Mr. MacGregor: On the hon. Gentleman's main point about grazed fallow, I have made a clear decision today that we will not go for the grazed fallow option. However, I was pressed, especially by the Scottish NFU, not to close my mind permanently to that if the general view or conditions should change. This afternoon one or two hon. Members have stated their concern that we should look at what happens in the European Community. However, I am persuaded of the importance of the understandable feelings and worries, with which I agree, of farmers in upland areas, and especially livestock farmers. That was what played the biggest part in directing my mind to the conclusion that I reached. I would certainly need to be strongly convinced that there were strong arguments for changing that decision, and that would have to be the view of those in the upland areas also.

The hon. Gentleman's final point requested the type of scheme that might come in under the extensification schemes which we are committed to introducing. We are, for example, committed to introducing one for arable production from—I speak from memory—1990.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Is this scheme as favourable to farmers as the environmentally sensitive areas scheme? If it is not, will my right hon. Friend consider increasing the number of environmentally sensitive areas?

Mr. MacGregor: It is impossible to say, because each farmer must take his own decision on that in relation to his own circumstances. To some extent, the schemes have different purposes and, therefore, the rates of payment are different. In any case, ESAs are not available to all farmers. What I am doing is in the whole context of trying to get the right balance between agricultural production and the environment, in the new changed circumstances of bearing down on surpluses. I am trying to offer a range of alternatives to farmers. They can choose for themselves which they think are most appropriate to them.

We have already embarked on a large programme of ESAs in a short time. It is necessary that we review and monitor them to see exactly how they are progressing, so that we can learn lessons from their progress. ESAs are moving favourably at the moment, but we need a little more time to review their progress before we reach conclusions about any others.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Turning again to the issue of grazed fallow, how deep were the divisions in the Community on that option? Was it a minority view, which the Minister reflected, or a majority view? When does he expect other Ministers to reach a decision on that important matter?

The Minister states that the Government had allocated £16 million for the set-aside scheme for next year. Will any of that money come from FEOGA, or is it in addition to the Government's own funding?

Mr. MacGregor: On the hon. Lady's first point, one member state in particular pressed the grazed fallow option—although I suspect that there were divisions of view in the farming community in that member state also. It is difficult to say how many member states will take it up. They may change their minds when the problems that I foresee with grazed fallow start to emerge. We need a little time to see how that develops.

On the payments and the FEOGA contribution, the £16 million is what we set aside in the public expenditure White Paper. There are varying rates of FEOGA payments depending on the level at which national member states set their own payments. In the case of the payments that I have announced today, we expect a 42 per cent. FEOGA contribution.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's proposals. Returning to the grazing of fallow land, does my right hon. Friend accept that there is divided opinion in the National Farmers Union of Scotland and among Scottish farmers, because if grazing is accepted on the continent there will be a major increase in livestock there, of beef and mutton, which will discriminate against this country? Will he therefore state today that he will monitor developments, take a flexible attitude, and keep in close touch with his right hon. Friend?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. There should not be a major increase in livestock production if other member states take it up, because there are now strict rules about what can be undertaken on grazed fallow, and on the limitation of livestock. As I said earlier, that was one point that I insisted on being included in the Community's conditions. I assure my hon. Friend that we shall monitor all aspects of the scheme, including what is happening in other member states, and I shall, of course, keep in close touch with my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Calum A. Macdonald (Western Isles): I add my welcome to the exclusion of grazed fallow in the Minister's statement and wish to convey to him the relief and the appreciation of the crofters and the upland sheep farmers of the Highlands and Islands. I take on board what I believe the Minister said earlier, and ask him for an assurance that grazed fallow will not be included as long as he believes that it will have an adverse effect on upland sheep farmers. Will he clarify the question about green fallow and make it absolutely clear that no harvest crops —for example, mustard—will be allowed on green fallow?

Mr. MacGregor: There are strict conditions about the way in which the green crop is used. It must not be used for agricultural purposes. On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I hope that I have already made it clear that I took the decision that I did on grazed fallow bearing in mind the representations from livestock hill farmers generally, and sheep farmers especially.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend accept that farmers in my constituency will be pleased with his original statement, but slightly less pleased with his subsequent qualification on grazed fallow —that he will not close his mind permanently to it? Will he firmly bear in mind the fact that, as far as arable farmers are concerned, the grazed fallow will merely be jam on top of the bread, but to the sheep farmers in my part of the world it means survival?

Mr. MacGregor: I take careful note of what my hon. Friend has said. I have heard her say it before, and I listened to her very carefully then, too. I am glad that she is pleased with the conclusion that I have reached. All I have said is that I will not permanently close my mind to an option that is available under the Community scheme if there is a change of view in the United Kingdom. But I

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have a very clear view, I think, of what most hill livestock farmers and their representatives, particularly in the House, feel at present about that option.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I am sure that the Minister will agree with me that there must be something obscene about taking good agricultural land out of production while millions of people are starving in this world. There is also something ridiculous about paying farmers—not for doing nothing, it has been said, but for watching the grass grow, as appears to be the system.

Would it not have been better to look at the possibility of imposing a nitrogen fertiliser tax? A tax of 15 per cent. would have had the same effect of reducing the surpluses as the set-aside that the Minister is proposing. It would also have had great environmental benefit as it would not have polluted the water. The Government, or perhaps others in a privatised world, will have to pay to have the nitrogen taken out of the water, which will reduce the profit on the land.

My second question concerns grazing on green fallow and the suburban problem of horses. It may be a light problem in agricultural terms, but would it not be sensible to allow horses to graze on green fallow since we have not taken to the practice of eating horses in this country?

Mr. MacGregor: It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman has not participated in some of our agricultural debates——

Mr. Martlew: I have.

Mr. MacGregor: Well, I cannot recall his contribution. If he participated, he clearly did not listen to the debates, because we have dealt with the whole question of food aid, the position in the developing countries and the relative situation on surpluses in the Community many times, and I do not intend to come back to that today.

On the question of nitrogen, I referred earlier to the fact that there were a number of environmentally important and attractive elements in the scheme. One of them is that it will not be possible to put fertilisers on the fallow land that has been set aside. That is really there to help to deal with the water leaching.

On the question of horses, it would be perfectly possible for one of the non-agricultural uses of land set aside to be development of equestrian facilities for the community at large.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): How can my right hon. Friend ensure that those countries that take up the fallow option—I enthusiastically support his decision with regard to the United Kingdom—do not use it to establish a higher livestock base for future stabilisers or quota schemes, which would be very disadvantageous to the United Kingdom?

Mr. MacGregor: The control of livestock numbers will be a very important condition in any member state that takes up the grazed fallow option. Clearly, that is something that I shall be very alert in watching and monitoring as the scheme goes along. I am sure that in other member states, too, livestock producers will be alert to the risks that they face if a grazed fallow option is available in their country.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) about low-input farming was brushed aside by the Minister. Does he not realise that this is a golden opportunity to move towards low-input, organic, sustainable agriculture, which would be for everyone's benefit, not least the consumer's? Will he show some appreciation of the urgency of this matter, since changing from the present over-exploitation to a sustainable agricultural method will be a slow process?

Mr. MacGregor: It was not brushed aside. The point simply is that low-input and organic farming in the sense that the hon. Lady puts it forward is not appropriate to this scheme, except at the periphery. This scheme is designed entirely to deal with getting surplus land out of production. Because of the importance of tackling the surpluses and getting land out of production, this was given priority in the European Council and the CAP reforms that were agreed then. But it was also agreed at that time that we should then look at the possibility of more extensive arable farming. We are committed to coming forward with proposals on that under the timetable set by the European Council.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Like so many of my hon. Friends, I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what he has done and ask him particularly to monitor the progress of the scheme. I was sorry to hear that he did not appear too committed to low-intensity or low-input farming. I remind him that continental countries, as I understand it, have adopted this form of low-input, low-output, farming. Is there not a chance that some of our own farmers might be disadvantaged as a result?

Mr. MacGregor: I can reassure my hon. Friend about monitoring. I come back to what I said a moment ago about low-input farming. We have a great deal on our plate at present in carrying through the structural changes in agriculture and introducing quite a wide range of schemes—to the extent that some people now tell me that they are beginning to be baffled by the number of alternatives available to them. That is why I am trying to keep this scheme as simple as I possibly can within the Community rules. But we shall be turning to the whole matter of low-input farming, which raises some very difficult issues that will need to be carefully thought through when we come to consider the possibilities under extensification.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): While I welcome the set-aside policy in dealing with the problems of CAP, it has some serious flaws. The Minister has already mentioned the problem of the effect of grazing. Does he not agree that, if we are putting large sums of public money into such a scheme, there ought to be some direction of the way that the land is used—particularly in managing it for conservation purposes—in terms of a return to wetland, hedgerows, and so on, and encouraging such things as woodland schemes?

Is there not a problem in that it is the marginal producers who are more likely to go for this scheme, and that the large-scale producers, who are the villains of the piece in terms of the environmental consequences of large-scale cereal farming for intervention price gain, will not be attracted by the scheme? Therefore, it is flawed in that sense.

Mr. MacGregor: In the conditions, it will be laid down that shelter belts, hedges and so on have to be maintained. There will be guidelines on environmental practices. So I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the sort of things he calls for will be part and parcel of the scheme.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): On my right hon. Friend's welcome statement about not allowing the grazing of fallow, is he aware that the west country livestock sector, and hill farmers in particular, will be disappointed by his subsequent remarks about reconsideration? My right hon. Friend mentioned that an individual applicant will have to agree to setting aside 20 per cent. of his grain. Does a minimum acreage have to be involved?

Mr. MacGregor: On the second point, yes—one hectare in a block. On my hon. Friend's first point, I obviously need to reiterate that I have made a firm decision today on the grazed fallow option. What I have said in response to the request received by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland from the Scottish NFU is that I will not permanently close my mind to a possible change. I think that everyone will agree that, in schemes of this sort, one cannot say that one will stick to a position permanently. I am well aware—I am becoming more aware as these questions continue—of the views in this House, and I have listened to them very carefully.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): The Minister will be aware that there will be a welcome for his decision not to take up the grazed fallow option this year, but I have noted his comment that he will keep his options open for future years. One pressure that he might come under in future years could be caused by his having set the compensation limits too low. There will be pressure on him from the other sectors of the agricultural community, because enough cereal land has not been taken out of production, for the grazed fallow option to be taken up. Can he assure us that he will not go down that road and that, even if he were thinking of going down that road, he would consider raising compensation rather than taking up that option?

Mr. MacGregor: I have heard what the hon. Gentleman has said. I suspect that that will be the view which he will press in succeeding debates on the set-aside scheme. I must make it clear again that I do not rule out reviews of various aspects of the scheme, including rates. I made it clear earlier what the position would be on that. But I would need a great deal of convincing to change my mind about the grazed fallow option.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): My right hon. Friend's statement will be widely welcomed as reasonable. Does he agree that farmers in Britain will accept it as long as it is seen to be fair across Europe? When considering how he monitors not only what we are doing but what our continental competitors are doing, will he ensure that we do not fall into the same trap as with dairy quotas, when the European Court of Auditors showed that six countries were cheating? Will my right hon. Friend assure my Shropshire farmers that other farmers will not cheat, as they did with dairy quotas?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend knows that we are assiduous in following up areas where we think there is unfair competition or unfair use of Community measures. I assure my hon. Friend that we will continue to do that. I find that the Commission is now alert to this. I am asked to make comparisons with other countries; I shall be doing that, but it is difficult to draw conclusions. One should not draw a simple conclusion just by comparing the rates of aid in different countries. Different conditions apply to the scheme. The position may be different in different countries. For example, in West Germany they can take advantage of different rates at different levels of profitability on cereals because of their land classification system, which I do not think any other member state has. When making comparisons, one has to examine carefully all the items involved.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): The Minister glossed over an earlier question about opencasting. I should like an assurance that we will not have even more opencasting as a result of the scheme. What provision will there be for access to the countryside? Has he had discussions with the Ramblers Association about this? Will the monitoring that he talked about take account of the impact that this will have on footpaths, because we want to keep those that exist?

Mr. MacGregor: Opencasting comes into the context of non-agricultural use. I do not think that it is possible at the moment to draw a firm line on all types of non-agricultural use. I specified in my opening statement areas of non-agricultural use which we would definitely exclude—for, I hope, acceptable reasons.

As to access to the countryside, it is important in the context of the set-aside scheme to realise that if we are to achieve proper take-up by farmers, we must keep the scheme as simple as possible within the Community rules, but there are certain things that I have had to do within Community rules. We must not encumber farmers with too many conditions which would put them off.

Therefore, I do not think that it would be right to insist, for non-agricultural purposes, on farmers being asked as part of the scheme to make their land openly available to ramblers or whatever. I beg the House to realise that we do not want to put unnecessary burdens, or what might seem to be restrictions, on farmers if we are asking them voluntarily to enter into the scheme.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appreciate that all the hon. Members who are standing have a strong interest in the matter, but I have to have regard to the subsequent business. I will allow questions on the statement to go on for another seven minutes. After that, we must move on. I hope that everyone can be called in that time.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): May I echo the welcome that my hon. Friend's have given to my right hon. Friend's statement? My right hon. Friend will realise that the rates of payment announced will ensure that farmers with less productive land will be interested in this scheme. It will be of less interest to farmers in my constituency on grade 1 and 2 land. I should like my right hon. Friend to answer two specific points. First, will conservation strips and headlands be eligible? The second point relates to the interaction between the proposal and the farm woodlands scheme; which rates of payment can be jointly claimed?

Mr. MacGregor: I recognise that the scheme is not likely to be attractive to most farmers on the most

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profitable and productive cereal land, although some, depending on their position, may want to enter into it. It is important for the former to recognise that if a scheme makes a contribution to getting cereal production down it is helpful to them too. As to headlands and marginal strips, we have fixed a limit below which farmers cannot go, but strips will be eligible under the scheme subject always to the overriding consideration that 20 per cent. of arable land must be taken out of production. I will set out clearly in the document the inter-relationship with the farm woodland scheme.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What are some of the six or seven ways of helping wildlife to which the Minister referred?

Mr. MacGregor: The marginal strips will clearly be one way of helping conservation. The fact that green cover crops will be on farms not used for intensive cereal production will be another. The guidelines that we are giving on good environmental practice will, I hope, be a third. The preservation and proper management of shelter belts, hedges and so on will be a fourth.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): Is it not a great concern that other EC countries will permit livestock grazing on set-aside land? Will the cost of this not more than offset the savings which the Commission hopes to make through a reduction in cereal price? Will not those countries be able to pass the cost of the ensuing surpluses in the livestock sector to the general European taxpayer through the CAP in ways we have seen in the past?

Mr. MacGregor: I am alive to this. Two points in the scheme will bear heavily on it. One is the control on livestock numbers where grazed fallow is taken up. The second is that grazed fallow payments will, under the Community scheme, have to be half the level of other payments for land set aside.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I give a broad welcome to the proposal. What consideration has the Minister given to ensuring a reasonably even take-up of set-aside across the country? Is he aware that the importance of agriculture does not depend just on income, important though that is, but on agricultural output, on which the jobs of farm workers and ancillary industries depend? What assurance can the Minister give to the north-east of Scotland, which suffered virtually a harvest failure last year, that agricultural output will not be decimated although there may be some short-term relief?

Mr. MacGregor: Obviously one cannot give an assurance of an even spread throughout the country of a voluntary scheme that is designed to help particularly the marginal cereal growers. The rates of payment are directed at that. Clearly each farmer will have to make up his own mind whether he wants to enter the scheme; the position of his farm workers will be one consideration in making the decision.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Does my right hon. Friend have targets for the amount of land which he would like to see taken out of production by the scheme and for the cuts in production? Is there not a danger that those who benefit from the scheme will be farmers who increase production like crazy on land left in cereal production?

Mr. MacGregor: No, I do not have targets, because it is a new scheme and we have to see how it goes. On the point about more intensive farming on the rest of the land, it will not be possible for a farmer to increase the amount of land for arable production during the period of the scheme. I have considered this carefully, particularly in relation to experience in the United States of America, which I visited recently. The conditions are different in the two countries. Inevitably there will be some slippage in the scheme, but I do not think that we will see sharply more intensive production on the rest of the land—for the very good reason that the vast majority of our farmers are extremely good farmers already and they are getting maximum production from intensive farming.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): What will the consumer and the general public think of the scheme? If the product of coal miners, steel workers or creamery workers is surplus to requirements, they are thrown on the scrap heap, but when there is a crisis in farming, all sorts of escape mechanisms are provided. Whatever assurances the Minister may give, will not the general public have a vision of farmers being paid for doing nothing because there will be no economic product to sell in the market? Is it not the case that the only real answer to CAP surpluses is guaranteed prices? If one cuts prices, that will protect small farmers.

Mr. MacGregor: There is some illogicality in the hon. Gentleman's argument, when he complains about a scheme that will protect small farmers but says also that I must protect small farmers.

It is important that the general public should understand and take the view that it would not be attractive if large tracts of our countryside went to dereliction, scrub and waste—as we saw happen in earlier generations. It is important for the general public to realise that farmers are the best conservationists we have and that they look after our land extremely well; opinion polls show that such is the view the public hold. There is a cost in managing such land, and part of the set-aside payment is designed to help farmers meet that cost, in the interests of us all.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): As I represent the Stroud constituency, in which almost exactly half the farmers are in the Severn vale, which is almost entirely grassland, and the other half are in the Cotswolds, which are almost entirely arable, I have good reason to be very grateful for my right hon. Friend's balanced statement. Does he feel that the combination of his set-aside proposals with the likelihood of lower corn yields in the United States resulting from the current drought will mean that our arable farmers may look forward to the future with greater confidence than for some time past?

Mr. MacGregor: Although I know that droughts happen, they must be considered as one-off events, and one would be unwise to rely on them as a source of long-term confidence for our farmers. We are pursuing a long-term combination of reforming the CAP so that it does not collapse under its own weight with measures designed to assist farmers in dealing with structural readjustment, while continuing to look after the land in an environmentally attractive way. As those measures take effect, I hope that farmers will increasingly see that that

combination offers the stability they want. In the long run, such an approach is more likely than a one-year drought to give farmers confidence.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Sheep farmers in north Yorkshire will warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's statement not to take up the grazed fallow option. However, the House will recognise his dilemma. I urge him to use his not inconsiderable powers of persuasion to convince our EC partners themselves not to take up the grazed fallow option—or if they do, to restrict it to such an extent that there will be no damage to or impact on our exports of sheepmeat.

Mr. MacGregor: There are considerable restrictions on livestock numbers in the grazed fallow option, by which our EC partners will have to abide. Moreover, the rates of payment are halved, and so are a good deal lower than those made to all farmers not taking up the grazed fallow option. That too will make it less attractive. It is certainly something we shall continue to monitor.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that farmers will be concerned that the measures described in his welcome statement are properly policed, not only in Britain, but also among our EC partners? Can he tell the House what proposals he has for controlling the new set-aside policy?

Mr MacGregor: I agree that it should be policed, and we shall be policing, monitoring and evaluating the situation.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In view of the multitude of costly disappointments on the CAP, all of which were widely welcomed by the House, will the Minister assure the taxpayer who will be financing this measure that the poor land which will be taken out of production will not be balanced by even higher yields from the land that remains? On reflection, does the Minister think it wise that the stabiliser should be fixed at a level higher than current excessive production?

Mr. MacGregor: We achieved considerable success in getting the stabiliser fixed at its present level. That was the result of pressure from the United Kingdom in particular. As to my hon. Friend's other point, I have considered the matter very carefully, and I believe that it certainly is a cost-effective proposition for the taxpayer.

Patrick McVeigh

5.13 pm

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement on the extradition proceedings relating to Patrick McVeigh.

Warrants were issued at Bow street magistrates court on 13 May 1988 for the arrest of Patrick McVeigh on charges of conspiracy to cause an explosion and of possession of explosive substances.

I duly sent to the Irish Attorney-General on 16 May, following the procedures recently agreed between us for the purposes of the Irish Extradition (Amendment) Act 1987, a note confirming that the Crown prosecution service had the clear intention to bring a prosecution, and that it had satisfied itself that there was sufficient admissible evidence to found a prosecution. I also sent to him a statement of facts and a statement of the relevant law.

The Irish Attorney-General, in accordance with the new Irish legislation, satisfied himself on the basis of that material that there was an intention to prosecute, based on a sufficiency of admissible evidence. The warrants, with the authority of the Irish Attorney-General, were accordingly endorsed by a Garda commissioner, and Patrick McVeigh was arrested on foot of those warrants on 18 May, upon the occasion of his release from Portlaoise prison, where he had been serving a sentence of imprisonment.

Applications for the return of fugitive offenders to the United Kingdom are made by the Irish State Solicitor, on behalf of the Irish state. Following McVeigh's arrest, discussions accordingly took place between the Crown prosecution service and the Irish State Solicitor. At the end of a conference with counsel for the Irish state in Dublin on 7 June, the central question remained whether the Irish state intended to call English witnesses to establish that the prisoner before the court was the person whose arrest was sought in the warrants.

On 9 June the Crown prosecution service wrote to the chief state solicitor stating that it was vital that it should hear from him forthwith as to whether English witnesses —and, if so, which—were required to attend the hearing on 13 June.

The following day a reply was received in writing from the State Solicitor that counsel had advised that the evidence already available was sufficient in law to establish the identity of McVeigh for the purpose of the district court hearing and that it was proposed to act on his advice. Accordingly, the evidence of witnesses from Britain to prove his identity would not be required. It was made clear that the Irish Attorney-General had personally considered and concurred in that advice.

Yesterday the Portlaoise district court considered the Irish state's application for the return of McVeigh to the United Kingdom. The unchallenged evidence led by the Irish state established that the prisoner before the Irish court was Patrick McVeigh, who had been released from Portlaoise prison on 18 May, and had formerly lived at 18 Forest street, Belfast. The English warrants expressly related to Patrick McVeigh of Portlaoise prison, formerly of 18 Forest street, Belfast.

However, the district justice held against the Irish state on the issue of identification. He concluded that the state had not established that the person before the court was

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the person to whom the English warrants related. He accordingly ordered the release of McVeigh, which duly occurred.

That result is deeply dismaying. The Crown prosecution service, at every stage of the proceedings, asked the Irish authorities what evidence the Irish state would require in order to meet the requirements of Irish law. It meticulously complied with the advice that it received. That advice did not occasion surprise, because it was consistent with the requirements previously made by Irish courts, which have never required evidence linking the person named in a warrant to the commission by that person of a specific offence.

Shortly after yesterday's hearing the Irish Attorney-General telephoned me to express his own disappointment with the result. I expressed to him my own feeling of profound frustration and surprise. We have agreed to consult urgently in the light of yesterday's judgment as to the next steps the Irish state might take, both in the case of McVeigh, and as to the implications of that decision for the effective machinery for extradition that we both desire.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): I also express my astonishment at the extraordinary and totally unexpected decision of the district justice. To avoid confusion, despite the Attorney-General's reference to the 1987 Act, will he confirm that these proceedings were not under that Act, but were under the 1965 Act, and that the issue of identity could have been raised at any time since 1965?

Whatever the difficulties of the past, I am glad to have confirmation that all the evidence required of Her Majesty's Government was provided and of the basis and terms of the application made by the state solicitor, expressly and personally approved by the Irish Attorney-General, but which resulted in a decision that has caused dismay to all concerned with the effective working of extradition proceedings between civilised states on both sides of the water.

In those circumstances, will the Attorney-General confirm that there is a full and continuing close understanding between himself and the Irish Attorney-General, and that there is no suggestion of anything else regarding the Irish Attorney-General and the state solicitor in the application?

Secondly, despite the fact that this horse has bolted, what thought has the Attorney-General given to an appeal by way of case stated to ensure that there is a firm ruling for future extradition proceedings—I understand that there are a large number of important cases in the pipeline—and, possibly, the expedition of such an appeal?

Lastly, what further steps does the Attorney-General have in mind to seek to ensure the avoidance of a repetition of this tragic result?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful for what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said at the outset of his remarks, and, indeed, subsequently. I welcome particularly his expression of dismay on behalf of the interests of all those—they are to be found on both sides of the water—who wish to see effective arrangements in place to secure the extradition of fugitive offenders, in every proper case, to this country.

Secondly, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is correct in saying that the issue of identity, upon which the district justice took his decision yesterday, could have been raised at any time since the scheme for the mutual backing of warrants came into effect between our two countries in 1965. The 1987 legislation amended that of 1965, to give the Irish Attorney-General a role in that procedure.

Thirdly, I can confirm that there is a close and personal relationship between myself and my opposite number in the Republic. I was grateful to him for telephoning me at an early stage after yesterday's decision, and I have again spoken to him on the telephone today. Any suggestion of our being at arm's length in this regard or in any other context has no foundation in fact.

As to the question of the Irish state asking for a case to be stated by the district justice, the House will not as yet know that the Minister of Justice in the Republic has made a statement in the Dáil this afternoon to the effect that the Irish state will seek to appeal by that mechanism. I welcome that, because I believe that the view of the requirements of Irish law taken by the district justice yesterday could, if unchallenged, have serious implications for the efficacy of our extradition arrangements under the mutual backing of warrants procedure.

As to the future—the last matter raised by the right hon. and learned Gentleman—I believe that the expressions of deep concern on behalf of the Irish Government are an earnest of their desire to see that the law in the Republic of Ireland is so framed and applied as to ensure that extradition will be effective.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will my right hon. and learned Friend make it clear to those who have responsibility for the working of the lower Irish courts that we in this country are thoroughly fed up with the fact that they move the goal posts every time we try to take action against an alleged terrorist? Will he make sure that the message is passed on to those authorities that we expect that loophole to be speedily closed so that the determination of our Government and the Irish Government to bring those terrorists to justice is fulfilled?

The Attorney-General: I have every sympathy with the indignation and dismay expressed by my hon. and learned Friend. The judges in the Republic are independent of the Executive, as they are in our country, but there is no doubt in my mind that the Irish Government are deeply disturbed by yesterday's decision. I am grateful and extremely pleased that the relationship that I have described exists between myself and my opposite number, and we shall both employ that to see that every means is taken to ensure that extradition will in future be effective.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Has the Attorney-General noted the disillusionment expressed in practically every English newspaper today? Does he agree that those feelings of betrayal result not so much from the refusal of some Irish Republic judges to deliver as from the utterly absurd notion that they ever would if left to their own devices?

The Attorney-General: I am not responsible for what is expressed in the comment columns of newspapers, but we in this Government are determined to ensure that extradition is effective, and I am satisfied that the Irish Government wish to see that extradition is effective. Yesterday's decision was a grave setback to confidence in

the administration of justice—to quote a phrase with which the right hon. Gentleman will be familiar in article 8 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Does the Attorney-General agree that the only winners to come out of the shameful farce that took place in the Irish court yesterday are the provisional IRA, which has already claimed a victory, and McVeigh, who has already gone into hiding? How many cases—I understand that there have been a number—of extradition have failed in the Irish courts on the basis of a technicality? Even if an appeal is pursued by the Dublin authorities by way of case stated, it will be on the narrow point of the district justice's findings on the basis of identification. Can the Attorney-General assure us that he will not continue to suffer the frustration to which he referred in his statement?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman is correct when he says that the only gainers are the terrorists when a proper case for extradition does not lead to the extradition of a fugitive offender. He will not expect me to endorse his description of proceedings in a judicial court yesterday, but I repeat that the British Government received the result with a deep sense of dismay. As we all know, there have been times when extradition cases have failed, but it is important to look forward rather than backward. The Irish Attorney-General and I have taken account of each other's concerns and we have reached a conclusion that is acceptable to both of us as to the procedure to be followed. We had each of us hoped with confidence that that agreement would lead to extradition taking place effectively in every proper case. We must wait and see whether that hope is fulfilled.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Following the two conversations that the Attorney-General has had with his opposite number in Dublin, he has reported that an appeal is to be made, and we shall have to see what happens. But what will happen in the meantime? Is it correct that the Garda cannot arrest McVeigh in the Republic until the appeal is over? What concerns me is not what the lawyers are doing, but whether anybody is looking for him.

The Attorney-General: I understand the position to be that, following McVeigh's release yesterday, there are no means by which he can be arrested unless further warrants are issued for his arrest. Therefore, that man is at large and whether the Irish Garda will in future be able, if authorised, to arrest him is uncertain. That is one of the grounds for the deep dismay of which I have spoken.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Looking forward, as my right hon. and learned Friend has suggested we do, should this outrageous absurdity not be regarded as a setback, not just to one Government, but to two, and to the police forces of both countries in their struggle against a common enemy? In trying to put common security on to a better footing—I realise that this is not strictly a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend—will Her Majesty's Government concentrate on the November review of the Anglo-Irish Conference?

The Attorney-General: This is, of course, a grave setback for both Governments. It is a setback, not just for the police and the security forces, but for everyone who has an interest in the apprehension of people who are reasonably suspected of these very serious offences. There can be no doubt about that. Whether these matters will be reviewed in November or before is not a matter for me, but it is, I know, a matter of the gravest importance and the highest priority between the two countries that better arrangements shall be applied.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The whole House will of course share the sentiment of deploring that such a person as Patrick McVeigh should be at large and might be able to return to the kind of actions that are at issue in the courts. Will the Attorney-General tell the House whether, when discussions took place on the extradition treaty with the Government of the Republic of Ireland, the Extradition Act 1965 was taken into account? Will there be further discussions with the Government on that Act to ensure that this deplorable position cannot be repeated?

The Attorney-Geperal: I do not think that the fault, if fault there is, lies with the 1965 Act. That Act provided for a system whereby each country would authorise the backing of the other's warrants, and that worked perfectly well for this country for the ensuing 23 years. We regretted —and made it plain that we regretted—the 1987 legislation in the Republic that amended that legislation by interposing the Irish Attorney-General with a role to play in the procedure, but that did not bear on yesterday's decision. Yesterday's decision turned on whether identification had been sufficiently established. We acted on the very firm advice given to us by the Irish State Solicitor, which was in accordance with the previous unvaried practice of the Irish courts, and the outcome of those proceedings—yesterday's judgment—took us by surprise and caused us the greatest disturbance.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that before the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, he and his right hon. Friends believed that its signing would make cross-border security co-operation and the struggle against terrorism more effective, and that without the agreement such desirable increased co-operation would not be possible?

Does my right hon. and learned Friend also recall that this is not the first occasion on which he or his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has come to the House to comment on and express dismay at the course of events? Does he understand that in Northern Ireland there is increasing bewilderment that Her Majesty's Government should have given a place of special privilege to the Republic of Ireland, when the Republic appears incapable of co-operating with us in the defeat of terrorism?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend will not expect me to usurp the function of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in commenting on the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I shall simply say that the hopes that my hon. Friend has just expressed were present among my right hon. Friends—and myself, for what that is worth—when the agreement was signed.

It is not true that there has been no advance—there has been. Yesterday's decision, however, was a grave setback which will certainly cause the greatest dismay in the Province of Northern Ireland, as my hon. Friend said. I believe that it is of the greatest importance that the two Governments decide together how best to improve the arrangements, so that in proper cases those who are suspected of grave offences are extradited to face justice.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): In the light of the earlier debacle over the case of Evelyn Glenholmes and the protracted discussions that have taken place subsequently, surely expressions of dismay are hardly adequate now. Does the Attorney-General really believe that what happened yesterday represents yet another triumph for the old firm of Fumble and Bumble, or does he think that it was a calculated piece of deliberate sabotage? Does he not agree that the real gainers yesterday were not just the IRA but those who want to undermine the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and that the losers were those who want to see constitutional progress made on the basis of a united front by the British and Irish Governments? How quickly does the Attorney-General intend to meet his opposite number to discuss the matter face to face?

The Attorney-General: I think that I made it clear that I have a close relationship with the Irish Attorney General and that we are in close contact.

I do not accept that there are only two possible explanations for yesterday's debacle, as the hon. Gentleman has suggested. What we must do is see how the arrangements can best be improved. Confidence will continue to wane unless such improvement takes place, and that is what the two Governments, in co-operation, must achieve.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is some comfort to know that the sentiments that he has reported have been expressed by the Minister of Justice and the Attorney-General in the Republic? Does he also accept that in this case words will not be enough, and that we will be looking, in the House and the country, for action by those two gentlemen to ensure that we get what we were promised by the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

The Attorney-General: I am certain that my hon. Friend's words will be noted. I do not think that in answering him I can add sensibly to what I have already said to the House this afternoon.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Is the Attorney-General aware of a widespread belief, in Ireland and in this country, that an Irishman charged with a terrorist offence cannot obtain a fair trial before the British courts? Is he further aware that the cause of that unease is the failure of Her Majesty's Government and our courts to own up to the huge mistakes that have been made in the cases of the six innocent people convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings, and the 11 innocent persons convicted in connection with the Guildford and Woolwich case? Would it not be better to own up to those mistakes, so that in future when this sort of thing happens we can occupy the moral high ground?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman sinks reliably to every occasion. I entirely reject what he has said —*[Interruption.]*—in a contribution that has dramatically lowered the standard of exchanges, which have been characterised by the gravest concern and the highest responsibility.

If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that yesterday's decision derived from a belief that there was no fair trial to be obtained in this country for any Irish citizen, that was not the ground advanced by the distict justice; nor would any sensible person have expected it to be so. I resent the imputation placed on the appeal that was heard over six or seven weeks at the end of last year, and on the judgment pronounced by the Lord Chief Justice, which was a unanimous judgment of the Court of Appeal.

The matter must be approached on the basis of good faith on each side. Where it is found, after sensible examination, that our arrangements need improvement and that the Irish arrangements for extradition to this country need to be improved, everyone will wish to see that improvement—except, I suspect, the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin).

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): Quite apart form the legal ramifications of yesterday's appalling muddle, is it not outrageous that McVeigh was released and not remanded or kept in arrest while any technical matters were sorted out? As this is the third time that known terrorists have been allowed to go off to their safe houses because of minor technicalities, is this not a grave flaw in the arrangements?

Would it not be entirely consistent with what Mr. Haughey said when he introduced the controversial amendments to the Extradition Act—if he saw that it was not working, he pledged to look at it again and make it work, improving it if necessary—for my right hon. and learned Friend to make the strongest representations that it is not working and that we look to Mr. Haughey to keep his word?

The Attorney-General: We certainly look to the proper operation of the Extradition Act 1965, as amended by the Extradition (Amendment) Act 1987. Where a case of this kind occurs, confidence in the operation of the law in Ireland is gravely shaken. Speaking only for myself, as my hon. Friend will recognise, I would welcome means by which a prisoner could be detained in custody pending an appeal on a decision taken at the court of first instance; that is to say, a district justice. I would welcome that. Had that been in place yesterday and operated, McVeigh would have remained in custody instead of setting off into the unknown, whence he may or may not ultimately be discovered and arrested. Speaking for myself, I believe that that would be a desirable change. I do not doubt that that will be one of the matters which the two Governments will want to consider.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): What will happen to Mr. McVeigh should he be so foolish as to return to his former home in Belfast? Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman, during the course of his investigations into this matter, looked at today's report in *The Irish Times*, which states that this district justice served in the offices of a former Minister of the Irish Republic and also worked in the practice of a second former Minister of the Irish Republic? Therefore, he must be very deeply steeped in the politics of that nation and be aware of the real political attitudes in the Irish Republic with regard to extradition of IRA terrorists to this country.

Is it not also clear from all that has happened down the years, when extradition request after extradition request has been refused on the most tenuous of technicalities, such as pinholes in paper and God knows what else, that certain judges in the Irish Republic will always find a technical reason to refuse extradition for known IRA terrorists?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to learn that if McVeigh appears and is discovered in the North, in Belfast or in any other part of the United Kingdom, he will be arrested. I have nothing to say on the hon. Gentleman's suggestions about the good faith of the Irish judge concerned. Finally, I confirm that a number of cases have failed through what in this country and in these courts would be described as the merest technicalities. However, in fairness I must say that yesterday's case does not fall into that category.

The Irish justice took the view that identification had not been established. That is an important factor in what must be established by the requesting state in any extradition proceedings. What caused the greatest surprise and dismay was the view taken by the Irish court as to whether that important factor had been established. We took and relied upon the advice of the Irish authorities that the evidence would be sufficient to establish that. We were not surprised by that, because it fitted exactly the pattern of previous Irish requirements.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that it comes as no surprise to his many friends, I suspect on both sides of the House, that neither he nor his Department is in any way culpable? Under what time scale will he work? It is very important, as I am sure my right hon. and learned Friend will agree, to get the matter sorted out, because the affair is debilitating for the defence forces and the forces of law and order both north and south of the border. It is important that we get it right very soon. Will my right hon. and learned Friend say a little more about the time scale?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful for my hon. and learned Friend's comments. This matter must be taken forward with all sensible speed, because people will not continue to put up with the failure of proper cases for extradition and will not have confidence in the administration of justice—to cite the Anglo-Irish Agreement again—if proper cases appear to be going wrong.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is the Attorney-General wise to get quite so angry with my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin)? Does he not recognise that there is a strand of serious opinion which has become totally cynical and asks, "What on earth do we expect a district judge to do in the light of 500 years of history other than to find any possible technicality?" I gather that many other cases may come up. Do the Government believe that in future other judges will not find technicalities of this nature?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman must give the Irish judiciary credit for wanting to apply the law of Ireland. Yesterday's decision occasioned equal surprise in the Republic of Ireland and here in the application of the law of Ireland. I do not think that there is anything to be gained or that anybody's interests, Irish or British, are advanced by reciting past grievances. To do that implies that the Irish judge has acted in a dishonourable, as distinct from a possibly mistaken, manner.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Stripped to its essentials, was not yesterday's disgraceful decision a catastrophe for Anglo-Irish relations? When my right hon. and learned Friend spoke on the telephone to his opposite number, did he make it clear to him that the only way to rebuild those relations is for the Garda to find this man and bring him before a court as quickly as possible?

The Attorney-General: I have made very clear the light in which I viewed yesterday's decision. I do not know whether it is a catastrophe for Anglo-Irish relations, but it is a very grave setback for everyone who wants to see extradition working in every proper case.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The Attorney-General and the Prime Minister at the Dispatch Box have criticised hon. Members for criticising judges in this country on the decisions that they have made, and they have said constantly that judges should not be influenced in their decisions when the evidence is put before them. Will the Attorney-General tell us this afternoon whether the Government will influence the Irish Government to influence judges in their decisions in future on extradition?

The Attorney-General: I have made the Government's attitude to yesterday's decision perfectly clear. We wish to see extradition working properly in accordance with the requirements of Irish law. That is what the Irish Government want to see. I do not believe that there is anything to be gained by suggesting, as the hon. Gentleman did, that the Irish judge was influenced by matters that were extraneous to his judicial duty and derived from personal prejudice. I would not make that allegation. It was made by implication by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South, and that was a disgraceful and most regrettable inference to draw. We want Irish law and Irish procedural arrangements to secure the extradition of fugitive offenders to this country in every proper case.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that all sane people in this country will recognise that he has bent over backwards to accommodate the more restrictive arrangements required by the Irish Republic? Would it not be wise to issue arrest warrants straight away? Will he tactfully suggest to the Irish Government that, in pursuit of an appeal by way of case stated, it should be made clear that the existing law between the two countries does not allow for the introduction of evidence from Britain about the identity of the person before the court as a person being responsible for any particular crime? That is excluded by the arrangements at present that apply between us and the Irish Republic. If that is not established, many other cases may come forward in which another judge in the Irish jurisdiction will claim to have insufficient evidence about the identity of the person before him.

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend, who knows so much about extradition, has put his finger on the crucial point. Irish practice and our practice have always established a barrier at the time when the warrants are issued. The Irish courts have never previously sought to go behind that barrier to see whether there is evidence connecting the prisoner before the court with the commission by that prisoner of a specific offence. Only by reason of the importance of maintaining that position have the Irish Government decided to proceed by way of appeal by case stated. Fresh warrants could be issued only if they were supported by the very evidence that we were told by the Irish authorities was not needed by Irish law. I do not wish to set a precedent whereby extradition requests are

[The Attorney-General]

supported by evidence that is not required by Irish law, because thereafter we should always be required to do the same.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): At this early stage, which is the more likely alternative: that there is something wrong with the system or—I put it no higher than this—that members of the Irish judiciary are bent by their own republicanism, bullied by the IRA, or just plain barmy? *If it is the second alternative, where on earth do we* go from here?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend will not expect me to endorse any of those adjectives. What I shall say —it is the limit of what is helpful, sensible and responsible to say—is that each Government must look at this case and decide whether either the law or the procedures are the best that it is practicable to devise to ensure that properly suspected fugitive offenders are extradited.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Will not the reeds start to rustle at Runnymede if Opposition Members continually impugn the integrity of Her Majesty's judges? Should not those of us who live in the real world, both in the United Kingdom and Ireland, look for ways in which we can improve these extradition arrangements, including the sensible suggestions made by my hon. Friends the Members for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) and for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook)?

The Attorney-General: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Birmingham prisoners were tried at first instance and their appeal was heard in the Court of Appeal on a reference by my predecessor, so their case has been subjected to a substantial further hearing. Our objection is that McVeigh will not apparently be subjected to a trial.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): When my right hon. and learned Friend reviews future policies, will he take into account the fact that now that it appears that the Irish courts have yet again decided not to co-operate with us and prefer to behave like an unprincipled banana republic's courts, a growing number of us in this country have decided that wringing our hands and saying, "Tut, tut," is not enough? I agree with the adjectives used by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and say that the time has come when we should treat the Irish Republic like any other foreign country and withdraw the special treatment of its citizens within the United Kingdom.

The Attorney-General: The special treatment to which my hon. Friend refers in the context of extradition has been highly satisfactory for the interests of this country, because our warrants have been endorsed hitherto by Irish authorities without exception. As a result, people have been arrested and extradited to this country without our having to show prima facie evidence, which we must do in every other case. It is not helpful to make general assertions about Irish courts. The most that it is helpful and sensible to do today is to make perfectly clear the dismay, disappointment and surprise of the House at the outcome. I am grateful for what the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) said in that regard about the outcome of yesterday's proceedings. I agree that we must urgently consult the Irish Government on how we can best secure that such a thing does not occur again.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): When my right hon. and learned Friend communicates with his opposite number in the Republic, will he reiterate that deep damage has been done to the faith of those of us on both sides of the House who have always supported the Anglo-Irish Agreement? I remind hon. Members that the House endorsed that agreement by a massive majority in 1985. Will my right hon. and *learned Friend emphasise the* damage caused by this perverse and apparently through-the-looking-glass decision of the Irish court? In his early investigations, did my right hon. and learned Friend check to see whether there was in any way, shape or form any substance to the reason that the district judge gave for disputing the evidence on identification yesterday? If not, we shall be further strengthened in our cynicism about the commitment of that Irish court.

The Attorney-General: We are expecting a full report from the Irish authorities about what occurred in the Portlaoise district court yesterday. Before that is received, I certainly would not endorse the adjective implied by my hon. Friend. It is necessary that the Irish authorities should know the depth of feeling that yesterday's decision has engendered in the House and in the country. I do not believe that they are under any illusions about that, but it certainly bears repetition and it will be repeated.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many of us on this side of the House who have so far supported the Anglo-Irish Agreement, are disillusioned? Does he agree that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is now one-sided? Does he accept that it is as one-sided as unilateral disarmament, and that for many of us it is as discredited and unacceptable as unilateral disarmament?

The Attorney-General: Not least of the dangers of a decision that gives rise to the reactions to which yesterday's decision has given rise is that it leads to exactly the sort of conclusions and results that my hon. Friend has expressed. It is fair to say that the Irish Government cannot direct any judicial decision. Their judiciary is independent, as ours is, and it is fair that that should be borne in mind. That does not mean that confidence in the relationship between our two countries is not gravely damaged by what took place yesterday. We must keep that in mind and do our best to ensure that there is in each country the best procedure, as well as the best substantive law, to secure that extradition in every proper case takes place.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this has absolutely nothing to do with the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and everything to do with the fact that, despite the good intentions of both Governments—and they are good intentions—we cannot agree to legislate in a way that will cater for bloody-minded, eccentric and perhaps partial judges? *[Interruption.]* I said perhaps. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will accept that yesterday the judge completely abandoned the standard practice for dealing with extradition under the Extradition Act 1965, which has allowed 700 people to be extradited from the South of Ireland to this country.

The Attorney-General: I am not sure that I agree with my hon. Friend that this has nothing to do with the Anglo-Irish Agreement, because article 8 states:

"The two Governments agree on the importance of public confidence in the administration of justice."

It is perfectly true that hitherto that phrase has been cited only in relation to confidence in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland. Article 8 continues:

"The Conference shall seek . . . measures which would give substantial expression to this aim."

Therefore, this is not wholly divorced from the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I appreciate and sympathise with my hon. Friend's indignation, but I cannot usefully add to what I have already said.

Mr. John Morris: Will the Attorney-General give an indication of the likely time scale of a case stated to be heard? Can it be expedited? While waiting for a case to be heard, is there any difficulty in starting fresh proceedings on the assumption that McVeigh may be found?

The Attorney-General: I cannot give a precise time scale, if indeed it is a precise time scale, but we shall press for the earliest hearing of that appeal. I wish to give thought to the possibility of starting fresh proceedings in consultation with my opposite number. We wish to take every possible step to ensure that this man is brought into custody again as soon as is proper and possible.

Members' Interests

5.59 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It has been reported in the British press that a financial matter has been raised in the South African Parliament concerning an hon. Member of this House. I have given the hon. Member notice that I wish to raise the matter with you. It concerns a hotel bill for £700, and the Speaker of the South African Parliament has said that that sum will be paid by the South African authorities. This matter concerns the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). I should like your ruling on the Register of Members' Interests.

I went to the Library to find out about this matter and discovered that the latest information regarding the hon. Member for Luton, North——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must stop the hon. Gentleman. This is not a matter for me. He should raise it with the Select Committee on Members' Interests, which was specifically set up to deal with such matters.

Mr. Winnick: I note what you say, Mr. Speaker. My other question does not concern Members' interests. It relates to the declaration of interests. Clearly trips have been paid for by a foreign Government and an hon. Member has received hospitality. The hon. Member for Luton, North frequently speaks about South Africa and gives the regime's point of view. Therefore, should we not reach the conclusion that his views reflect those of the regime which pays for his various trips, hotel bills, and the rest of it?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should pursue this matter with the Select Committee.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) to cast such aspersions across the Floor of the House? He says that I speak for the South African regime. That is an aspersion on my character. Also staying at that luxury hotel in South Africa, I should mention that Mr. James Robbins of the BBC spent most of his time lying by the pool. He was there at British licence payers' expense—at our expense—not at the South African Government's expense.

Mr. Speaker: This is not a matter for this Chamber.

Ministerial Statements

6.1 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a different point of order. It arises from a ruling that you gave yesterday, but it is different from yesterday's point of order.

You will recollect, Mr. Speaker, that yesterday, at the end of the statements, I pointed out that the Secretary of State for Wales had been carrying out a briefing and was planning a press conference today in advance of a statement that was due to be made in this House this afternoon. I shall quote two sentences from your ruling because it is important, but my point of order is completely different from yesterday's. You said:

"I believe that the House of Commons should always be given information in advance of the press or anyone else . . .I am sure that what has been said will be carefully noted by those on the Government Front Bench."—[*Official Report*, 13 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 36]

On the basis of your ruling on the briefing that took place yesterday, when you said that it was out of order, I seek clarification on a new process that appears to have occurred today. Yesterday I pointed out that the press conference in the valleys was being held at 10.40 am, although we would not have the opportunity to have the statement until, at the earliest, 3.30 pm this afternoon. Instead of cancelling the press conference, the Secretary of State put into the Vote Office not the statement, but documents that contained some of the information, but not all of it, which was available in his statement and available at the press conference.

Will you clarify what the House should understand—I thought I was clear on what you meant—by always giving information in advance to the House? Is the mere laying of documents in advance of a statement sufficient justification for a Minister then to go ahead with intensive briefing outside the scope of those documents in anticipation of a statement and before the House of Commons has even heard that statement?

Mr. Speaker: I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman heard my answer to his former question, when I said that I have no authority to postpone press conferences. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Williams *rose*——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot say more than I said yesterday. I do not believe it is right for the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) to use my comments in support of his argument. It was not a ruling; it was a reasonable feeling that such things should not happen.

Mr Williams: You will recollect, Mr. Speaker, that when you took office you undertook—I know that you have tried firmly to sustain that undertaking—to protect the interests of Back Benchers. One of the important interests of Back Benchers is that we should have the proper right to interrogate Ministers and that Ministers should observe the conventions and rules of this House. It is every bit as important that they observe the rules as that we should observe the niceties of the symbols of state. Anything that undermines the status of the Chair damages this House. In that case, I think that it is a matter for you as to whether the placing of documents constitutes—according to your judgment yesterday—providing to this House advance information that is adequate to let a Minister escape the convention that he should make his statement before he briefs the press.

Mr. Speaker: The House knows that I have no authority to dictate to the Government whether press conferences should be held or not or whether press releases are placed in the Library or the Vote Office. What I said yesterday was intended to be helpful to the House—that I had been informed that in advance of the press conference, information would be released in the Vote Office today. I believe that that happened.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order Mr. Speaker. I raise the same matter because I believe that it is of great importance. I shall start by referring to the Mace and what happened some weeks ago. The fact is that neither "Erskine May" nor the manual of procedure requires that an hon. Member does not drop the Mace on the Floor. It is a practice that we deprecate because we know that it is wrong. We do not need a rule of this House to tell us that this is so. We do not do such things because we know such actions are unacceptable.

I believe that the actions of a Secretary of State who contravenes your view, if not your ruling—you have already said it was not a ruling—and also contradicts the will of the House in the sense that he knows that it would be the will of the House for a statement to be made, are as bad as dropping the Mace on the Floor. Both actions are an affront to our institution. Although they do not contravene the procedure, they contravene the spirit of what Members expect of other Members.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a busy day. The hon. Gentleman takes a long time to get to his point. Will he please get to it?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It may appear to you that we have a busy day and that I am taking a long time, but these matters are important. We spent several hours discussing the dropping of the Mace. I submit that the dropping of the Mace is less of a crime than a Secretary of State refusing to make a statement to Parliament because he wants to run a public relations campaign in Wales. That is why this matter is important.

Mr. Speaker: I am not saying that this is not an important matter. The House knows that Mr. Speaker has an obligation to ensure that the rules of the House are kept. It is not within his authority to ensure that all the conventions are kept. This is a self-disciplining Chamber and I hope that the conventions of the House will always be kept.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I understand that this is a self-disciplining Chamber, but what happens if you make repeated statements from the Chair requiring Ministers, wherever possible, to come to the House to make statements prior to making those same statements outside the House, but they simply ignore your requests? What happens if year after year, month after month, occasion after occasion, they persist in carrying out such actions? What happens then?

Mr. Speaker: If conventions are consistently broken, I believe that the Procedure Committee would look into the matter, and as a result, we shall probably get more rules.

I am in favour of few rules and strongly in favour of keeping to the conventions of this self-disciplining Chamber.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you confirm that the Secretary of State made a statement to the House at the first opportunity that was available to him after the documents were issued?

Mr. Speaker: That is correct.

Members' Interests

6.10 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) about the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), Mr. Speaker. Not keeping up-to-date lists of Members' interests can be extremely misleading to hon. Members. Last week, as you probably know, an injunction was to be taken out against the BBC in connection with the highly successful concert at Wembley on behalf of Nelson Mandela. When many of us looked at the rules of the House and at Members' interests, we believed that the hon. Member for Luton, North had gone on a major publicity spree for that concert, and had come to his senses by opposing the apartheid regime in South Africa. We thank him for that.

However, having read *The Guardian* and the other sources of publicity given on Saturday to the hon. Gentleman's injection of South African money, we understood that giving the concert money had been a crass mistake on his part. So it can be misleading if Members' interests have not been kept up to date. We came to our conclusion wrongly, but we still want to thank the hon. Member for Luton, North for the massive publicity that he gave to that successful concert.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that it has always been regarded as wholly in order for hon. Members to put into the Register of Members' Interests visits that they may make to another country, whether at their own expense or at the expense of a foreign Government? My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) has recorded such visits in the past.

Mr. Winnick: He is a paid South African agent.

Mr. Forth: Will you confirm, Mr. Speaker, it is as legitimate for my hon. Friend to make such visits as it is, for example, for the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) who had an ANC-funded visit to Tanzania, which is also in the Register of Members' Interests? To avoid confusion, it would help the House, my hon. Friend and me if you could confirm yet again that there is nothing wrong with hon. Members going on fact-finding trips to other countries, at their own or at another Government's expense, if such trips are recorded in the Register of Members' Interests? That is a widely practised phenomenon.

Mr. Speaker: In the interests of the whole House, I confirm that that is absolutely correct. Hon. Members have every right to undertake visits, and should record them in the Register of Members' Interests, which is always available for Members to consult.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has been calling out from a sedentary position that I am a paid representative of the South African Government. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that this matter was brought before you some two weeks ago, and that the hon. Gentleman reluctantly withdrew those remarks then. May I ask you to do the same today?

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear what is alleged, but if the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) made those remarks from a sedentary position, I ask him to withdraw them as a matter of honour.

Mr. Winnick: I am a man of honour, but the fact remains that the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) went on various trips to South Africa——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not concerned with that. It would help the House and me, if the hon. Gentleman made those remarks, if he would now withdraw them. He is an hon. Member, and I am sure that he would expect the same from a Conservative Member.

Mr. Winnick: May I resolve the matter, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I do not withdraw anything, but if you ask me——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the remarks, not to qualify them.

Mr. Winnick: I was about to conclude by saying that, without changing my mind in the slightest, if you, as the Speaker of the House of Commons, ask me to withdraw, I obviously have no alternative, and I do so.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Documents Nos. 8242/85 and 6944/86 on higher education diplomas be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents. —*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) Amendment Order 1988 (S.I. 1988, No. 964) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Questions to Ministers

6.15 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am amazed that you took the other points of order, but mine had to wait——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman: he was not on his feet, and we have a heavy day ahead of us.

Mr. Cohen: My point of order arises out of Question Time. I wanted to raise my point of order immediately after I had asked my question. I went to see you, Mr. Speaker, and you said that I could not raise it at 3.30 pm, but had to wait until after all the statements.

My question, No. 15, was directed to the Secretary of State for Social Services. It was linked with Question 1, so I was called early. It was:

"To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the special unit dealing with transitional protection in respect of housing benefits to be in full operation."

My supplementary question to the Secretary of State raised the plight of a number of my constituents, individuals and families, who are up to £26 worse off under the changes and have been caused acute hardship by them. I followed up that information with key aspects——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We do not want to go over this again. I heard the question, and I want to know the point of order for me.

Mr. Cohen: I must explain it, Mr. Speaker. You heard the question, but I wonder whether you heard the Minister's answer——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did, but this should be a point of order to me, not a rerun of Question Time.

Mr. Cohen: I shall cut short what I asked. I asked about heating charge rebates and how they were applicable to the transitional arrangements—for they are. My question was perfectly relevant to the substantive question on the Order Paper. In his cursory answer, the Secretary of State, in effect, said that what I had said had nothing to do——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an absolute abuse. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to have a rerun of Question Time and is not raising a point of order with me.

Mr. Cohen *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take it only if there is a point of order for me.

Mr. Cohen: It is very much a point of order for you, Mr. Speaker. I agree that there was an abuse of the House—by the Minister, who did not properly answer my relevant question. Hon. Members such as I take oral questions seriously. I have not been known to miss them. I come in especially for oral questions when my question is high on the Order Paper, and I expect a decent answer——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must stop the hon. Member there. Throughout this point of order he has been raising matters that are plainly for the Minister, not for me. We must move on.

Mr. Cohen *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall hear no more, as this is an abuse. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Private Security

6.17 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the regulation of the private security industry; and for connected purposes.

I am pleased that, after three long statements and many points of order, I at last have the opportunity of trying to convince the House of the need to accept licensing in the private security industry. This Bill is probably closer in time to an Adjournment debate than it is to Question Time.

I introduce my Bill to establish a system of public licensing, to replace the present wholly unsatisfactory system of partial self-regulation. The Bill's origins date back to the unsuccessful attempt by the present Secretary of State for Employment to introduce a system of public licensing—with the Security Industry Licensing Bill. I introduced a Bill in 1977 and, having been so patient, now have the opportunity to try again 11 years later. My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) tried unsuccessfully last year. I must also compliment the efforts made by Members of another place, such as Lord Willis and Baroness Phillips, who have been trying to pass similar legislation in that Chamber.

The security industry in its broadest sense is enormous, probably employing 250,000 people. It has grown because of the growth of crime, because of new threats such as terrorism and drugs, and because of the enormous increase in counterfeiting. Technology has spurred it on. Police numbers have not grown as many people would want them to, and the private security industry is filling the vacuum.

The industry is painfully easy to enter and profits can be high. These factors have led to a proliferation of companies. No doubt the industry will survive well into the next century, and I have no desire to see it terminated. However, I want to see a proper framework within which the Government can establish the industry on a proper footing.

The number of companies is unknown. I looked at the Yellow Pages for London and found that there are 400 companies working under various categories of security —and that is just for central London. There are companies offering guard services and cash in transit services, and companies providing security equipment. There are companies providing store detectives; there are security consultants, and others offering VIP protection. Some companies are getting into the areas of exotic professions such as the hiring of mercenaries, bugging and other forms of industrial espionage and in-house security.

There has been an enormous expansion of an industry that remains outside the scope of the House. There is much that is right in the industry. It contains many thousands of honest, industrious people trying to do a good job in difficult circumstances. The overwhelming majority are honest and hard-working. It is a dangerous job and the chances of a security officer, particularly one involved with cash in transit, being killed are significantly higher even than those of the police.

I want to see the industry developed effectively and efficiently, so that it provides a proper service to those who use it. I want to see improved conditions of service and employment for the many people who work in it. I want to

[Mr. Bruce George]

minimise the likelihood of those who have serious criminal records getting into the industry, and I seek to establish accountability.

When one asks what is wrong with the industry, most people point to criminality. In the Brinks-Mat robbery, £26 million of bullion was knocked off. A decade ago, the Purolator company suffered a £2 million robbery, the money being taken by a criminal who was employed for a few weeks and used his experience to rob the company. There was a case a couple of months ago of a reputable company which hired a security guard working in a van. He zipped off with £30,000. A newspaper report said:

"A worker at the mill said 'It was almost comical; the guard left behind was jumping up and down in a state of shock. He just kept on saying 'My mate has done a bunk with the van.'"

That is funny in a way, but it is also very worrying that the industry has people with serious criminal backgrounds or people who have little interest or competence in the industry.

I am concerned about low efficiency and poor performance. Very few companies have a good training programme. Three days is the average and the overwhelming majority of companies conduct no training at all. Turnover can be as high as 100 per cent. and a recent report said that that was the case in 45 per cent. of the good companies. How can we have an efficient industry when there is such low morale, low wages and a 100 per cent. turnover? I am worried by the low public esteem and the poor relations with the police, who regard the industry in many ways with indifference and contempt. In many cases that is deserved. The poor end of the industry damages those who are trying to do a good job. While many have expressed anxieties from the civil liberties standpoint, others have used the "private army" argument. I have not, because the industry is too inefficient to constitute a serious collective threat to the state.

A system of self-regulation is exercised by the British Security Industry Association Limited. It has a small inspectorate, and although the large companies belong to it, the overwhelming majority of companies do not. There are now more members than there were four years ago, but at that time a former head of the inspectorate of the BSIA said it was possible that fewer than 0·1 per cent. of guarding companies belonged to the BSIA. In some respects, the BSIA is doing a reasonable job, but I cannot accept that a limited company, a trade association, should have such an important responsibility for regulating the industry. However, it regulates only part of the industry and the companies that are not affiliated to it are the ones that I am most worried about.

What model of regulation should be followed? It should not be self-regulatory, nor should it be regulated by local authorities, because they have little surplus capacity. It cannot be regulated by the police, because they do not have the resources. I would much prefer the semi-anarchic status quo to be superseded by licensing by the Home Office. There are numerous examples of licensing abroad. It is carried out in Canada, most states in the United States and in most European countries. We have a precedent in the United Kingdom in part III of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1987, which licenses security services in Northern Ireland.

There are many examples of other United Kingdom professions that are regulated by statutory authorities. We have bodies for gambling and for broadcasting and employment. Betting shops are regulated in that way, as are consumer credit agencies, nursing homes and professions such as doctors. Why should taxi drivers be subjected to statutory control while people who protect lives and millions of pounds worth of property are totally immune from any serious system of regulation?

There is a great deal of support for and some opposition to my proposals. Criminals have no reason to support them and the Home Office has little sympathy. I distinguish between the two groups: one is purely criminal and the other is totally inert. The Police Federation of England and Wales supports licensing and the International Federation of Security Associations and Private Investigators seeks an improved system, as do some companies in the BSIA. However, the Home Office is opposed. It does not like quangoes, but prefers self-regulation and is not convinced that there is adequate evidence of criminality.

A private security licensing authority set up by the Home Office would not simply be a gatekeeper laying down standards of wages and training and so on. I want to see the Licensing Authority acting as a catalyst for reform.

The case for the reform of the security industry is overwhelming. One day, the Home Office will be compelled to act, but there will probably have to be a crisis before it acts. How much better for it and for us to prepare for that eventuality now and not assume the typically British response of reacting after the crisis.

I urge hon. Members to support the Bill. The question of who guards the guards is very important. I hope that approval of the Bill will help to settle that question. It has been 10 years since I last introduced such a Bill. I appreciate that Ministers from the Home Office are present in the House and I hope that I shall not have to wait another 10 years for another opportunity. I hope that the Home Office will take up the cudgels and that we will see a proper industry, accountable and efficient and serving the people who work in it and the companies themselves serving the consumer.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Bruce George, Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. Bruce Grocott, Mr. Keith Speed, Mr. Stuart Randall, Mr. Neil Thorne, Sir Anthony Beaumont-Dark, Mr. Richard Shepherd, Mr. Doug Hoyle and Mr. Merlyn Rees.

Private Security

Mr. Bruce George accordingly presented a Bill to provide for the regulation of the private security industry; and for connected purposes; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 July and to be printed. [Bill 177.]

Orders of the Day

Housing Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee) further considered.

6.28 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yesterday the Minister issued a pamphlet entitled "Tenant's Choice", which was laid in the Vote Office. It was obviously intended for the debate. I should like to draw to the attention of the Minister the fact that it needs to be corrected, and I would be grateful if he would put that in train to ensure that hon. Members and people outside are not misled. I know that the Minister cannot do anything about the matter at this stage.

The pamphlet reproduces part of the Housing Act 1985. It reproduces page 358 of that Act but does not include the amendments that went through the House of Commons and the House of Lords. They affect the power of the Secretary of State to decide whether a house is suitable for an elderly person. The House of Lords removed that power and gave it back to the local authority. The pamphlet suggests that the power lies with the Secretary of State. I should be grateful if the Minister would ensure that that is corrected in due course, but I understand that he cannot do anything about it now.

On another, but related, point, in Committee on 8 March, columns 493 and 1544, both Ministers made pledges to the Committee that they would produce a social landlords' charter, to be debated on Report. We have not had that, and I wonder whether, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can draw to the Minister's attention yet again the inadequate preparation of the Bill. We were told that we could debate what is an important part of the Bill on Report. We do not have the charter so obviously, in those circumstances, we cannot debate it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I think the hon. Member realises that he has been addressing his remarks to the Minister rather than to the Chair. I think that the best thing that we can now do is to proceed with the debate, and it may be that he will receive some answers to the points that he has made.

Clause 45

HOUSING ASSOCIATION GRANTS

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move amendment No. 377, in page 34, line 6, at end insert

'except that in respect of grants made to charitable housing associations and fully mutual housing co-operatives for the provision of residential accommodation as sole or main residence, the Corporation shall calculate and pay the grant so that it is sufficient to enable and to ensure that the costs that are to be financed by rent shall not exceed 20 per cent. of the average weekly net income as determined by the index established under subsection (6) below.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: Amendment No. 378, in page 34, line 24, at end insert—

'(6) Within six months of the commencement of this section, the Housing Corporation shall establish, and thereafter annually update, a regional index (Essential Services Employees Earnings Index) of the average net weekly earnings of employees working in essential services and industries.'.

New clause 38—*Rent Recoverable by Social Landlords*—

'(1) Where a tenancy is granted for a dwelling-house by a landlord who is—

(a) a registered housing association, within the meaning of Part I of the Housing Associations Act 1985;

(b) a person who has acquired property under Part IV of this Act; or

(c) a public sector landlord, within the meaning of section 86 of this Act,

the rent recoverable by the landlord shall be not higher than a maximum rent for the region in which the dwelling-house is located to be determined by the Secretary of State in accordance with this section.

(2) For the purposes of this section, the maximum weekly rent recoverable in a region shall be a sum not greater than 20 per cent. of the average net earnings of manual employees in the region.

(3) For the purposes of paragraph (2), average net earnings of manual employees shall be calculated by taking into account average gross earnings of full-time employees in manual occupations whose pay is not affected by absence, less—

(a) an amount in respect of income tax equivalent to an amount calculated by applying to those earnings the basic rate of tax after allowing for a deduction for personal relief of the amount specified in section 257(1)(b) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988; and

(b) an amount in respect of primary Class 1 contributions payable under the Social Security Act 1975 in respect of those earnings.

(4) A maximum recoverable rent determined under this section shall be known as an "affordable rent".'

Mr. Hughes: The subject of this important debate is affordable rents. Perhaps it would not be inappropriate to make a preliminary comment about the way in which we have come to it. This is the third day on which the Housing Bill has come back to the House for debate on Report. It is exactly three hours after the normally planned time that these debates should start. I wonder whether there was not some complicity between those who arrange the Commons business to put in two statements that certainly did not appear as if they inevitably had to be made today. I wonder whether it has been done in the hope that, yet again, housing is, hopefully, pushed away from the headlines in tomorrow's newspapers, because the Government would be embarrassed at what the headlines might otherwise be.

This Bill will bring substantial changes to the lives of many people. Not only does it not have enough time in general, but, on the day that it has time, we start the debate in what anyone would define as evening as opposed to afternoon.

It has also astonished those who have followed the progress of the Housing Bill—on both sides of the House and outside—how little attention the press has given to this major and important measure. Perhaps it is because the new language of housing—assured tenancies, assured shorthold tenancies, social landlords and mixed finance—is unfamiliar and sounds technical. However, perhaps there is a more important reason—that in Thatcher's Britain the press, which has to sell its wares, considers that the two thirds of people who own their own homes are perfectly comfortable anyway. It is not so bothered about the one third of the population who rent or the increasing number who have no homes at all.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman has touched on an important point, because a number of us, himself included, have been trying to emphasise housing in the political debate. This morning I was listening, perhaps unusually, to the "Today in Westminister" programme, and I was worried when it was said that the most important business before the House was the two Bills dealing with mining subsidence. The programme then continued to give an extract of a point of order about the Norman Shaw doors being closed, and ignored the rest of the Housing Bill.

Mr. Hughes: Unusually, I agree with the hon. Gentleman, because I was driving home at the time of "Today in Parliament" and driving in at the time of "Yesterday in Parliament" and I heard both reports. Last night I think the Housing Bill was reported at about six minutes to midnight—the last six minutes of the half-hourly report. As a result of this morning's programme, one almost would not have known that we had debated housing at all yesterday. I find that sad, and an unusually poor reflection on those who edit and report those two programmes, which are normally fair in giving priority to the appropriate matters before the House.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): A moment or two ago the hon. Gentleman suggested that the press had not given due consideration to the Bill in Standing Committee. I remind him that it has been covered comprehensively by *The Independent* and *The Times*. The new clauses and amendments that he tabled in Standing Committee were scrutinised carefully by the *Municipal Journal*. I invite the hon. Gentleman to join me in paying tribute to Mr. Andy Marr of *The Independent* for his article of about 10 days ago tracing the history right back to speeches prepared by my right hon. and learned Friend, now the Foreign Secretary, in the early 1950s, pleading for decontrol of rents to increase the supply of rented accommodation for those who deservedly demand the right to rent.

Mr. Hughes: The article by Andrew Marr was an excellent article, tracing the history of a subject which it is easy to see in the short term. Many of the newspapers have written feature articles and specialist articles that have been good. I was not pretending that there had not been that sort of reporting. My anxiety was that the substantive debates had not been reported. For example, today the parliamentary page of *The Independent* had no report, and *The Guardian* had two columns, each of one inch and a half, partly because of the time of day that it was printed.

I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman, and I hope not to offend him, because later I shall refer to him. We had a debate on the subject in Committee, and the hon. Gentleman made a valuable contribution. I should like to suggest a way now to proceed with which he will agree.

The crucial sector of the Bill that we are now debating includes clauses that completely rewrite the rules about rented housing. As that is still the way in which a third of the population occupy their homes, I believe that the entire country would be interested. It is not even certain that those who buy their own houses will always remain in owner-occupied housing.

This debate is about the most important element in that sector. It is about rents and whether they will be affordable for people who must pay them. The rents that people have to pay are neither a new nor a technical concept. I hope that the debate will mean that the threats that the Government's plans pose for many people who rent, and many people who would not be able to afford market rents or anything like them, will be reported well in the press in all parts of England and Wales. They need to be reported, because I believe that pressure will be put on the Government to amend their legislation to guarantee that affordable rented housing continues to be available and that its supply increases rather than decreases.

Last night I went to the celebration of the opening of a second hostel by an organisation called Thames Reach in the London borough of Westminister. That hostel takes from the streets people who would otherwise be homeless. We are talking about two categories of people today. The first category are those who at the moment have no homes at all, but who are certainly not in the category of people who wish to be members of what the Government Front Bench often call "the dependency culture".

I met a Scotsman, aged 62, who had been sleeping rough in London for nine years. Until some years ago he slept in a tent, but somebody burned his tent down. During that time he never claimed benefit. He went to the wholesale markets to get fruit and vegetables. He went to the warehouses to pick up damaged packets of sugar, tea and butter. He wanted to be independent, but he just did not have a home. That man has been in the hostel in north London now for a couple of weeks. He does not sleep on the floor: he sleeps in a bed. He enjoys that. He is beginning to realise the sort of opportunity that he could still have, even though he is 62. That then is the sort of person we are talking about in connection with housing associations, social housing and affordable rents.

We are talking also about many people who do a full day's or week's work—people who earn, but do not earn enough to escape the need for rented housing. They might be employed in the catering industry or the teaching profession; they might be nurses, bus drivers or people who have office jobs. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) and I have met and talked to such people in the context of a report produced about London, but other such people who are also well clear of the dependency culture are to be found in other cities and towns. They, too, need affordable rents, because to contemplate a society in which rent takes 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 or 80 per cent. of their income is unconscionable.

We debated this issue in Committee on 9 February, and some hon. Members who were there then are here today. I do not intend to go over old ground. I argued that there were two principal reasons why affordable rents were needed: first, the security of all the parties involved and, secondly, the respectability of all the parties involved—tenants, housing associations, investors and the Government. The Bill should provide for rents to remain genuinely affordable by housing association and other social housing tenants.

I give credit to the Minister for being sympathetic, but he said that a regime with rent regulations would be more politicised than a regime where public housing association grant levels would be the factor in determining rents. I quibbled with that then, and I quibble with it now. The amount of housing association grant—the contribution by the taxpayer—is as much a political matter decided by a Government as the amount fixed as an affordable rent by Government or local authority. The Minister's argument was profoundly flawed on that and on other issues.

Although the arguments still stand strongly for security and respectability of affordable rents, we must also ask questions about who should bear the risk of providing housing. The danger of the Government's plans is that individual tenants will have to bear the consequences of the financial risks taken by large institutions. We must ask why the wider public, through the relevant Government agency—the Housing Corporation in England and Tai Cymru in Wales—should not bear the risk. Although there is now a fair rent regime and some private finance in the housing association movement, which the Minister so much admires—such as Sutton Hastoe, which has brought in private finance over many years and not just in the last couple of years through the Challenge initiative—and although private finance has responded in the context of a rent restriction, the Government still argue that there should be no limitation on rents other than market levels if investors are to be attracted.

The basic case of principle is that the risks of housing association and all social housing projects should not and must not fall on the tenants, who are the most vulnerable in our society. Instead, they must be carried by housing associations and other social landlords. When their reserves are inadequate because they are only medium or small associations, the Housing Corporation, making use of public reserves, must make additional payments as necessary.

The extent to which housing associations should be expected to bear risk of losses is limited. All housing associations are non-profit-making bodies and, as such, do not have the benefit of making profits in the market place to compensate for bearing the risk of losses. As I made clear in Committee, I accept that it is reasonable of the Government to argue that, as housing associations develop and grow, they can and should work to build up reserves sufficient to enable them to carry some, and in the long run most, of the risks associated with their projects. Therefore, it is common ground that a handful of large housing associations can bear the risk for many projects. For medium-sized associations, risks can often be shared on a percentage basis—as, I understand, the Government envisage.

However, it is crucial that the Government accept that the shared risk system is not appropriate for small or developing housing associations—especially, for example, the ethnic minority associations, whose risk must be 100 per cent. borne by the Housing Corporation as the agency of central Government. In the interests of housing association tenants, most of whom are on low incomes, housing associations must be sufficiently large and well established before dependence on reserves is reasonable.

6.45 pm

I wish now to deal with what is, in some senses, a technical point, but which for the Government is a fundamental point. The minister argued in Committee—as he did in a letter to Richard Best, the director of the National Federation of Housing Associations—that public expenditure consideration controls the way in which financing is organised. It is because of a public sector accounting convention that private loan finance is counted as public expenditure if the Government guarantee to cover loss, the logic being that, if the project went wrong, the public sector would have to bear the whole cost. However, there is no overwhelming case why that convention—and it is only a convention—should always apply when a state agency provides some additional subsidy to cover a cost overrun on a project that makes substantial use of private finance.

If the Government were so minded, the convention could be changed—and it should be changed. Even if the Treasury insisted that it should not be changed, there are other possibilities. For example, the Government, without contributing funds directly, could establish a mutual insurance fund for housing associations and other social landlords, whereby premiums were paid to a private fund that would bear the risks. The whole cost of projects would not then have to count as public expenditure. Housing associations could be required by law to pay premiums to such a fund and the Housing Corporation could take those premiums into account when allocating grant.

There is no fundamental reason of public sector accountancy or expenditure why the Government should not share the risk by, for example, limiting the rents. A maximum limit on rents that ensured that social housing homes continued to be affordable for those for whom they were traditionally provided is essential if tenants are not to bear undue risks and become liable to be priced out of the market.

When the Minister last week made what may become known as the famous Warrington speech, he said:

"On the principles of rent setting, rents must remain within the reach of those in lower paid employment."

Such people are not covered by housing benefit. Their rents will not be paid by the increases in housing benefit, if we really believe that there will be increases—and some of us are sceptical about that. Those people are working, and for many of them the reality will be that, unless there are affordable rents, rents will rise and they will be priced out of the market.

We began a debate in Committee on how affordable rents should be calculated. I want to deal with one of the objections raised by the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) to my arguments. I accept that the present system of fair rents is increasingly widely discredited. It is widely agreed that the way in which rents are set under the fair rent system is shrouded in mystery. The only major study on that is a book, part of which I have read, entitled "Public Control of Privately Rented Housing" by Doling and Davies, which found the system flawed in many ways and inconsistent over time and between different parts of the country. I do not argue that we should retain that system. There should be a more rational system of rent regulation for all lettings in the social rented sector. I advocate that maximum rent levels should be based principally on a measure of average income. Income would be the principal variable, although one could accept other variables, including capital values and maintenance costs.

There is one crucial reason for using a measure of income as the main basis for affordable rents. Under such a system, one would have a guarantee that, where housing costs in a market were very high—for example, in central London, but also in towns and cities elsewhere in the country and, most importantly, in the south—there would still be housing provision for the low-paid service workers who every city and rural area needs. Needless to say, a capital city suffers most severely from this problem. I represent a London constituency and therefore know that area best, but the problem applies equally to the Minister's city, Bristol, and to other towns and cities in England and Wales.

[Mr. Hughes]

The danger is that market rents would mean that whole areas of a town or city would become no-go areas in housing terms for workers in many occupations. Shortages will become worse, particularly in respect of primary school teachers, transport workers, nurses and other health workers, caterers, local government workers and social workers. In some places, some of those services are already close to breakdown. The effect of the shortage of nurses, which is acute in London, but apparent elsewhere in the country, has been widely publicised.

The Minister and his colleagues will have seen an academic study prepared by University college London and supported by the Confederation of British Industry, which made it clear that the problem of access to rented housing in London is now increasingly severe for both employers and employees. The Campaign for Homes in Central London, which sponsored that study, supported by hon. Members of all parties, made it clear that the nation cannot afford to fail to address that problem.

A regime of maximum rents based on incomes—not all incomes, but incomes in a group of occupations—would have the fundamentally important advantage that, even where house price inflation was rampant, as it is widely now, homes could still be provided for people who need them at rents that they could afford. That is the basic argument behind the amendments and the new clause. We do not make a special case for London, but we are most acutely aware in London of the need for such a regime.

The amendments on the one hand, and the new clause on the other, set out alternative approaches, although the same principle lies behind them. I prefer new clause 38 which, by taking a measure of average net earnings already available in official statistics as its basis, is perhaps simpler and less susceptible to charges of favouring some groups and not others than the approach contained in amendments Nos. 377 and 378 which refer to a number of selected occupations.

I wish to allude here specifically to the points raised in Committee by the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire. He quite rightly expressed concern for people on fixed incomes, particularly pensioners. There was a flaw in the argument in favour of average income, as people on fixed incomes are not affected by that. The proposal in new clause 38, based on statistics commonly available region by region and on the average earnings of a group of low-paid workers, meets the fears expressed by the hon. Gentleman. I ask him to consider the proposal sympathetically and acknowledge that, after testing, it is a more credible way of meeting those concerns.

I wish to make a number of points in respect of new clause 38. First, it covers housing associations and housing acquired, under part IV of the Bill, by new landlords from local councils, along with those people who are at present council tenants. It is also deliberately designed to include local authority housing. There is no argument of principle why local authority housing, which is definitely social housing, should be exempt from provisions governing rents.

Secondly, overall average imcomes should not be taken as a basis for affordable rents. In areas such as central London, the average income may be very high, but the people at the bottom of the income scale would be unable to afford such prices. I have taken the wage levels of manual workers as a useful way forward, as the figures are easily available from the new earnings survey.

Thirdly, the precedent for subsection (3) of the new clause is regulation 29 under the Social Security Act 1986, which relates to the new housing benefit regime. It takes net income rather than gross income as the basis for housing benefit calculations, and the wording is taken as closely as possible from the regulation. That wording was passed by a Conservative Government and therefore should be acceptable to them.

Fourthly, the percentage of average manual earnings, region by region, that we have selected, is generally agreed by those people in the housing association movement who have considered the subject in detail as a suitable figure for a maximum rent. In Committee, I mentioned 18 to 20 per cent., but, having considered more closely the rent levels that arise from using variable groups of occupations and measures of income, I agree that 20 per cent, is acceptable. The regime established by the new clause would give an average national maximum rent of about £25 to start with. It provides for regional variations that would take account of regional wage variations. That may not be exactly the right figure, and I accept that there might be slight variations, but there must be a guarantee that rents are affordable; and the new clause shows that it is possible to legislate for such a guarantee for all social housing tenants.

Amendments Nos. 377 and 378 have been proposed by the Campaign for Homes in Central London. That organisation, which suggests an index of selected low-wage occupations as the basis for maximum rent levels, has existed for several years. It is a federation of groups representing communities in Battersea, Covent Garden, Fitzrovia, Hammersmith, Paddington, Pimlico, north Southwark, Somers Town, Spitalfields, Thornhill, Waterloo and the Docklands. Communities have survived in those areas while the land around them has been developed and made them increasingly expensive places in which to live. There are two interesting examples that might make the Government think more clearly about this matter. I ask the Minister to pay particular attention to this point because a great deal more than this debate may turn on it.

In Southwark, as elsewhere, housing association rents already appear to be in line with Government guidelines on affordability. The average Southwark unfurnished rent registered by the rent officer in the first half of last year was £19·83 and, for furnished property, £32·44. The Minister will know that the Southwark housing association group has written to him in strong terms making it clear that the proposed legislation will not address the pressing needs of the people of Southwark for an increase in the supply of affordable rented housing, let alone the essential repair of the public housing stock.

A borough that the Government might look at even more urgently is perhaps the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea where there is a high proportion of rented accommodation. Owner-occupation is only 28·8 per cent. in the Kensington constituency. Local authority property accounts for only 34·3 per cent. About 37 per cent. of people in Kensington live in other rented accommodation; 11·5 per cent. have no bath; 8·5 per cent. are overcrowded; 13·5 per cent. of the population are unemployed and over 15 per cent. are pensioners. The Minister will have seen letters from the Kensington and Chelsea Housing Association Group, which has written to him, to the hon.

Member for Hammersmith and to me, which make clear its concern that in just such a constituency and borough the Government's proposals will mean substantially higher rents, which many in the community will not be able to afford.

7 pm

I could, but I will not, read out representations from the Church housing association, a perfectly reasonable and respectable body; from the Family housing association; and, much more tellingly, recent evidence, about which the Minister will have read, from the Community housing association of NW1. Before I come to that evidence, which shows a major flaw in the Bill, I should like to ask the Minister of State a question raised by one of my constituents who chairs the Tower Hamlets housing associations group and who works for the Victoria Park housing association.

The questions asked by that constituent are questions that all such groups want to ask. What is an affordable rent in inner London? How is it calculated? How does it relate to ability to pay, and to the type and size of accommodation? What evidence does the Minister have that mixed funding schemes for 75 per cent. housing association grant will produce affordable rented housing in inner London? Will the Minister, as a matter of the utmost urgency, instruct his civil servants to allow special and general consents, because the only way in which housing associations can acquire the properties they need is if they can buy them at less than market value?

I am just about to table some questions on how long it takes to get answers to requests for specific and general consents, which will now have to go through the Department of the Environment where they appear either to get lost or to be delayed, in many ways, unconscionably.

The Family Housing Association and the south east area tenants panel makes the point that it is no good thinking that housing benefit will come to the rescue because not only are further cuts planned, but many tenants on housing benefit now have to pay 20 per cent. of their rates and will have to pay 20 per cent. of their poll tax.

Perhaps the most interesting example is that given by the Community housing association of NW1, relating to a fair rent set by the rent officer in Camden of £105 per week for a housing association property in Bloomsbury—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ridiculous".] Yes, as hon. Members say, that is ridiculous. However, it gets more ridiculous, because the top level that the Government permit for housing benefit in Camden is £88 per week; so already the registered fair rents, which will be lower than any rents that will come out of these proposals, are nearly £20 per week more than the maximum that tenants can get back through housing benefit.

The article from *Housing Associations Weekly* of 10 June is short but telling. It states:

"Community HA, which owns the 3-bedroom maisonette in Bloomsbury Street, WC1"—

I think that is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), and I apologise for not alerting him that I would make this point, but I think that he would agree with it without any problem——

Mr. Soley: Yes, he would.

Mr. Hughes: Yes, his Front-Bench colleague says that he would agree.

The article continues:

"is making representations to the Department of the Environment about the high levels for fair rent being set in Camden. Chief executive Mike Sweeney said: 'We've had people turning down new flats on the grounds of affordability.' The association works almost exclusively in Camden and Westminster.

Housing association tenants, to whom the housing benefit stop levels do not apply, can afford to live in properties such as these if they are unemployed. But there is a major disincentive . . . to return to work when the rent is so high. Using the Federation's benchmark—that a tenant should not have to pay more than 20 per cent. of his or her disposable income in rent—any tenant moving into the Bloomsbury maisonette would have to return to work on a salary of £24,000 to not lose out."

The situation faced by community housing associations in central London, as house prices rise to unprecedented levels, is becoming more common.

Many more examples could be given. The rent officer service has been quoted as saying that in future affordable rents for assured tenancies will be used as comparators to fix fair rents for housing association secured tenants. The Community Housing Association states:

"Within two years of deregulation of rents it is not mere speculation to predict a massive increase in rent levels which will cause inflation to soar."

That is happening against a background of regular cuts in housing benefit, the latest of which was effective from April. A pensioner couple came to see me because their rent doubled last week from £16 to £32 as a result of housing benefit changes and rent increases. Research by New Islington and Hackney Housing Association demonstrates that housing association rent levels are already at the limit of affordability and that single people will be paying a significantly higher proportion of their income in rent, after allowing for housing benefit.

On the same day that we are having this debate, it is galling to read an article in one of our national daily newspapers that in the new parliamentary year there may be substantial changes to take away from local authorities their duty to house the homeless, who will be increasing in number as a result of a combination of these provisions. The single homeless were the subject of a report produced last week which showed that they, too, would like to work but that they could not find any accommodation. They come to London from the north, Scotland, Ireland, the midlands and, increasingly, from the home counties because they believe that there are jobs here, but they end up on the streets, subject to gambling, alcohol or abuse of one kind or another. They want to work. They do not want to be part of the dependency culture. Hon. Members of all parties expressed their concern about that, as I did, in the Centrepoint report which was produced only last week.

I hope that the Minister will consider the serious proposals contained in the amendments and the new clause, because I do not believe that there is a responsible alternative way forward that does not accept that rents have to be held down.

I should like to make two substantive points before I conclude. First, I suppose it would be fair to concede that there could be a third way in which one could achieve affordable rents. The Government might find it more appealing, so I do not want to rule it out and I am being generous in suggesting it. I hope that we can come out of

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the debate with an agreement that the Government will change their mind, although, as yet, there has been nothing to give ground for great hope.

Maximum rents could be set deliberately somewhat higher than the rent levels that the Government think should operate and on the basis of which the Housing Corporation calculates the level of housing association grant. That would permit social landlords to raise rents in the event of shortfalls, but not beyond an explicitly laid down maximum. There could also be a requirement to reduce rents to the original levels within a period judged adequate to enable the housing association to balance its books after receipt of additional housing association grant where that was a legitimate way forward.

Secondly, in Committee the Minister deployed the following argument against affordable rents:

"I do not want to import a rent control mechanism because the private sector will then ask what kind of market it is, and if costs rise more than was predicted when the original package was agreed, what freedom does the housing association to which it is lending have if it is forced to raise rents to pay the higher costs? If it has no such freedom, the market will then ask if the Government are to guarantee any deficit. If they were to do so, we would be back to a full public sector system with Treasury control over provision and the rest, and we would still have not performed the trick. Under neither a Conservative nor a Labour Government would such a guaranteed deficit system be other than at the heart of the public sector, so we should not have gained the freedom which we need.

If, on the other hand, the Government were not able to pay the deficit, the market would say that it was a horrible, politicised market in which rents were controlled and that if they got the sums wrong the Government would not pay the deficit. The market would not invest in that any more than it would in the fair rent system now, and for the same reasons. . . . much the best way for those rents to be negotiated is project by project, depending on who the client group is, on the area and on the costs. If we try to set an overall rent figure we shall make it either too lax or too tight."

These are the questions, having got to the Minister on his defensive argument.

First, given that private money is already coming into social housing, why does he set so much store by the advice that he has received that the private sector will not be interested if, as now, there is any continuing form of rent limitation? In Committee, he said:

"the importation of a statutory rent control will scare people off and make them say that there is a wholly politicised market again."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 9 February 1988; c. 745-46.]

He also said that if the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) were the Minister, he, like any Minister, could increase grants to housing associations to keep rents down. As I said before, that would be equally politicised; it would be Government intervention to help provide the housing that is needed in the market.

Publicly subsidised social housing will always be politicised, as it should be, because that is how Governments, by definition political, seek to assist with solutions to a political problem—how to house people given the money that they have got to pay. There is nothing more or less politicised about ensuring that rents are affordable by limiting them than by controlling them out of a grant that the owners of the property get. That is not the issue. The issue, if rents have to go up, is: who should bear the risk? It is clear that it should not be the most vulnerable prospective and actual tenants.

If the Government are saying that they are going to opt out of politicising this issue, presumably they are saying that they are going to walk away from the responsibility to provide housing at affordable rents. Our case, and what the amendments and the new clause make abundantly clear, is that it would be perfectly possible for the Government to legislate for affordable rents if they believed that rents should continue to be affordable by tenants of the kind that housing associations and the like have traditionally housed.

The Government say that that is their objective. In *Housing Associations Weekly* for March we see the headline "Rent objectives the same, says Waldegrave." In last week's press release that accompanied—I cite it, again—the famous Warrington speech, the Minister referred to the need to provide rents at an affordable level for those who need them, and the Government have tabled their own new clause, new clause 30, which refers to this issue.

The reason for the great concern outside the House—whether in the national or the specialist press, and specifically among increasing numbers of our constituents in England and Wales—is that there is nothing to back up the Minister's words and to prove that he will do what he says. In the consultation paper "Finance for Housing Associations", published last September, the Government said that the aim would be to ensure that housing associations can

"let at sensible rents that are attuned to the means of their prospective tenants."

It sounds good, but from that day to this we have had no definition of the interchangeable words—the Minister admitted that they were interchangeable—"sensible rents" and "affordable rents." We have had no substance at all to back up the words. The amendments seek to write in that there will be rents at affordable levels. For the sake of the one third of our population who are tenants, or likely to be tenants, the Government must move towards a

7.15 pm

Is it not right that at the end of the day it should not be the tenant, particularly the vulnerable tenant, who should have to bear the financial risks of the agency providing the housing? Is it not right that the housing association movement, which the Minister praises and wants to see expand, should continue to be able to provide housing at rents that tenants of the kind that it has traditionally housed can continue to afford? They have been proved to be people on lower average incomes than either private rented sector or council housing sector tenants.

If the answer to those questions is, "Yes, that is right," the Government should be prepared to tell the House tonight that they will legislate for a system of regulation for genuinely affordable rents. Our fear is that they do not agree with these propositions, but agree that, as rents go up, tenants will have to bear the cost. The consequence of the legislation is obviously, as the Government have said, that rents will go up. They will mean that housing associations, social housing and the poorer people in Britain will yet again suffer from the Government's bringing the market place into the home.

The Government have a bad enough record in creating two nations, in putting people on the streets instead of in homes and in meeting the needs of the most needy. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. This is an

opportunity for Ministers to show that they understand that they cannot go on like this is our society and that all people need housing at costs that they can afford.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The House is greatly obliged to those groups that have advised the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). He has presented their and his view, which will be widely shared in the House; a view that is not merely based on the commitment to justice, which needs to be restated in the housing field, but also reflects anxiety about the future.

A few months ago I was driven around New York to look at the housing conditions in that city. They are worse than anything that we have, but if the Government do not begin to understand that the needs of the most vulnerable section of the community, to which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey referred, have to be met and cannot be met by the individuals and groups themselves or on the basis of existing central priorities, the condition of our people, of the national housing stock, of our inner cities and perhaps of towns outside the traditional inner-city areas will be increasingly serious.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey referred to cases within London. Some of my hon. Friends and I have grave and growing anxieties about these matters because in recent years the Government have required British Coal to sell off housing estates, which have often been bought by London property companies, speculators who will be seeking a level of return from their housing operations in the provinces of the kind that, as the hon. Gentleman is well aware, they can obtain in parts of central London.

For that reason and a number of others that I shall refer to later, I am very sympathetic to amendments Nos. 377 and 378. I can think of a number of reasons in addition to those directly concerned with housing to justify the House in approving amendment No. 378. I should dearly like to see a regional index of workers engaged in essential industries. I would love to be able to compare the wages of workers engaged in essential industries and services in my own constituency with those of persons engaged in exactly the same industries and services in, say, south-east England. I think that we would find a difference of £80 or £90 a week, and things are, of course, getting worse as the gaps between the richer and the poorer areas widen.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): My hon. Friend makes an important point. In the north, housing was kept reasonably cheap specifically to retain workers in slum housing conditions. Down south, the city slickers who seemed to make a bomb out of the bang that occurred recently have perks that enable them to afford enormous houses. We must not forget that there are still many poor people in the south. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Minister should consider the needs of the poor rather than the greedy people?

Mr. Hardy: I have not burdened the House with frequent involvement in debates on housing for quite a few years, although in the first part of my parliamentary career I often spoke in housing debates, largely because I had relevant experience in a local authority in south Yorkshire, although not at the level of leadership and seniority which my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) has attained. I believed that local authority housing, and housing in the rented sector, was being dealt with properly in areas like mine. In my former urban district, obliterated by a previous Conservative Government's obsessive desire to interfere with local authorities, we had established sound and sensible housing policies which did not require massive subsidies. When I entered the House in 1970, my local authority was building three-bedroom, Parker Morris standard housing, without any subsidy from the rates, which were rented at £4.7s.6d.

In the area that I represent, sensible and experienced local authorities have a much better grasp and a sounder approach to the problem than the Government. They could provide a more effective solution than anything which has emanated from the Government since 1979, when we were in sight of resolving a housing problem which has since become much worse.

I remember saying in a housing debate in the House in 1978 that, if my local authority was allowed to maintain its housing policy for not more than one and a half years, the housing problem in my constituency would be completely resolved. It was diminishing rapidly. Since the Conservative Government started to apply their policies and to operate their dogma, in my area, as in every other part of the country, the position has become much worse.

I want to warn the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey about new clause 38, which is being considered with the two amendments to which he has referred. The hon. Gentlemen seemed to be taking a more kindly and optimistic view of the Government's attitude to the amendments than some of my hon. Friends might take. In new clause 38, the hon. Gentleman may be giving the Government a new instrument of dogmatic oppression. I can see a real temptation for some of the market-oriented Conservative Members to decide that the first nine lines of the new clause are attractive but that the rest should be removed.

If the Government accept the new clause, the sort of people who now attend in the other place may turn up and take out everything after the ninth line. Then the word "affordable" would no longer be relevant. It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman, who is as deeply committed as we are to establishing the principle of an affordable rent, has put the phrase "affordable rent" at the end of the new clause, where it may be more easily butchered by the people who are less concerned about the vulnerable sections of the community.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I do not pretend that the drafting is perfect. It was chosen for two reasons. The first is that it follows Government precedent, which may make it more appealing. The second reason is that I am advised—and I think it is right—that there should be a definition, which is provided in subsection (2) where there is a reference to "20 per cent. of the average net earnings of manual employees".

The case which is made strongly is that, if the Government do not take heed now of that fundamental point, they may have difficulty in resisting in the other place. I understand that there is considerable sympathy in the other place for housing associations and the social housing movement and for the concept that rents must be limited.

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Gentleman may be being excessively charitable. He mentions that in the other place there may be sympathy with the housing associations, but that, of course, is among those noble Lords who attend regularly. I am not worried about the noble Lords who attend regularly but about the ones who come down only rarely. They are likely to vote for different things than the

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housing associations to which the hon. Gentleman is attached. If the ruthlessness that I fear is displayed in the other place, the

"maximum rent for the region in which the dwelling house is located, to be determined by the Secretary of State"

may lead to an extension and a compounding of the weaknesses of the fair rent system to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

I recall that, about five years ago, I decided to advise a constituent under no circumstances to appeal to the rent tribunal. I have given that advice consistently, because I found that, when constituents appealed against a fair rent registered by the rent officer, in all probability the tribunal fixed a higher rent. So that recourse to what was supposed to be an instrument of justice was not of benefit or value. It merely created a great deal of stress among people who were subject to a vicious and distressing increase in rent.

At the time I made the decision to give such advice to my constituents, I thought it would also be fair to suggest to the Minister that a new approach be adopted to the manning of tribunals. When one examined the composition of rent tribunals, one found that there was excessive influence from those who had a professional and commercial interest in securing higher rents and higher property prices. It seemed absurd, for example, that an estate agent's wife should be on a rent tribunal when her family's income was always improved if rents or property prices increased, because that income depended on the value of the property or the rent with which the tribunal was dealing. In Yorkshire, we found that solicitors engaged in conveyancing and such activities, estate agents or close relatives of those people had more influence on rent tribunals than ordinary people who should have been better represented.

I can see a real risk of the Government accepting new clause 38, knowing that their keenest and cruellest supporters in the other place will be eager to remove everything after the ninth line, so taking out the commitment to the affordable rent which has inspired the comments of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. The Government could take a more generous view. They could accept new clause 38 and offer an absolute commitment that they will do their utmost to ensure that those who generally support them will not be encouraged to change the new clause or remove from it anything of value.

Mr. Redmond: Call in the backwoodsmen.

Mr. Hardy: Loyalty in the Conservative party is such that if the backwoodsmen came down and were properly guided by those who influence the other place, they might be persuaded not to do so. But for the new clause, we would need a very firm commitment that the guidance would be clear and positive, so that there is no confusion.

7.30 pm

The Government could afford to take that view. After all, as recent statistical analysis has shown, in the last Budget the Government could afford to give £1·9 billion to the richest 1 per cent. of the country, which is twice as much as they gave the poorest half of the population. It is among the poorest half of the population—and it may be as high as one half—that the vulnerability exists to which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey referred.

The Government may imagine that only 1 or 2 per cent. of the population are vulnerable, but not any more—certainly not in areas such as that which I represent, where the real rate of unemployment may be 40 per cent. Nor is it true in areas such as the Dearne valley in south Yorkshire, whose economy has been devastated and where a huge proportion of the population is dependent on the state.

When I recently asked the Prime Minister about unemployment in that area, I was told that it was falling—but that is not the case. When I wrote to her the other day asking her to ensure that certain steps are taken to give my area some capacity and cause for pride, she replied—my hon. Friends the Members for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) and for Don Valley have seen the letter—that the Government's commitment to my area is so great that they are keeping 17,500 of our young people on training schemes; that was a measure of the sustenance and support that the Government are engendering. How many of those 17,500 young people, who will probably never be able to buy a house, will be placed in future at the mercy of the Rachmans that we have seen creeping into south Yorkshire?

If the Government have any sense of obligation to the nation as a whole, they will ensure that the new clause and the two amendments, together with the principle of affordability, are enshrined in the Bill. It may be even more appropriate for the Government just to return to the situation of a few years ago and consider those local authorities which were able to provide decent housing efficiently, effectively and fairly, and who were in sight of a resolution to their housing problems—until the Government changed the whole emphasis and basis of their approach. The situation has now been reached in which business enterprise tax fiddling is given a higher priority than decent financial management of local authority housing.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I accept entirely the hon. Gentleman's comments about south Yorkshire. It is also somewhat galling for my constituents, 95 per cent. of whom rent social housing and 25 per cent. of whom are unemployed, to look across the river—and sometimes not even that far—to see properties changing hands at £2·5 million. They know too that the bulk of property built since 1979 has been not homes for rent but second homes for those who are already adequately housed, in this country or abroad. That is the situation in our capital city, and not only in the deprived and neglected regions in the north of Britain and elsewhere. That is the situation within a mile or two of the heart of our nation.

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Gentleman emphasises a point that I made earlier, when I referred to my visit to New York to see conditions there. The gap between the rich and the poor in New York may be wider than it is here, but that may change as the months go by, as the sort of arrangements introduced in the Budget are continued. That gap is one cause of the unease, disorder and social problems which are increasingly assailing our urban areas. Housing conditions and rent levels lie close to the heart of

those problems. The House is right to devote substantial time to the subject this evening and must continue to do so until the Government adopt a more sensible approach.

I referred also to the recent sale of Coal Board houses to companies outside the mining communities. I am extremely fearful of the Bill's effects, and the amendments are relevant to the circumstances I have described. We must ensure that the people living in those houses do not face escalating rent levels, especially at the same time as they are affected by reductions in housing benefit and social services. As the Government have compelled those houses to be sold and must take every ounce of responsibility in that matter, they should accept that the burdens faced by areas such as mine are now acute enough to lead them to view the amendments with greater sympathy.

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend referred to the sale of British Coal houses to financial companies and speculators in London. Perhaps he will remind the House what measures the Government took to stop the exploitation of British Coal tenants and to protect them and to protect the future housing stock for their children.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I advise the hon. Gentleman not to go down that road of questioning.

Mr. Hardy: I would not dream of doing so. My hon. Friend's concern is very genuine, but it would not be entirely appropriate for me to go down that road except to say that, as the Government created the problem and have increased anxieties to the present level, amendment No. 377 should certainly apply in areas such as ours. The only difficulty is that amendment No. 387 gives rise to some conjecture, anxiety and even astonishment.

In parts of the Yorkshire coalfield, the average net weekly earnings may not be easily obtained, as the majority there may not be employed full time. Some people are working only one and a half days a week, so that their employers may avoid the costs which they would otherwise incur in respect of full-time or substantially part-time employees. I called into a job centre in Rotherham recently and saw that the situation has not changed. One job was advertised at the rate of £1·50 per hour, but for only a very small number of hours. That was done so that the employer would not have to pay a national insurance contribution and could treat that employee as a casual worker. That situation is growing as each month passes.

How can we establish a proper register? I accept that from a statistical and sociological point of view a proper register should be established. However, I wonder whether that can be done reliably in areas of high unemployment. We all know that the Government's assessments and analyses are often grossly inaccurate, and such inaccuracies might disadvantage the areas of highest unemployment. Although I recognise that such a disadvantage exists, there is sufficient merit in amendment No. 378 to provide grounds for our approval. It refers to a guide, although I hope that no Minister, understanding —if they do—what they have done, would claim that the guide was accurate.

A few moments ago I mentioned the Budget and the changes in the use of business enterprise schemes to extend private sector housing entirely as a cost to the taxpayer. I suppose that some schemes have got off the ground already, probably in areas close to that represented by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, who may be able to refer to some of them before the debate is over. If the Government can give such a priority and allow an enormous part of the investment in private sector housing to be set against tax, they cannot say that the nation does not have the resources to provide the material support that would be required by amendments Nos. 377 and 378 and new clause 38.

It is no good the Government saying that there would be cost burdens. There may be, but if the Government can allow taxes to be reduced in order to sustain the astonishingly generous schemes available under the business enterprise scheme for rented sector housing, they cannot say that they lack the resources to assist here. If they are to rely increasingly on private sector housing, they will have to make the rewards generous, because the entrepreneurs to whom the Government are committed are so trained and accustomed to go for an early yield, a quick killing and a high profit, rather than for long-term investment, that unless they get the quick killing, high return and substantial growth in capital, they will not play. The Government should understand that they will not play unless their greed is fed. Why on earth should the vulnerable half—perhaps more than half—of Britain's population be plunged into difficulty, enormous anxiety and great financial stress to assist a small proportion of landlords? I doubt whether, in a democracy, anyone would see such a situation again.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey touched upon the problem, but I do not think that he perceived the scale of the problem that will now unfold. A few moments ago, he referred to the enormous increase in housing costs. He referred to relatively small houses across the river being sold for millions of pounds. What the hon. Gentleman and some of the people engaged in the worthy groups to which he referred may not have perceived is that the effect of that massive explosion in house prices has not yet been reflected in the rents that apply in parts of London. Houses have been going up in price, sometimes by thousands of pounds as each week passes, and one shudders to think what the rent levels will be in a little while.

Earlier today—it is a pure coincidence that I had this experience—I travelled on the train from Brighton, where I had been addressing the local government conference on the privatisation of the electricity industry—another example of commitment to greed. I could not help overhearing the conversation of a young couple on the train. One said, "My father has been very good to us. He bought my husband and me a house last year and he has let us have it at the price that he paid for it." The lady to whom that person was talking gasped with astonishment and said, "You are very lucky. Your father is a very generous man." She was astounded that the girl's father had let his daughter have the house for the price that he had paid for it the year before. He is obviously a supporter of the Labour movement, or at least espouses the values to which we are attached. He certainly is not a Conservative, or he would not have dreamed of acting in that way. That shows how enormously generous someone can be considered simply because he is prepared to sell a house this year for the price he paid for it last year.

7.45 pm

Mr. Soley: One of the quickest ways of becoming rich in the Prime Minister's enterprise Britain is to have bought a house about five or six years ago and a barrel of beer or a crate of wine, and to have drunk oneself to perdition, making about £70 a day in doing so.

Mr. Hardy: Yes, that is an entirely appropriate example. Conservatives would probably regard such a person as patriotic because they believe in indirect taxation. They would probably suggest that he went out and bought two barrels.

The scale of capital appreciation is vast. I was seeking to make the point that the capital appreciation of recent months has not yet fed through into the rented sector and will exacerbate the problem dramatically.

I had not planned to make a long speech, because my main anxiety was keenly to warn the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey that the Government might take new clause 38 on board. We need to extract from the Minister a promise that, if the Government do that, they will retain it in its entirety rather than chopping it off at the ninth line, bringing the Liberal party into even more disrepute than it is in already. I do not want to be unkind to the hon. Gentleman. We are still a long way from a general election and, if he serves a decent cause, we are entitled to support him. On the other hand, he should understand what he is doing. Unless he insists on proper safeguards from the Minister, he may well have put a tool of oppression, cruelty and unfairness into the Minister's hands.

The Minister enjoys a reasonable reputation on conservation matters. He and I share a profound interest in that. The hon. Gentleman made appropriate noises and went a good way along the conservation road in a direction of which the House should approve. But the fact remains that he will not be doing his reputation any good if he shows himself more sympathetic to Britain's flora and fauna, to which he was, and I believe still is, greatly attached—a sympathy that I endorse enthusiastically—than to half Britain's human race. He will not be assisting his career as much as some of us would like, especially as he is not regarded as one of the more unpleasant Rachmans on the Conservative Benches, and there are plenty of them. If there were not, we would not have the Bill.

Just as I suggested that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey might be the Government's tool, so the Minister might be the instrument for further unwisdom. To create the sort of society that Conservative Members seem set on creating inevitably means the creation of enormous social problems. It means that young people will leave my constituency and those of my hon. Friends to find employment because they want to work and they cannot find any economic opportunity close to their homes.

Earlier this year, in an Adjournment debate, I spoke about the abuse of young ladies from my constituency and similar areas, who come to London to take up domestic service because there are no employment opportunities for them at home. Such young people may sooner or later wish to live here. They cannot bring with them the capital resources to obtain a decent home, so they will be at the mercy of the BES Rachmans, or the housing associations will be placed under enormous pressure to increase the yield from their rent income—market rents fixed by people who have every possible incentive to see that those rents are as high as possible.

We are already in a jungle. I suggest that the Minister takes careful note of the amendments. If he has any capacity or freedom to do so, he should accept them, and, in doing so, make sure that the Government understand that they are committed to maintaining the principle of affordability, that they are committed to assisting the vulnerable and that they perceive that vulnerability in our society now embraces a majority of the population.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): First, let me deal with one or two comments made by the previous two speakers. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) both decried the present system of fair rents. While tribunals may be more likely to put rents up than to lower them when they have been set by the rent assessment officer, at least that system provides something that another part of the Bill will evidently remove—the right of appeal by either the tenant or the owner of a property. The decision of the appeal tribunal is of course binding on both parties. I do not believe that the changed situation will be very healthy for many of my constituents who have been driven by their circumstances to live in privately rented homes rather than owning their own property.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth mentioned house price inflation. It seems strange to me—and to many other hon. Members—that although the Government are always talking about the absence of inflation, house price inflation is considerable. In my constituency the average annual rate of house inflation is well over 15 per cent. I recently had the good fortune to visit East Anglia to speak about the poll tax. Figures announced about six weeks ago showed that the figures over the past quarter reflected an annual increase of some 40 per cent. in the area.

There is no doubt in most people's minds that there will be a dramatic effect on those in the private sector if they are deprived of the rent protection afforded by the current legislation. We can only speculate on the effect on the generations of young people now either at school or just beginning their working career—if, indeed, they are lucky enough to be working—who may not be able to buy a home and settle down. If the Rent Acts are repealed or amended, they may be forced to rent in the private sector.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said that if the Minister could not accept amendments Nos. 377 or 378—I accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth said: the compiling of a register will involve problems in certain areas, and we are discussing an area problem—he should consider accepting new clause 38. The new clause would help to achieve an affordable rent specific to a region rather than to individual households. It would be much fairer if decisions about the approximate level were made in consultation with another Government Department.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey should not despair. The National Federation of Housing Associations suggests that when the Bill has gone through all its stages—and stages seem to have been added each day over the past two or three months——

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The Government do not know what they are doing.

Mr. Barron: I must say that, judging by the number of informed decisions so far, that seems to be true. If we could listen again to what was being said six months ago about what the Government envisaged, we would certainly say that they did not know what they were doing, because so much has been added on Report. The part that we are debating now, however, has been in the Bill for some time.

The evidence of the National Federation of Housing Associations has plainly fallen on deaf ears. I should like to go into some detail about what the federation has said about affordable rents, because it makes sensible reading. Given its arguments, I should have thought that the Government would want to introduce the concept. The federation says:

"The concept of an affordable rent applicable to housing association tenants would not necessarily involve an individual assessment."

While we have said that we must look at incomes, certainly on a regional level, and perhaps more locally than that, the procedure of individual assessment would be a long-drawn-out one. We must also bear in mind, however, that many people living with "social landlords", whether they are housing association or local authority tenants, are assessed on their ability to pay rent through the housing benefit mechanism—although the Government have changed it considerably over the past two months. There is no doubt that individual assessments must be made in that context.

An affordable rent need not be a rigid ceiling. Obviously it would have to change from region to region if the decision was made on the basis of income. It would mean that the Secretary of State would have to place limits on rents for different projects in different areas, which in some instances would be below the open-market rent level. Some rents would be higher than fair rents, but the limits would ensure that the housing associations could continue to meet the needs that they currently serve.

We should take on board what the federation has said, and also what seems to make good common sense. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey about the inner cities. It is true that a far higher percentage of homes are rented, in either the public or the private sector, in his constituency than in mine, but my constituency is not without such problems in parts, normally affecting old people living in accommodation provided through housing associations with the support of the local authority. The hon. Gentleman gave a vivid description of a 62-year-old person who, after nine years of living rough in London, was provided with a home over his head that was not made of cardboard or, presumably, canvas. In such circumstances it would obviously be wrong to base an assessment on anything near the average income.

Mr. Simon Hughes: May I give the hon. Gentleman a figure that I did not put in my speech? It is interesting to note that, among the poorest groups of tenants, of all those in housing association property, 75 per cent. need housing benefit, compared with 60 per cent. of council tenants and 50 per cent. of private tenants. We are talking about the most vulnerable among those who are housed at all, the great majority of whom need additional help to meet their present rent levels, let alone those that will be imposed in future.

Mr. Barron: The hon. Gentlaman has made a very good point. I hope that before we conclude this debate the Government will ensure that people in the housing associations concerned with that level of take-up of housing benefit are satisfied that the Bill will not make matters worse. We hope that some words of comfort will be provided by the Minister when he replies to the debate.

The National Federation of Housing Associations believes that there are many advantages in limiting rents to meet the specific market needs of different types of people living in different types of accommodation. Tenants would have greater security knowing that the next rent increase would not raise rents far beyond the level that they could afford. That is very important for many people who are at the lower end of our society who have not made it in the City or elsewhere in the so-called enterprise culture which the Government claim to have created over the past eight years.

8 pm

The victims of the enterprise culture are now living in poverty in greater numbers than was the case eight or nine years ago. It is important that we protect those people and tell them with some confidence that it is highly unlikely that in years to come, given that their incomes are likely to be close to or remain at the present level, they will be priced out of the homes that they are renting at the moment. Those people feel very vulnerable because of their level of income. Many families also feel vulnerable, and it would be nothing short of callous to move to a different level of rent which did not provide the protection that they require to provide them with as stable a life as possible in those circumstances.

Another advantage of limiting rents would apply to local authorities. At the moment local authorities are responsible for homeless people in their areas even if those people are moving overnight or in a short period. I do not disagree with the present legislation which makes local authorities responsible for housing people in their boroughs. In accepting that responsibility, local authorities know with some confidence, when nominating homeless families and others in similar circumstances, that housing associations will not turn people away because they cannot afford the rents.

I am sure we are all aware that there has been some conflict in the capital over the treatment of homeless families in different boroughs. I must tell the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey that a council not too far from here which flies the hon. Gentleman's political flag does not have a good record in its treatment of homeless people and its interpretation of current legislation. However, the vast majority of local authorities recognise the problem, especially because of the cut in Government funding, which has affected the building of local authority homes for homeless people throughout Britain.

Given the current legislation and the way in which housing associations are run, the authorities know with some certainty that if they direct a homeless family to a particular housing association it is likely that the family will be able to afford the rent. If that is the case, the local authority will know that that family has been dealt with satisfactorily and that it can move on to the next family requiring accommodation.

I am sure that all right hon. and hon. Members are aware that there has been a phenomenal rise in homelessness recently, not just in London and the major

[Mr. Barron]

cities, but in rural and suburban areas and in the type of area that I represent. It is important that local authorities are able to direct people to some security.

Another advantage in limiting rents to meet specific market needs is that the Department of the Environment would know that, in return for its payment of grant, an association would always be able to target the subsidy to supply accommodation on the basis of housing need, not on the ability to pay. I am sure the Minister will agree that, no matter how the Government fund housing associations, they will not be able to ignore the plight of the housing associations, through the Housing Corporation, even if they can ignore the plight of the homeless or those who are worried about proposed increases in rents. The Government cannot ignore the fact that the funds must be found from somewhere.

As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey explained, many people will still need state funding from one source or another—whether that is provided in their basic income or through the Housing Corporation and a housing association—to keep a particular dwelling. The housing associations will need funding to carry out their job to house homeless people.

Another advantage of limiting rents would be that the Department of Health and Social Security would be protected with regard to housing associations. That is relevant because, according to the Bill, housing associations will come under more financial pressure. They are certainly under financial pressure at the moment. I am sure the Minister is aware of the problems in constituencies such as mine, where we have tried to attract housing associations, as they are responsible landlords, to buy houses that have been sold by public bodies such as British Coal.

The DHSS must be protected because housing associations will be under presssure to push up rents to the maximum, which the DHSS will cover through housing benefit payments. That will increase public expenditure. The Goverment may think that they are saving money in one form, but that might not be the case.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey referred to a rent that had risen to £110 a week, far in excess of the current level of benefit payment. The private sector does not address itself to such problems. That is a classic example of the difficulty that we face, and the Government must do something now.

There may be no reason why housing association rents in some areas, perhaps in an area such as mine, should be forced up to 50 per cent. of the maximum level of benefit payable, unless the associations were trying to get the maximum amount from the state—because they are under pressure to raise funds—under the housing benefit system. In those circumstances it would be sensible to impose a limit of an affordable rent which recognises incomes on a regional, if not local basis. Such a limit would protect the DHSS. I believe that it is sensible to include an affordable rent clause in the Bill, if not in new clause 38 as envisaged by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. That would provide some protection for the public sector.

Mr. Simon Hughes: My point links directly to what the hon. Gentleman has just said. The Government have argued that there might be protection under housing benefit and, as the hon. Gentleman said, that comes from the public purse—either from DHSS or Department of the Environment moneys. The trouble is that the DHSS and the Chancellor of the Exchequer will never guarantee to continue paying housing benefit to an ever-increasing level. The best argument for affordable rents is that the system may not cost the public sector any more, and it will guarantee that people will be helped by knowing that only a certain proportion of their income would have to go on housing. That would be a much firmer guarantee than the other ways proposed, whereby the public sector would have to pick up the tab at the end of the day.

Mr. Barron: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. Only a week ago there were strong rumours that housing benefit might be a thing of the past in years to come. In those circumstances, we definitely need some limit on affordable rents in this legislation.

To limit rents to meet specific market needs would also give some advantage to private investors. They would be less fearful of future Governments imposing rent controls that would jeopardise their investment. Affordable rents could be the sensible price of political consensus, which may turn out to be the essential prerequisite for long-term private investment, and it is important that such investment is long-term.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth rightly highlighted the short-term gain. There has been a lot of speculation recently, particularly in housing, but also in other sectors. That is not necessarily good for private investment in housing in the long term. It may be all right for city speculators who will buy a block of flats, a house or two homes and sell them. They are not too worried about the housing market after they have offloaded their short-term property investment, but long-term private investors are worried about the cost of housing and affordable rents would provide protection for them. Such rents would ensure that the market was more stable than would otherwise be the case, so that they could plan better in the medium and long term for what they believe to be right.

Affordable rents would benefit existing tenants who need to transfer to another of the housing association's properties. That is important for families who leave their homes, perhaps to look for work and for the elderly whose families have got married, and who can therefore think of moving within the same area or community into a small purpose-built flat or bungalow owned by the same housing association. Affordable rents would give them protection if they moved, so they would not be deterred from undertaking what would be a sensible move on their part, and an economic move for the housing association, because by moving into a one-bedroomed flat and releasing a three-bedroomed family home, a local homeless family, or a homeless family who wanted to move into the locality, could move in.

It would be easy to transfer between housing association property because of the protection afforded by affordable rents. This is an eminently sensible proposal and I can see no reason why hon. Members should not want to write it into the legislation to ensure that housing associations could use their property to its full potential to help homeless families, which is what housing associations are about.

Mr. Redmond: Housing associations can help those in need. I am not sure what this proposal does or how it

affects the schemes that are implemented by local authorities which take part in the mobility scheme. In the search for jobs it is important that people can move from the north to the south, and from the south to the north. It is important that associations operate the mobility scheme to ensure that couples or people searching for jobs can find accommodation in those areas. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is vital if associations are to provide a service and fulfil a function?

8.15 pm

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend raises a good point. The National Federation of Housing Associations has not spent much time on that, but obviously it will have looked into the matter. I do not have any figures on mobility between the homes of housing associations.

A person of working age, with an income, who wants to move from one region to another would find himself or herself under some pressure if there were major discrepancies in rents because of the limits set by different markets. During this short debate we have had many examples of the effect on rents of the private sector in London. We all know people who, like me, live in a region and have to live in London, if not all the time, at least for part of the week. There is a tremendous difference in the rented sectors of areas, such as south Yorkshire and London.

The idea that without some form of protection people could transfer and that markets would set rents for housing associations scares me. In effect, there would be no mobility. An aged parent could not move nearer children or grandchildren. If a husband or wife died and the only offspring of the surviving spouse was 200 or 300 miles away, he or she would not be able to move nearer to that member of the family. Unless protection is written into the legislation, families will be kept apart, and by families I do not mean man and wife, but, for example, mother and son. They would be kept apart because of the economic disparity across Britain. That has not been assessed properly in the context of this problem.

The most vital reason why affordable rents—or some form of limit—seem eminently sensible relates to the increasing problem of rent arrears and the inevitability of homelessness if tenants are evicted. Affordable rents would be a way of avoiding rent arrears and any subsequent court action that would remove a tenant from his home. Some people may get 20 per cent. more than, or even double, the average earnings of an area. There is little that we could do to protect people who have been silly and have spent the family income and neglected the essential family responsibility of keeping a roof over the family, but where that is not the case it would be negligent of us, as a legislative body, to ignore the possibility of evictions where there is no rent limit. An affordable rents provision in the legislation seems obvious and sensible, and we should consider that in greater detail.

The federation says in its facts sheet:

"In so far as affordable rents are lower than the market rents which associations might have obtained by letting to those on higher incomes, housing association projects will require more grant-aid."

We accept that that is inevitable, especially when 75 per cent. of people living in housing association homes receive some form of state benefit, be that housing benefit or anything else. We must accept that, one way or another, state money will have to be used to keep families in their housing association homes. Such funding is no different from what we now provide for housing or other areas of the economy.

I do not wish to go into the question of regional aid and what is given to the different regional groups that assist in trying to develop regions. I have no doubt that a substantial amount is being spent in the regions. It is not enough, but that money is given to those regions because, on occasions, the Government seem to recognise that there are regional imbalances. I should know about this, because I come from one of the poorer regions. Some regions are a lot poorer than others, and in reality the Bill will change nothing. The Government will have to carry on providing such funds until such time as we can get rid of regional discrepancies. I am sure that many of my hon. Friends and a number of Conservative Members, although they do not often talk about regional imbalances, believe that it is something that we should get behind us, so that people do not have to live in different forms of poverty or wealth.

The federation also states:

"The global amount of government subsidy to associations is obviously limited, so if rather more is needed for each home, the total programme has to expand more slowly. But housing associations would rather grow at a modest level and continue to house those with the most severe housing needs, than expand more rapidly but fail to help the very people for whom they were founded."

That is an important factor. Earlier we discussed poverty in inner-city areas. On occasions such poverty can be found in rural areas, and pockets of need in urban areas also need attention. If we go for a quick return basis and introduce some form of market rent without protection, housing associations will be forced to charge such rents.

I am sure that even the Minister will accept that there is already great pressure on housing associations to try to self-finance by buying out or building in certain areas to help homelessness. In those circumstances, we should not divert housing associations from that work. If housing associations are obliged to follow certain projects as a means of getting more money to enable them to manage their schemes and to deal with problems elsewhere, it will mean that they will be unable to look after an entire area or undertake other necessary projects. It may be that housing associations have projects that offer a low return of income because of the nature of the income received by the people housed by that project. It would be doing a great disservice to housing associations if they were forced to make a choice between projects on the basis of received income.

I have great faith in local authority housing, and I do not like the discrimination that is shown against it, but I should not like to talk down the help that has been provided by the many good projects that have been developed by housing associations in my constituency. I am sure that there are many other right hon. and hon. Members who could say the same of their constituencies.

The federation also points out:

"In the absence of the Secretary of State setting rent limits for housing association tenancies, financial pressures may compel associations into a higher rent regime. This will move some associations up-market to helping the middle income groups for whom such rents do not present a problem. And paradoxically it will drive other associations down-market, concentrating exclusively on those whose rents are paid in full by the state. But for many people in between—for example, pensioners with occupational pensions or modest capital resources, families in low-paid occupations"—

there are at present many such families—

"this would create immense problems."

[Mr. Barron]

The people in the middle would suffer immense problems, but they would have no protection. The federation states:

"Housing associations wish to concentrate on helping those people for whom market forces are not producing the answer. They want to help a mix of households; they do not see their role either as providing welfare housing entirely for the destitute, or becoming like commercial landlords charging market rents."

The federation starkly concludes:

"The Bill enables Parliament to spell out the true position of housing associations as social landlords, not open-market, profit-making bodies. The twin concepts of tenants' rights enshrined in a housing association tenancy, and a ceiling on rent levels for this sector, would achieve the objectives shared by all concerned."

When the Minister replies to the debate I hope that he will have some words of encouragement for housing associations, which have worked alongside the homeless for many years. They do good work, not only in inner-city areas, but in rural areas. I hope the Minister will say that housing associations will not be forced into the position of having to leave some sections of the community behind because they are too poor. Presumably the Government would say that care for that sector falls upon the shoulders of local authorities and that they, not housing associations, are responsible for the homeless.

I hope that housing associations will not be forced to go after people with higher incomes on the basis that they represent a reasonable investment because the income received will enable then to carry on and manage particular projects. In those circumstances, it is important that some words of reassurance are given. The Minister has managed to convince his right hon. Friend about many issues relating to tenants but when we discuss later clauses we shall see how far the right hon. Gentleman has been convinced.

I hope the Minister will say that housing associations will be given some protection over affordable rents for different projects in different parts of the country. I hope he will say that housing associations will be protected, just as they protect those who are in need. The Government boast about a tenants' charter, and I hope that the Minister and his right hon. Friend will make it clear that housing association tenants will be afforded the protection that the Government say will be given to others elsewhere.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): In common with my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), I have great sympathy for amendments Nos. 377 and 378. I also share my hon. Friend's reservations about new clause 38 but it has my support. I hope that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and the Minister take note of that.

It is useful to quote the view of the National Federation of Housing Associations on the Bill and what it believes to be the role of housing associations:

"The Housing Bill will determine the future direction of housing associations. The Bill abolishes for future tenants the current rent controls currently imposed through the rent officer service. And it removes the charter of tenants' rights currently enjoyed by housing association tenants. If the Bill is enacted without amendment, housing associations will become indistinguishable in law from profit-making private landlords."

My concern here is new clause 38(1)(b):

"a person who has acquired property under Part IV of this Act".

I am concerned that much of the present local government housing stock, which is confined now to housing associations and other socially acceptable bodies, will find its way to private landlords. The area that I represent has, unfortunately, suffered severely from that in recent times.

8.30 pm

I was privileged to be chairman of the Wakefield metropolitan district council housing committee until 1978. At that time it enjoyed a waiting list time of only a fortnight; rents, including rates, were running at about £16; the council was doing an excellent job. Entirely as a result of Government housing policy since then, many areas in my constituency have been experiencing great difficulty—although it is probably not as bad as in some other places—in housing people. People are having trouble finding the present rents, even though many of them receive rent support.

If many of these local authority tenancies find their way into the private sector, we in my area fear that something similar to the free-for-all that took place with the sale of Coal Board tenancies will occur. I do not want to discuss that experience now, but it is a fact that, if council tenancies find their way into the private sector, private landlords will let out tenancies on short-term contracts at high rents, rates and key money. Such contracts will last for 12 months and landlords will reserve the right to throw the tenants out at the end of 12 months or to increase their rent substantially.

Unfortunately, many people purchased their properties in accordance with Government policy but, during the miners' strike, were unable to maintain their mortgages, were forced to give up their homes and were thrown on the market at the mercy of private landlords. That is the great danger of council properties finding their way into the private sector.

Why do the Government believe it is necessary? If they had continued to give the same support that has always been given to local authorities to maintain their housing stock, there would have been no need for this. Only political dogma can explain it.

I fully accept that many people would like to own their own homes and that many took the chance under this Government's policy, but they have now lost because they cannot maintain their mortgages——

Mr. Redmond: It is true that many people have had their homes repossessed and many families have been kicked out on the street. To whom did those people turn for accommodation? Did they turn to the local authorities who are getting hammered, or to the housing associations?

Mr. Lofthouse: They turned to local authorities, but because local authorities such as that in my area could not maintain their building programme and have built few homes for letting since 1979, they could not fill them up with tenants. They have no houses to offer, but are required by law to house the homeless. They then attempt to send the homeless to housing associations and do the best they possibly can for such people. That is ludicrous. If the Bill is enacted and there is a free-for-all, desperate people will be forced to accept short-term contracts of the type I have described. Young married couples with children who have nowhere to lay their heads will put their signatures to documents to obtain somewhere to live, knowing full well that the high rents—the key money and all that goes with it—are beyond their means.

What does this mean in the end? The Rachmans of this world will charge higher rents; their tenants will qualify for added rebate; that is an added charge on Government funds. Short-term contracts would involve higher rents, and because these people's incomes are insufficient to pay those rents, they will qualify for rebates for which the Government will have to foot the bill. That is crazy.

What are affordable rents?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): May I give my hon. Friend an example of an affordable rent? I have in mind a Minister's residence—a Prime Minister's residence. Apparently, the Prime Minister has an affordable rent. She pays nothing for 10 Downing street or for Chequers. I should like to know why that is not allowed for the millions of people who will be affected by the Bill. Why cannot they be allowed not to pay rent and rates? It seems that the fact that the Prime Minister does not pay has something to do with her taking a cut in her salary—yet other Ministers do pay. It sounds a bit of a twist. So if we are talking about affordable rents, let us think of those, such as the Prime Minister, who get their residences for nothing—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. This is an intervention. The hon. Gentleman, who is very experienced in these matters, knows that interventions must be short and to the point. The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) has the point.

Mr. Lofthouse: I have the point, and I have a great deal of sympathy with it——

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): May I follow that intervention by pointing out that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has a subsidised flat, which he gets from the National Union of ——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not relevant to the clause that we are discussing.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As was explained by Mr. Speaker in a debate a few weeks ago when this matter was raised, I do not live and have never lived in a subsidised flat in London. That was made abundantly clear when Mr. Speaker referred to the fact that I had informed him of the position. I challenge the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) or anyone else: say that outside, and I shall ensure that the National Union of Seamen or some other union will get some money out of people who are prepared to make these statements——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman made his position clear many weeks ago. I should have thought that all hon. Members were perfectly aware of it.

Mr. Lofthouse: I shall treat the remark from the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) with the scorn that it deserves.

As I said, if new clause 38(1)(b) is passed, many council tenants may find themselves at the mercy of private landlords.

We cannot overlook the type of private landlord that may be attracted to these properties. It is the type of landlord who used to send letters to Coal Board tenants with a £1 coin in the envelope. Landlords of that type asked if they could inspect the interior of a property. They then made a bid for the property and sold it the next day, making a profit of £3,000 within 24 hours. People like that could be interested in purchasing local authorities properties. The Bill gives no protection against that sort of thing. I hope that the Minister will seriously consider the amendments and new clause 38 and will bear in mind the dangers to council tenants that can arise.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): This is a useful debate, covering some of the basic issues of this part of the Bill. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) may have been a little surprised to find himself leading such a formidable group of Yorkshire Members. That was perhaps not a normal position for the hon. Gentleman. We covered many aspects of the problem, including Coal Board houses, and discussed some other problems that are present in the north as well as in the south. Nobody denies that.

New clause 38, which is at the heart of this group, is wide-ranging. It would apply to every type of landlord who provides or is likely to provide what we have come to call social rented housing. The amendments supplement the clause by requiring the Housing Corporation to pay grant to housing associations at particular levels in order to make the specified rent level effective.

The debate is wide-ranging, and I should like to say something about our future intentions towards housing associations. Many hon. Members have paid tribute to them and I know that that will be welcomed by the housing association movement. There has been rather more unanimity in the debate about the role of housing associations than there sometimes was in Committee. In Committee, one of the Opposition spokesmen did not share the views that have been expressed in this debate.

I am perfectly willing to join in tributes to the housing associations. The whole purpose of this part of the Bill is to try to enable housing associations to meet the needs of their traditional client groups, while being freed to some extent from the inevitable Government constraints of being fully within the public sector when it comes to the national accounts. Its purpose is to get more housing association property that meets the needs of the people. It is to ensure that those involved in the housing association movement from its very beginning—before the time that the House started to take an interest in cheap housing—can continue to meet those needs. Such housing is a major objective and was a major objective of one of my predecessors, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). That objective was to free housing associations and allow them more flexibility in this area. I am glad that that has now become a Government objective.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey spoke about one of the grounds on which we argued against the new clause in Committee. That is the danger —a real danger, although I shall not put too much weight on it—that if we go back to a system of centralised rent control, the market will be bound to look at the area as being firmly back in the public sector.

We would then have a market in which there were considerable Government grants amounting to hundreds of millions a year. Government would fix the rents by some formula such as that in the amendments. I shall not say that we would have lost the chance, because there might still be some schemes that would be financed on that basis, but we would have diminished the chance of attracting the

[Mr. William Waldegrave]

major flows of capital for the provision of social rented housing. That is because the feeling of the markets would be that this had not moved far enough from being the regulated market of the kind that they dislike.

8.45 pm

There is at least one other powerful reason for the change, and to it we attach at least as much, and perhaps more, importance. It is the very necessary changes introduced in, I think, 1974 by the bipartisan Act that established the modern housing association movement. One of the necessary parts of that Act was introduced because abuses had arisen in the old housing association movement. All parties and leading members of the housing association movement realised that the time had come to regulate the whole thing properly and to put it on a modern footing. The noble Lord Goodman and others played an important part in that. That was obviously right and we now have a proper regulatory framework.

The Housing Corporation's powers are widely accepted, and it has very able people. Perhaps inadvertently, we introduced in the process one fundamental change that has not been wholly to the benefit of the housing association movement. It was that we effectively made the housing association movement more or less completely part of the public provision. Virtually all the movement's money, except for the funds of housing associations that had some charitable funds, such as Guinness or Peabody, came from the state.

Although the strength of their different traditions has continued to provide to some extent a pluralistic supply in the social rented sector, they have steadily become, like any organisation that is wholly dependent on state funding, more and more like state bureaucracies. There is nothing wrong with state bureaucracies and they are perfectly necessary. However, the whole purpose of the movement to establish and expand the housing association sector has always been to try to provide an alternative sector for social provision with a variety of different styles and traditions.

Part of the purpose of the Bill is quite explicitly to try to push the housing associations a little further from Government. The key to that must be to say to them that when it comes to setting rents, to balancing the costs and to seeking the necessary efficiency, Government are asking them to take more responsibility and to stand further from Government.

Mr. Soley: I am puzzled as to whether the Minister is trying to push the housing associations further away or trying to drown them. Many of them are managing perfectly well on their own funds. Those funds have existed for a long time, and the associations can borrow on the capital. Is the Minister saying that they are not capable of continuing as they are? Why does he not help them to continue as they are, rather than putting added financial burdens on them, which is what he is doing?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman should not be puzzled. One of the most welcome developments in recent times is that some of the associations with major reserves —I have mentioned two of them—have started to use the basis of those reserves to go out into the market. I welcome that. We say that we should be seeking to help and encourage other associations to behave in exactly the way that the hon. Gentleman applauds. I applaud that too.

The key to this is that the associations will continue to benefit from a high level of public subsidy. We are in the second year of the experimental mixed-funding scheme, which is 75 per cent. in London, 50 per cent. elsewhere and averages about 60 per cent. nationally. We are watching this very closely to see how rent levels turn out. It is better for associations to look to the needs that they know best and for their people with all their skills to find out how they can best meet those needs.

Of course, there is still 100 per cent. funding for the major part of the programme, and there is no need to fear that we shall not watch very closely what happens as the funding arrangements develop. The earnest of that is not to be found in anything that I have said, but in what we have done in moving from 30 per cent. to above 60 per cent. nationally.

The Government remain firmly committed to helping the housing associations to meet their objective. That is why we are providing the Housing Corporation with increased funds for them—to enable them to become more flexible and to restore to them a little of the independence that they have inevitably lost since Government agencies have been setting their rents. I assure hon. Members who made powerful speeches about the need in their areas—some of which I know because I have had the privilege of visiting them—that housing associations can still play, and increasingly play, an important part.

We are resisting the amendments on that basis, and not on the basis of wishing to drown or hinder the housing associations. I know that many people in the housing association movement—many I have met—are nervous about it, but there are also those who regard it as a challenge which they can meet and which will provide greater opportunities if we get the correct proportion of spending. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey fairly implied that that is so.

The best earnest of that is the figure that I quoted in a debate yesterday of the relatively small part of the approved development programme of the Housing Corporation that has entered into the Challenge funding scheme, which is about £58 million this year. Seven hundred million pounds-worth of applications have been received for that, which is encouraging. I do not believe that the housing associations, which are responsible for those applications, have deserted their roots. They believe that they can do what needs to be done for various schemes on the basis that we propose should be used more widely.

It is on that basis that we oppose the amendments and the new clause. It is not on the basis, as some hon. Members have alleged, that we doubt the purposes or wish to undermine the projects of the housing association movement.

Mr. Soley: The Minister gave the game away in his closing remarks, because he acknowledged that some of the housing associations are unhappy about what is happening. What the Government have done uniquely—what the Minister has done uniquely—is to divide the housing association movement. They have also burst wide open any consensus on housing associations that used to exist in the House.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman used that argument the other day. I can understand that, at a time of fairly radical change, there must be anxieties. However, he will remember that before the Act which we now all support—the measure that we drafted in 1973 and the Labour Government passed in 1974—many doubts and anxieties were expressed. It came later to be generally supported.

Mr. Soley: The radical difference is that the Minister knows—he has been told over and over again by people from the housing association movement—that he is pushing the housing associations up market. That invariably will be the result of this action. If he does that, all the words that I used in the House the other day when we were debating the Housing Bill apply. I must say that those housing associations that stay true to their original principles and continue to service the groups that they were set up to serve will receive our support. However, those who move up market and bring in outside private investment to the extent that they are providing an up market service will risk burning the fingers of their investors. That is the essential difference, because that did not have to be said before. Now that message has to go out loud and clear to housing associations and to investors.

Similarly, it has to be said, as I said the other day, that a Labour Government will reintroduce rents set independently of the landlord. I reiterate that it is not just the Labour Government who will do that. I predict with confidence that Conservative Governments will have to do the same, because the entire basis of the philosophy is economic nonsense. There is not and cannot be a free market in housing. At the least, it is a grossly inelastic supply system.

If the Government make a two thirds cut in housing completions in the public sector, cut the number of housing association completions and have only a minor improvement in the private sector rebuild for rent, scarcity must become worse. That must mean inevitably—even to someone who is on chapter 1 of a basic economics book—that rents will go up, that house price inflation and homelessness will continue to rise and, as all those things take place, that political pressure will grow to persuade the Government to do something about it.

If we cannot increase the supply of housing rapidly, Governments will have to step in sooner or later and say, "We will have to control rents." That is the central part of the argument. That is why the Conservative Government's attempt in 1957 to take off the Rent Act failed. They decreased the amount of private rented property available, just as the cut in the Rent Acts in 1980 decreased it. However, now, unlike then, we had housing associations to help us out. The Government have restricted the amount of building, and perhaps, above all, the amount of economic planning ahead that housing associations have been able to do. The constant twists and turns of Government housing finance policy have resulted in local authorities and housing associations not being able to plan ahead. If one cannot plan ahead on one's housing renovation, repair and rebuild programme, one must expect to create the managerial problems that this Government have created for local authorities and housing associations alike.

The amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) are on the same lines as amendments originally tabled by us but not selected. However, they are important amendments and we have no hesitation in supporting them. There is no longer a consensus on housing association rents. That is what the Government have destroyed. Rents will not be limited to an affordable level for existing client groups, and that is the problem. The Minister constantly uses the word "affordable", but he never says what it means. We do not know what an affordable rent is supposed to be for anyone. All we know is that the Government talk at one level of affordable rents and at another level of market rents. We have some idea of what market rents will be, and I will return to that in a moment.

In Committee, the Minister said that he could agree wholeheartedly with me that no one wants the housing association movement to move away from doing the job for which it has been funded under both Labour and Conservative Governments. In the same speech in Committee, the Minister went on to say that the House would want to know whether subsidies would produce housing at low market rents. In other words, the Minister recognises that there is a need for housing associations to provide for the lower end of the market, but he cannot say how he will control the rent levels. At the same time he is describing and, indeed, by his actions, making housing associations go up market. They will increasingly be pushed into that corner by the Government's actions. The Minister says that he does not want to do that, so will he explain what he means by "affordable"?

9 pm

Let us pick on what I accept to be one of the most difficult areas in the country—London and the south-east. I looked at some of the newspapers and magazines in west London advertising property in the private market. I could find but one property, a bed-sitting room, available for £38 a week; the average rent was more than £200 a week. If we tried really hard, we might find the odd advertisement with rents in the upper £30, £40 or £50, but the majority would be £70 or £80 for those advertised in the local newspapers and more than £200 for those in estate agents' magazines. With rents for a one or two-bedroomed flat in west London of more than £200 a week, one does not need to be an intellectual Tarzan at economics to work out that if the Government continue to push housing associations into the private sector, their rents will begin to approach those prevailing in that sector. The more that that happens, the greater will become the problem of homelessness because people on low incomes simply cannot pay those rents.

Indeed, the Government's problems in the south-east will grow generally because, once again, people will have to move at least 100 miles out of London to find a housing belt that they can afford. However, at the same time high-cost housing is being built in that belt, which is why the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and others complain about development in the south-east. With the average price of a house in the south-east at about £150,000, it means rents of about £300 to £400 a week. Where will the second generation find properties to rent, or are they expected to buy as soon as they leave home? Where will essential workers live? I am referring to teachers, nurses and the people who clean our streets and drive our trains and buses. The more that housing associations are pushed up market, the greater will be the problems for those people.

[Mr. Soley]

We want to know whether the rent officer will use clause 109 to rule that a rent is unreasonably expensive. In a speech in August 1987, reflecting on housing policy, the Minister said:

"For example, people assume that it is right to pay far more housing benefit, or to spend far more on building a council house or a housing association house in a high cost area than in a low cost area. That is, we are saying we will pay to keep poorer people in more expensive areas, even if it means that that recipient of help gets ten times more money or ten times more help in kind than someone in another part of the country."

The Minister then basically said that that was wrong. The implication is that we must make someone decide whether a rent is a proper rent for someone to pay and to receive subsidy towards in certain areas.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman would bore the House if he read out my old speeches. However, if he had properly read that one he would know that I said that such matters should be explicit and costed because they were part of housing policy. To understand the differences in costs is an essential ingredient in understanding the policy.

Mr. Soley: The Minister makes a fair point in saying that he is considering the wider issue. However, it would be hard to interpret, in any way other than I did, his comment:

"I note that we do not think like that in terms of other welfare payments."

Presumably, he is saying that that is the wrong way to do it. Indeed, the whole speech implies that that is undesirable. If that is so, what is the purpose of clause 109?

Mr. Waldegrave: We shall debate clause 109 later, but in case anyone reading the report of this debate misinterprets it, I ask that my speech be read in whole because it was not designed for selective quotations.

Mr. Soley: I shall quote more of what the Minister said:

"Usually, 'fairness' means national equality, roughly; in housing it is automatically taken to mean the opposite either because we assume that people have something near a right to live where they want (but only if they are receiving state money), or, perhaps because we are thinking that it would be undesirable for only better off people to live in high cost areas —and we are willing to pay for a social mix."

Would it not be interesting if, all of a sudden, the Minister said, "I am struck by the fairness principle; I had better apply it to mortgage income tax relief. We cannot have all those people buying expensive houses in expensive areas and expecting to be subsidised for it. That is unfair." If the Minister really believes that that is unfair, why do not he and the Government take me up on the offer that I have made several times? We are willing to work on a Bill that will reform housing finance in a way that makes it fairer, both between the rented sector and the purchase sector and within the two sectors.

At present, there is a gross distortion and massive unfairness against those people who rent. Increasingly in this country people do not have a right to rent. That is the problem. The Government talk constantly of a right to buy, but they will not talk of a right to rent and, as a consequence, homelessness has doubled. The only right of those homeless people is to a cardboard box under a bridge, yet we call ourselves a civilised society. If I were a Housing Minister in this Government, I would start asking myself what sort of a society we are creating in this country where it is apparently perfectly acceptable to give £5 billion in mortgage income tax relief subsidy and about £500 million to subsidise the public housing sector, while at the same time watching homelessness double. What sort of society does that? What sort of Government are prepared to live with the gross unfairness that they have imposed and are continuing to impose with this Bill?

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey mentioned Camden. I point out that in Camden a rent officer has set a fair rent of £105 per week in respect of a housing association flat, yet the housing benefit stop for Camden is £88 per week. When the Bill is enacted, the people concerned, because they are members of a housing association, will no longer be able to obtain full housing benefit. What will happen to them? Again, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey made an important point. A person may at present be in a flat in Camden and pay a rent which is met by housing benefit subsidy, but, when the Bill is enacted, he or she will not receive that same degree of subsidy. That person will suffer a dramatic cut in state subsidy. The Minister may say, "Well, that is all right; I am only making it fairer," but he is in fact imposing the burden on people who rent while turning a blind eye to the increase in subsidy that he is prepared to give to those people who buy.

That is what is so wrong. I have no objection to people being subsidised for buying, but I have every objection if people are not given a relatively equal and fair subsidy for renting. That is what is so fundamentally wrong with this country. We do not subsidise rents as other European and north American countries do and we do not subsidise purchase in the same way as they do. We subsidise purchase far more generously. That is why people move constantly from the rented sector to the purchase sector and that is why there is a continuing decline in the availability of low-cost rented housing in Britain. Everything that the Government are doing in the Bill and in resisting the amendments is designed to make that worse.

What is the Government's policy on high-cost areas? The Minister does not appear to like me quoting from his speech; he appears to think that it is unfair.

Mr. Waldegrave *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Soley: The Minister now appears to like me quoting from his speech, but I presume that he is prepared to stand up and tell us what policy the Government have for high-cost rent areas. As is inevitably happening in Camden, will they remove benefits so that people have to give up their flats and move out? Will they insist that some people do not receive the benefit that they received before because they live in unreasonably expensive areas? What will they do?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not want to prolong a full debate, but the hon. Gentleman deserves an answer. As he knows, the Bill deals with that problem because the housing benefit stop is a temporary system which will be replaced by the commitment that we have made and by clause 106, now clause 109, which states that a market rent—not something that is a distortion of the market rent, but a market rent—will be paid by housing benefit.

Mr. Soley: That is where we come to the "Catch 22" and that is why we distrust the Government so much. We keep hearing them say, "We are going to increase housing

benefit," but they have cut it eight times since 1979 and the evidence in the leaked documents from Downing street is that they will cut it again. The problem for the Government is that sooner or later—to be fair to the Minister of State, I think that he understands this although I am not sure that the Secretary of State does—they will not only have to increase housing benefit, they will have to do something radical about the way in which it is structured because, even if one doubled, trebled or quadrupled housing benefit overnight, that would still not help many people because of the way in which the tapers work.

Unless the Government can come up with a more sensible form of housing finance reform, they will be trapped. They can say to the country, "Do not worry; we will increase housing benefit," and those people who are in the know will say, "Hang on a minute; they have cut it eight times already," and those who are not in the know will say, "They will have to do that by a large amount to make it manageable." In early April, many people, who suddenly had their benefits cut, realised that that was happening to the extent of £10 or £20 per week—not by small amounts. When the Government and the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled did an about-turn on that after pressure had been put on them, they realised that they had hurt far more people far more deeply than they had thought.

If the process goes through, we need to know whether people on low incomes will be able to stay in some areas. The Minister knows that the Campaign for Homes in Central London, supported by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, myself and the Minister's hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), has put to him in letters and on a visit that I was unable to attend, that the problem in London is so acute that unless the Government do something dramatic to increase the supply of low-cost rented accommodation, that shortage will continue to have a dramatic effect on London's economy because it is no longer possible to find the low-cost accommodation that is necessary if one is in a low-income job. It is fine if one already has accommodation, but, if one is second generation and is about to leave home, one does not get anything. Similarly, if one is trying to move to London to find work, one does not get anything.

I visited Reading some months ago to look at some of the properties that were being offered to people who were coming from the north to work around that area. The accommodation offered was appalling, and at a high rent. If we ask where such people will live we discover more of the hidden nightmares of the Government's housing policy. Some large building companies, for example, are encouraging their employees to sleep on site because that provides the company with night watchmen as well as enabling those people who have travelled down for the working week to have somewhere warm and dry to sleep at night—usually in one of the portakabins. When we see that that is happening in one of the world's richest countries, we ask, "What on earth are we doing?", but the Government drive on with all the blind stupidity that they can muster to plough through a system that is almost consciously designed to make the situation worse.

We want to know how the Government are going to change housing benefit. If the Minister says, "We have given a pledge to increase housing benefit," as I said earlier, that begs the second part of the question: what are the Government going to do about the tapers? Will the tapers be reformed and revised so that they are made more effective and people do not get the sharp cut-off that they do at the moment? Is that what the Government are talking about? If so, when are we going to hear about it? Will it be in the form of yet more legislation on the hoof with provisions being presented to us suddenly as though they have just been dreamt up in one of the Minister's back rooms late at night with the thought, "We will shove this in the Housing Bill when it is going through Parliament so that we can dodge the Committee system. We do not need to bother with all that because we have a big enough majority to get it through."? Is that really what the Government will do?

I turn now to the effects of the provisions on some housing association tenants. I take as an example a family—a couple with two children under the age of 11, living in a newly built flat in Cambridgeshire, with a net household income, including child benefit, of £151·59p a week. If housing association grant is limited to 65 per cent. of scheme cost, the weekly rent required will be £46·61—about one third of that figure. Is that supposed to be an affordable rent? Is the Minister saying that what he means by an affordable rent is one third of a family's income? Or are we talking about 20 per cent. perhaps? Is that affordable?

9.15 pm

A single nurse aged 31 living in a one-bedroom modernised flat in Islington has a net income after tax of £117·31. If the housing association grant is limited to 75 per cent. of scheme cost, the weekly rent required will be £48·15—about 40 per cent. The Minister will probably remember—he was not present, needless to say, but he probably picked some of it up from the media—that I gave a press conference a month or so ago when the Government were giving their increase to the nurses. I demonstrated that with market rents a nurse in west London would be worse off financially by a significant sum—I cannot remember the exact figure now, but it was over £10 a week—simply on the basis of market rent, even taking into account the recent rise. So market rents, and presumably affordable rents, on the housing association basis, will leave nurses worse off in many cases than they were before. So much for that theory.

Pensioners are devastated by what has happened recently. The housing benefit cuts were cruel and vengeful. I remember at my advice night a 75-year-old couple—he was war-disabled—telling me that they had lost £7.51, I think it was. They were heating their house by paraffin. He was one of the people who talked to me about a land fit for heroes. When one hears things like that, one wonders what sort of a society the Government are creating.

A pensioner couple aged 68 and 66 living in a one-bedroom flat in a new sheltered housing scheme in Cardiff have a net household income, including the state pension, the husband's occupational pension and the wife's part-time earnings, of £130·48. If the housing association grant is limited to 40 per cent. of scheme cost, the weekly rent required will be £47·39.

We have three examples taken from the southern area of Britain—Wales, Cambridgeshire and London—that demonstrate that if the Government plough on in their mindless way it will mean that people will be expected to

[Mr. Soley]

spend between one third and one half of their income on rent. That will be the normal pattern of affordability for many areas of Britain.

If we suddenly turned the situation round and treated those who were purchasing their homes in the same way—expecting them to bear that burden throughout the period during which they were paying the mortgage—there would be uproar in this country. Sadly, it is because people in rented accommodation, particularly private tenants, have a less effective voice in British politics than those who purchase that the Government have been able to get away with ignoring them.

This goes back to what the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said when he opened this debate, about the lack of interest in some areas. I would be the first to concede that, as the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) said, *The Independent*, *The Guardian* and one or two other newspapers have done good work on housing issues, but the vast majority of the British press have not shown any interest at all in the Housing Bill, and they are thus ignoring a very large section of the community who are being devastated by this Government.

One of the most important concepts that the Government have argued—the Minister put it first in his opening remarks—is that of attracting private money into housing associations. I have made it clear on a number of occasions that I am not fussed about housing associations taking private money. That is fine. However, if they are pushed so far up market that they are unable to provide for the groups which they were set up to provide for, the Minister, as I have said on a number of occasions, will have busted wide open any consensus on housing in this country, because he will have put in the front line some of the most vulnerable in society. He has ignored the fact that the desperate need at the moment is for good, low-cost, rented and purchased accommodation. It is not available for the vast majority.

The Government say that they will encourage private investment. If private investment results in housing associations going so far up market that they cease to provide for the low-income groups for which they were set up to provide, they cannot expect to be bailed out by a future Labour Government. They cannot expect to be bailed out when rents set independently of the landlord are reintroduced by a Conservative Government or by a Labour Government, as will inevitably happen, for the reasons which I have outlined. They will get their fingers burnt.

If genuine money is invested in low-cost, rented accommodation, that will be good and I will support it. If building societies are interested, that is fine, too. What gives the game away is the Government's move in the Budget to invent the business expansion scheme. What do we find? We find Rachmanism paid for by the taxpayer. Even Conservative Back Benchers are worried that that is wide open for abuse. I raise that point because it is relevant to the crisis that the Government have created by cutting back so dramatically on the provision of public housing, including housing provided by housing associations, and by failing to increase supply in the private rented sector. Indeed, they have actually cut back the private rented sector by 500,000 homes since 1980. By doing all this the Government have produced a crisis which they can only address by short-term crisis measures, of which the business expansion scheme is one.

I predict that we will have other measures. I fear that the Government are still trying to avoid their responsibility to face the fact that, as long as they subsidise the purchase sector and fail to subsidise the rented sector, they will continue to drive people into purchase, even when they want to rent, and they will continue to dry up the rented sector, public or private. As a result, the housing crisis will continue to get out of control. At first the position will only be noticeable when we walk along the streets at night and see the homeless begging or sleeping rough, or when we see people queueing up for council housing.

The Government try to kid everybody that council housing is unpopular, but people want to get out of the private sector into housing association and council accommodation. That is what is happening, despite the Government's constant attacks on local authorities and on housing associations which have made it continuously difficult for them to provide the quality of management which should be expected in any rented section, public or private.

The position will continue to get worse. People who were not previously affected are now suffering the long-term consequences of house price inflation. There is a link running through the housing problems. As I indicated earlier, as housing finance is more and more distorted, it is not just homelessness that goes up and the supply of low-cost rented accommodation that goes down, but house price inflation goes up, too. Several of my hon. Friends have raised that point. The three things are so interwoven that they demonstrate almost beyond any need for me to spell it out that the Government have no housing policy. Their policy is a shambles, a mess and a racket.

To his credit, in Committee, the Minister tried to pick up some of the bits for his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Then he trotted out other bits and pieces which were an offensive act against the House. He did that in a way that showed the desperation which he feels about the needs of housing. Sadly, the problem will not go away. Whichever Government are in power in a couple of years' time, they will have to pick up the bits of this wretched mess, and, by God, it is a mess. We will support the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I make no apology for bombarding the Minister with arguments that he has already heard from hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). The Minister is part of a Government whose actions have led to one of the worst housing crises since the war, and he should be made to listen to the problems that his Government have created. I see the Secretary of State for the Environment hiding away in the corner of the Government Front Bench, but I am glad that he has come to listen.

The Minister has stated on many occasions that it is not his intention to force housing associations up market. He says that rents will be affordable, and many hon. Members have asked him what he considers to be "affordable", but we still do not know. I shall listen with interest for any indication of what "affordable" really means.

The Minister has also said that housing associations will be able to accommodate the kind of people for whom they now provide accommodation, but there are already problems. I refer to a problem affecting the Anchor housing association in my own area. It is a well-known and well-respected housing association, with a good reputation. It has near my constituency office in Halifax a lovely sheltered development, which is a housing with care scheme.

Housing associations are very good at caring for special groups of people—not least the elderly. The development to which I have referred cares for the very frail elderly, for whom it provides an ideal way of living. Care is there, but the independence of the individual remains, which is something that we all want to see. It offers 48 units, but it is not an institutionalised development and is the very best example of housing association accommodation.

That development is in trouble. Some weeks ago its management invited me to look around and meet the tenants there. They are very comfortable, happy and well cared for. They have a community room and everything that we would wish for those who are in their twilight years and finding it difficult to sustain an independent life alone. The scheme is running at a deficit. Its total annual expenditure is £355,189, but its income from tenants totals £324,630, leaving an annual deficit of more than £30,000. The deficit is currently running at £150 per week. That is happening because housing benefit no longer covers its costs.

That is just one example of the problems facing us. What on earth will happen to similar schemes in the future? The Minister cannot just sit there with his eyes closed, and with the Secretary of State nodding off in the corner of the Front Bench.

Mr. Barron: It is difficult to tell whether he is awake, even when he is standing.

Mrs. Mahon: I agree with my hon. Friend.

I recognise that the problems in Halifax are probably nothing compared with those faced by my hon. Friends with constituencies in parts of London where there is a huge problem of homelessness, which destroys the assurances which have been given. We see the truth and the reality through the eyes of our hon. Friends representing constituencies there.

The Minister has given no assurances about the housing benefit stop. At present the housing benefit stop does not apply to housing association rent, so housing associations can let property to a tenant on full housing benefit, without which no one in low-paid work could afford it. What will happen to that property and others like it when the Bill is enacted? Will the rent officer, in his new role under clause 109, deem it acceptable for housing benefit or unreasonably expensive? Will the existing tenant be forced to move and the flat let to someone who can afford a rent of over £100 a week? What will happen to those who have formed themselves into a community? Will they be moved to places according to their different levels of income? They have no security, and great anxiety must be building up in those communities.

9.30 pm

Do the Government accept that people on low incomes have a right to live in certain areas? Will there be ghetto areas in which people with a certain level of income can live? Will people be moved out just to tidy a place up? The Government have not told us whether we shall have that kind of dehumanising policy.

I hope that the Minister and the Secretary of State, who is now sitting in an upright position, will think again. They are inflicting this terrible Bill on vulnerable groups of people. It is not too late. I am sure that the Minister has had many wrangles with the Secretary of State who, having led a sheltered and privileged life himself, is renowned for his stubbornness and inability to understand how ordinary people live. I hope that the Minister will think about what he is doing and what the Bill will inflict upon people. It is not too late to retract.

Mr. Redmond: I shall not be too long, but I have sat through all the debate and I want to comment on one or two aspects of amendments Nos. 377 and 378 and new clause 38. I support the amendments and the new clause but I have certain reservations, some of which have already been expressed. The amendments and the new clause are obviously far superior to what is already in the Bill.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred to the famous Warrington speech. I have not read that, but if it is anything like the Bill, I do not wish to. The hon. Gentleman looked for a little compassion on the Conservative Benches, but I do not think that he found any. He referred to the Bill being gobbledegook, like most Government publications. When I was a member of the old Doncaster metropolitan council, we spent a considerable time devising a rent rebate form that would be easy for tenants to understand so as to ensure that they claimed the maximum rent rebate.

The Bill is designed to take away many rights that the private tenant and the council tenant have previously enjoyed. Since 1979, the Government's main thrust has been against the council tenant, and they are now coming the old soft shoe shuffle, trying to get the housing associations to take up the slack that they have created. However, the two cannot be divorced in the two amendments and the new clause and the Government attack on housing. Council rents have a direct link with housing association rents. One can give many examples of where housing associations have linked their rents to council rents. They have always been on the high side in councils, but that is to be expected.

What never ceases to amuse me is that Ministers, from the Prime Minister down, have launched a massive attack on private and council tenants. I do not think that one of them has ever been a tenant. They lack experience of what tenants are looking for. I wonder whether the Minister would be in a position to give funds to a housing association that wanted to build accommodation in a sweet village not too far away where the farmer is having some difficulty over a planning application for housing.

I believe that it was in the mid-1960s that the question of fair rents arose——

Mr. Skinner: The fair rent idea began in about the late 1960s. It became the germ of an idea under that Tory wet, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)—who was very Right-wing at the time—accompanied by the present Prime Minister. They introduced the Housing Finance Act 1972 in a blaze of glory. Many authorities refused to implement it, including Clay Cross, right to the bitter end.

[Mr. Skinner]

It is interesting to note that although 11 members of Clay Cross council were bankrupted and surcharged, the Housing Finance Act suffered a severe rebuff in the 1974 general election and the legislation was not reintroduced thereafter. The fair rent principle, however, was continued in the sense that assessment officers were included in legislation for both private and public rents.

If my hon. Friend is going back to the 1960s, he can talk only in terms of the private sector, which was dealt with by rent assessment committees. But we may discuss that later.

Mr. Redmond: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. But I would argue that it was in 1967 and 1968 that people such as Percy Riley—who is now dead—and Owen Briscoe led the tenants' associations' fight against the higher rents that the Coal Board was trying to impose. To some extent British Coal as landlord can be likened to housing associations. I am certainly not critical of the excellent standards that housing associations provide, but it would be possible to be very critical of British Coal—or the National Coal Board, as it then was—for the conditions that it provided for tenants.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) remembers Clay Cross. In my area in Doncaster there is a place called Conisbrough, which fought like hell.

Mr. Skinner: Conisbrough—that was the place.

Mr. Redmond: The housing chairman of the time ended up as chief whip on Doncaster council. The qualities that he showed on Conisbrough district council made him vice-chairman and then chairman of housing in Doncaster. Unfortunately, the old lad is dead now, but the Minister ought to go and meet him at the appropriate time. Of course, that would not be possible, because Alf went upstairs, and the Minister will obviously go downstairs!

I want to refer to Doncaster council because there is a direct link between the housing associations and public council tenants. One of the problems that housing associations have to face involves the greater demand placed on them as a direct result of Government policies to stop local authorities building houses. In 1974, Doncaster council decided to produce 1,500 new starts each year. My hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) is nodding and he was actively involved in that at the time. Those new starts were made to meet the needs of people in Doncaster.

Obviously the Government thought that such provision was off-putting when they came to power. They thought it was off-putting to meet the needs of young married couples and give them smart new houses with all the modern conveniences that money could buy. Therefore, the Government set about reducing housing grants. Systematically they robbed council tenants and, because of the link between them, they robbed the housing associations.

The tragedy is that, if the Government were really concerned about providing good housing stock for people to rent at a price that they could afford, they would be looking to local authorities to meet that need. In this thrust against council house tenants, I wonder whether the Government have considered some of the Conservative-controlled authorities which have taken some of the rents from council tenants to prop up the rates. That is diabolical.

Local authorities cannot use the money that has been accumulated in the kitty from the sale of council houses to make good repairs about which the Government do not care. I want to repeat a question which has been posed many times tonight: "What is a fair rent?" I do not know. Perhaps the Minister—or the Secretary of State when he wakes up—will give us the definition of a fair rent.

Mr. Skinner: We asked ourselves that question on the Clay Cross urban district council in the 1950s, 1960s and early 70s. We decided that the rent should be 30 bob in the old money because we were never keen on decimalisation, the Common Market and all that. We kept the rents down. The rents only went up 2s. 6d. in 12 years and some Tories took us to the district auditor. I thought that was terribly unfair because we were answering the question, "What is a fair rent?" We said it was 30 bob. That was 30 bob more rent than Minister's houses cost. We believe that that is the level that we should be targeting. I hope that that level will be included in the Liberal party recommendation for an affordable rent. I wonder whether that is carried through in Tower Hamlets for the Bangladeshis. That is the key question. My hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head.

Mr. Redmond: I would obviously like to think that the level will relate to the affordable rent that has been mentioned. However, we do not see that compassion on the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Hardy: Following from the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to which my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) referred a moment ago, will my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley refer to a problem which may face his area and mine and which echoes the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), who quoted cases in Cardiff. When, in the next few months, we see the massive expansion of commuter traffic between London and Doncaster, because people will be able to complete that journey in 50 minutes, will the rents in the Doncaster area be fair on the people who maintain their present level of income given the impetus to house price inflation which will follow electrification?

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. There are swings and roundabouts. One welcomes the electrification if the Channel tunnel has a terminal within Doncaster, as that will provide jobs. But obviously it brings the other evil—commuters from London who will gobble up the cheap houses in Doncaster which will raise prices. Then young married couples will not be able to afford houses.

9.45 pm

Mr. Skinner: It is not as simple as that. My hon. Friend is right in one respect, but I must challenge him about commuters coming to Doncaster. It is true that they are coming to Grantham and further to Newark and Retford, but once they reach the coal mining areas where there is subsidence they have a problem. Yuppies will steer clear of subsidence now that the Government are helping the Coal Board not to pay out the moneys that it should pay for those houses. That is the speech that I should have made yesterday.

Mr. Redmond: That is a fair point. One of the benefits will be the jobs that the Channel tunnel terminal will bring to Doncaster. The bad effect will be the escalation of house

prices which will have a knock-on effect on houses beloging to housing associations in the Doncaster area. A further benefit of electrification is that it will bring yuppies and commuters from down south to Doncaster to meet real people who are the salt of the earth in south Yorkshire.

What is a fair rent? That is a valid question and I should like the Minister to answer it. I do not know what constitutes a fair rent. There is great talk about a body to which people can appeal, but it will not be like that. I do not know what teeth it will have.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Is my hon. Friend aware that John Scurr house in Tower Hamlets, a semi-dierelict estate that was emptied some time ago and which, if one visited it, one would think was uninhabitable, is now being used for homeless familiies? That is an improvement on the vast sums spent on bed-and-breakfast accommodation, but some of these families, who are paying rent to a housing association which is letting the flats under licence, are being charged £100 a week. That is more than double the price charged for good council flats. Does my hon. Friend think that that will be the future pattern of housing associations?

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend certainly has a point. The housing policy in London is uneconomic and crazy. It seems stupid to spend millions of pounds providing overnight accommodation but not to make the repairs and to provide good quality houses that are so desperately needed. To think that that is in the capital and that Ministers pass it every day is absolutely appalling.

Will fair rents apply to pubs? If prices escalate—I have never known owt come down under this Conservative Government—that will affect the price of a pint of beer. Obviously that will affect many Conservative Members, and I would not want that to happen. If rents escalate, many students who live away from the university campus will seek to return to campus and that will cause excessive overcrowding.

The old Adwick urban district council decided to allocate some ground to a housing association. It built some nice flats, but unfortunately it had to charge an economic rent. Over a period, the tenants found that they were unable to meet their rents and they went to the local authority for help. Can the Minister assure us that that will not happen as a result of an escalation in rent charges? He has already said that market forces will prevail.

In Doncaster, bungalows for old-age pensioners were provided at a fair rent. The authority made those bungalows available to the public and the private sector. Those bungalows met a demand because, at that time, the private sector did not provide such bungalows. The local authority intended to have 1,500 new starts per year, but that went by the board when the Government started to chop the housing grant to local authorities.

The Minister has spoken about meeting the needs of the people. The Government are not meeting that need because they are not providing the finance to local authorities and to housing associations to provide the accommodation that is desperately needed.

It has been said that housing benefit will meet the rents charged by the housing associations and the private sector. The Minister said that housing benefit will give such tenants protection against any savage increases. Perhaps the Minister would care to come with me to one or two places in my constituency and talk to those people who have been affected by the latest cuts in housing benefit.

It is not good enough for the Government to produce a housing Bill that is totally devoid of the compassion and common sense that is needed to provide the necessary housing stock.

Mr. Simon Hughes: We began this debate at about half past 6. It is a testimony to the state of this Bill that you, Mr. Speaker, selected 196 amendments or new clauses for debate today. Half those amendments or new clauses have been introduced by the Government, but we have been fortunate to have a debate on two amendments and one new clause that have been tabled by the Opposition on a matter that the Government have not included in the Bill. A provision to ensure in law that people will rent at prices that they can afford was, like homelessness, a noticeable omission from the Bill.

This has been an interesting debate in another respect, too. There have been eight substantive contributions, seven by hon. Members from Opposition parties and one by a Conservative Member—the Minister. He had no choice but to make a speech, but not one Conservative Back Bencher spoke, in nearly three and a half hours of debate, in support of affordable rents for tenants. Is it surprising that there appear to be two nations, politically as well as in other respects?

It is good that the debate has shown the breadth of shared opinion among hon. Members in opposition parties. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) and her hon. Friends for joining the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and me—representing London constituencies—and showing that the issue is of relevance and concern throughout the country.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) was worried that the Government might carve up the new clause and take the bits that give the Secretary of State power, throwing away the bits that give protection to tenants and ensuring that the future is as bad as what is proposed now. That is possible, of course. It is possible that the Government will maul and carve up a proposal that would give tenants protection. But the message that has come through loud and clear from us is that the 6 million or 7 million people whom we are discussing—the 6 million council house tenants, the 600,000 housing association and housing co-operative tenants and all who, as the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) said, may join them if the council estates in which they live are taken over by housing associations or the private sector—should be protected from now on, and not left to be victims of the new Tory party market philosophy.

The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) made it clear that consensus across the political divide is needed for good housing law. The housing association movement was born of consensus. A Bill that was drafted by one Government was implemented almost unchanged by another. The most important part of consensus is that tenants should have rights, the most important being the right to a rent that they can afford. With the growth of housing associations encouraged by the Government, it is important that housing association tenants, as well as local authority tenants, should have rents that they can afford.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

This is not an insignificant group. There are 1,800 registered housing associations in England and Wales, some with housing stock as large as 21,000 properties. The hon. Member for Halifax said that some of the people that we are discussing are among the most vulnerable in society. The hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) made it clear that this is a linked sector of housing associations and local authorities working together. They have done good work and are now desperately trying to pick up responsibility for those with whom the private sector cannot possibly hope to cope.

Next we heard the Minister's response. As is often said, he is an intelligent man. He could have dealt with proper concerns and given convincing and persuasive answers but, sadly, in a short speech, he did not. He gave two reasons for rejecting these amendments. The first was that they might diminish the chance of obtaining capital investment from the private sector. I shall quote briefly from a letter that he wrote to Richard Best; its first sentence is ironic:

"As regards rents, there is nothing between us on objectives. It is, of course, an essential characteristic of the social housing sector that rents should be below market levels. But, as I have now explained in Committee, I still believe that a formal limit is not the right way to secure this; and indeed that it would undermine our policies for expansion of the movement to provide desperately-needed accommodation for those on lower incomes. The essential point is that rent control would be acceptable to the private investor only if the Government agreed to underwrite any resultant deficits."

That is precisely the case. If the public sector and not tenants bore the risk where necessary, the private sector would still invest in the future in the way that it has invested hitherto. The housing association movement has argued a different case.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Housing Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Mr. Hughes: As I was saying, the housing association movement has argued a different case. It has argued that a sensible price for political consensus, regarded as vital to secure private sector investment, is some limitation on rent levels. That is what the amendments and the new clause seek to achieve. They seek not the informal protection that the Minister pretends will come, but formal protection that will be written into the Bill.

The second argument adduced by the Minister was that it is important that the housing association sector should not be on all fours with the public sector. I do not dissent from his logic on that. He said it is important that it should be free-standing, able to take initiatives and able to draw in willing money from the private sector. Of course that is right, but the role of the housing association is also to come to the aid of those who most need to be housed. The money will come in and the independence from the public sector will be guaranteed even if the Government accept that there must be a limitation on rents.

It is interesting to note that the Government were anxious to ensure that too large a public sector commitment to housing associations did not imply that it would be counted as public spending. The Minister well knows that, when Ministers accepted that the average for public sector housing association grant would be 60 per cent. in England and 55 per cent. in Wales, the previous convention by the Treasury about that being public expenditure was changed. It was changed then, and it can be changed again. A more flexible system can and should incorporate rent control.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) made three very important points, and I should like to repeat them. First, he made the case that the Opposition parties are arguing for subsidy for those who rent and that by resisting that the Government are massively subsidising those who buy. The divide continues. The Government say that they will help people who buy but will offer less help to those who rent.

Secondly, the hon. Member for Hammersmith said that our argument that consensus is the prerequisite for housing legislation appears to be falling on deaf ears. During the speech by the hon. Member for Hammersmith, my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said he found it incredible that in England or Wales the Government are contemplating paying housing benefit on market rents.

Thirdly, the hon. Member for Hammersmith said that the cut in housing benefit is not fantasy. We have seen it happen and do not believe promises that housing benefit bills will continue to be met. Those promises have not been kept in the past. Rented accommodation houses one third of our fellow citizens. The system was born of consensus and has been developed, especially by housing associations, in consensus. The risk is that it will be destroyed in a conflict precipitated by the consumerist greed of the Government, who are motivated to legislate for those who have against the interests of those who have not.

We are not embarrassed or ashamed of that consensus. We are its guardians. We are the guardians of the interests and rights of the vulnerable, the low-paid, the unpaid, the pensioner, the widow, the widower, the carer, the disabled, the single, the homeless and the inadequately housed. The Government promised that they would pay with housing benefit; we do not believe them.

There are two alternatives on which we are about to vote. We either write in protection for those on lower incomes or state benefit or we knock it out. The Opposition parties—and, I hope, some Conservative Members—will display a commitment to the fundamental principle that we should provide rented housing throughout the country, from the north to the south, at rents that people can afford.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 215, Noes 255.

Division No. 350] **[10.05**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Bermingham, Gerald
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Bidwell, Sydney
Allen, Graham	Blair, Tony
Alton, David	Blunkett, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Boateng, Paul
Armstrong, Hilary	Bradley, Keith
Ashdown, Paddy	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Ashton, Joe	Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Barron, Kevin	Buchan, Norman
Battle, John	Buckley, George J.
Beckett, Margaret	Caborn, Richard
Beith, A. J.	Callaghan, Jim
Bell, Stuart	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Campbell-Savours, D. N.

Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'll)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Malcolm Bruce

NOES

Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Batiste, Spencer
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*

Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Richard Ryder and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment made: No. 247, in page 34, line 24, at end insert—

'( ) Where one of the associations mentioned in subsection (4) above is registered by the Housing Corporation and another is registered by Housing for Wales, the determination mentioned in subsection (5) above shall be such as shall be agreed between the two Corporations.'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): I beg to move amendment No. 86, in page 34, line 24, at end insert—

'(6) For the purposes of this section, section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 shall apply to the Corporation and to registered housing associations as it applies to local authorities.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take the following: Government amendment No. 298.

Government new clause 29.

New clause 8—*Extension of Section 71 powers*—

'For the purposes of this Act, section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 shall apply to the Housing Corporation, a housing association and housing co-operative, a Housing Action Trust and a person who is an approved landlord by the Housing Corporation pursuant to Part IV of this Act, as it applies to local authorities.'.

Mr. Boateng: We are seeking to deal with some of the problems experienced by the most deprived section of our community in relation to housing—the black community. We would do well to reflect on the Minister's performance in Committee. The Minister was at his most effusive and emollient. He was all too happy to please, and all too willing to lend a sympathetic ear to our legitimate concerns. We were promised that we would be well pleased with the results of his deliberations in the Department of the Environment. However, when we come, at this late stage, to consider the Bill on Report—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am anxious to listen to the hon. Gentleman. Will hon. Members who are not taking part in our proceedings please leave the Chamber quickly and quietly?

Mr. Boateng: —we find that the Minister has been unable to deliver his promises. Somewhere between the Committee and Report, he was nobbled. Opposition Members know who nobbled him—it was his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

We were told that we would have a code to deal with the matters of concern that we raised in Committee about the needs and aspirations of the community in question in relation to housing. Where is the code? We have been waiting for it month after month, but there is still no sign of it. Instead, we have two Government proposals that recognise that it is important that section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 should apply to housing action trusts and to housing corporations, but that is as far as the Government are prepared to go.

Our amendment and new clause seek to recognise the deep-rooted disadvantage that exists in relation to the black community and housing. I give some examples of the form in which that disadvantage manifests itself in London. When one looks at the results of the surveys that have been carried out over the years by, for example, the Policy Studies Institute, the Commission for Racial Equality, the London boroughs, and the then Greater London council, one finds that a pattern of deprivation emerges in every sector of the housing market.

That pattern of deprivation is evident in the private rented sector, in local authority provision and in the provision offered by housing associations. The picture that emerges is that if black people are owner-occupiers they tend to live in the older, more overcrowded terraced houses in our communities. If they are council tenants, again, they tend to live in the older more overcrowded or high rise properties. If they are private tenants, they tend to pay higher rents for poorer quality accommodation outside the protection of the Rent Acts.

Private landlords refuse to let accommodation to black and ethnic minority people because of their race, estate agents refuse to give details of houses to black and ethnic minority applicants, and local authorities tend to allocate to black families some of the worst accommodation that exists within their stock of property. The activities of housing associations leave much to be desired. Both private and public developers are failing to provide the sort of accommodation that is needed to meet the needs and aspirations of the minority community.

What hope do the Government's amendment and their new clause hold out to that most deprived section of the community, to the 75 per cent. of all those homeless in Brent who find themselves in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and who are black? I am afraid that the Minister has lost his opportunity to hold out the hope of any improvement for them. When we examine how he has lost that opportunity we are forced to the conclusion that, whatever his good intentions when the Bill was in Committee, he has not been able to deliver them in the face of opposition from within the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not want to spoil the hon. Gentleman's eloquent speech, but I shall be providing reasons why we are not able to bring forward the code in the House. But he will get his code.

Mr. Boateng: We welcome the assurance that comes at this late stage, but our concern is not simply with the fact that a code might at some unspecified time in the future be produced. We are, with respect, concerned about the content of that code, and we have every right to be so concerned.

Considering how we treated the Minister in Committee, and how until now we have treated him on Report, he should realise that he has got off very lightly. We have treated him as a nice man delivering a nasty Bill. That may have been our mistake, because perhaps the Minister is not so nice after all. Perhaps we have mistaken the man because of the way in which he brings forward these provisions, and perhaps the time has come when we should see his true nature.

I must admit that there is one hon. Member who has seen through the Minister from the word go——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Me?

Mr. Boateng: No. My hon. Friend will no doubt have his moment of glory, but it will not be now. That man is my hon. Friend the Minister for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). He has always been quite clear. I see a smile beginning to play around the lips of the Minister and, indeed, those of his acolyte, who sits so resplendent beside him, recently returned, we understand, from studying opera in Finland. It is said that the opera is not over until the fat lady sings. I am bound to say that we have not heard a word from the hon. Lady in the course of this whole debate. We would like to hear more. We are very fond of her.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Marion Roe): I spoke in the debate yesterday, but unfortunately the hon. Member was not in the Chamber at the time.

Mr. Boateng: I am delighted that at last the hon. Lady has been ungagged, because our experience of the hon. Lady's performance in Committee was that she was very rarely let loose, and when she was she seldom departed from her brief. I do not want to be seen to be ungallant to the hon. Lady, because all hon. Members who were on the Committee, rather than joining in at this late stage and mocking from the middle Benches, will know the high regard in which we hold the hon. Lady. She was our greatest friend in Committee, and whenever she speaks, the clarity of our argument becomes even greater and the wisdom that we have over the months sought to share with Government Members becomes that much clearer. I am sorry to have missed the hon. Lady's speech, but it does not in any way detract from the point that I seek to make about the Minister.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield has always maintained that the Minister would go down in the halls of infamy for his role in producing the Bill. I see a chorus of assent from my hon. Friends who were most closely associated with him in Committee. I beg to differ. Hon. Membes on both sides of the House and, I am sure, the Minister of State, will remember Caligula and his horse. Hon. Members should reflect on the fact that there was another person connected with Caligula and his horse whom we tend to forget. That person was the hapless senator whose job it was to introduce Caligula's horse into the chamber of the senate of Rome. We remember Caligula and we remember the horse, just as we will remember the Bill and the Secretary of State, but we do not remember the hapless soul who had to introduce the horse into the chamber of the senate.

10.30 pm

In tabling the Government amendments and, indeed, in introducing the Bill in its entirety, the Minister has all the moral authority and political credibility of the senator who introduced the horse into the senate of Rome, and his fate will be the fate of that senator—obscurity. He will not be remembered. If he sees another summer on the Front Bench as a Minister of State, I will eat the provisions of this amendment with a light cheese sauce.

The Minister has sealed his fate in bringing forward the amendments and the new clause. I want to give the Minister an opportunity to tell us what is in the long-awaited charter for which we have been holding our breath. Will it deal with harassment by the private landlord which is the common experience of all too many Asian and Afro-Caribbean people? Will it provide a means by which that harassment can be avoided? Will it answer the very clear picture presented by the Greater London housing condition survey, by the survey of private tenants in London conducted in 1983 and 1984 and by the London housing survey of 1986 and 1987? The picture which comes from all that work, which is not likely to be dismissed by the Minister, is that the impact of housing deprivation on our city is felt most directly by the Afro-Caribbean and Asian community.

On numerous occasions the Minister has gone out of his way to praise the response of that community to the housing crisis. In his response to this debate I want him to deal with a number of questions about the role of Afro-Caribbean and Asian housing associations if our amendment and new clause are not passed by the House. As the Minister well knows, the impact of the Bill on housing associations that cater for these special needs will be to render them less likely to be able to cater for those needs at acceptable levels of rent.

[Mr. Boateng]

The Minister knows that, as a proportion of earned income used for rent, the black family is likely to spend about 42·5 per cent., while the white family will spend about 36·5 per cent. He knows also that in London, with 70 per cent. HAG, a couple with two children will pay £45·99 per week rent as a result of the Government's proposals.

The Minister must be able to tell the House that his new clause and amendment, which deal only with housing associations and housing action trusts, will deal with that issue. He must be able to assure the House that housing associations will, in view of their size, be able to raise sufficient private capital to meet the new conditions under which all new associations will be obliged to operate when the Bill is enacted. The Minister must also assure the House that there will not be the loss of revenue to those housing associations that we fear because fewer families will be able to maintain their rent payments at the new level.

We suggested ways in which it might be possible for the Government to acknowledge that it is important that the Housing Corporation and the Secretary of State should consult black housing associations before making financial determinations that affected the special needs that they were established to serve, but answer came there none.

We asked the Minister to consider, but he failed to do so, a means by which it would be possible to ensure that statutory revenue funding to black housing associations would be guaranteed during the first few years of their life, to provide the start that is necessary if they are not to fail. The Minister knows, because his Department has undertaken the research that shows this, that without that start-up support, the survival rate is likely to be unacceptable.

This is not a topic to which the Minister is oblivious or about which he does not care—he does, but he has been nobbled. He knows also that, because of the way in which housing associations conduct themselves, there is no room for complacency. The idea that by applying section 71 to the Housing Corporation one will necessarily enjoy a spin-off effect in terms of the way in which housing associations conduct themselves simply is not on.

I will give the Minister one example from the city of Leeds, showing the impact of the Government's proposals and the beneficial effect that our amendment and new clause would have. Leeds city council conducted a survey of the equal opportunities policy of 18 housing associations in its area, and all credit goes to it for doing so. That survey found that 66 per cent. of management committees gave cause for concern over their black membership. They simply did not have any, or sufficient, black members. Fifty per cent. of the associations needed to ensure that black people had access to their housing, because their existing patterns and systems of regulation worked in such a way as to ensure that that did not happen.

The survey showed also that 44 per cent. of the associations had not even established ethnic record keeping for housing allocations, so they would have no way of determining whether they were meeting any guidelines subsequently laid down by the Housing Corporation or by the Secretary of State. Fifty-five per cent. of them did not keep ethnic employment records, and 50 per cent. needed to monitor records in other areas of particular concern to them. Sixty-six per cent. of the associations did not even produce reports for their management committees, 44 per cent. had not adopted a policy of racial harassment, and 78 per cent. had not taken any action to deal with specific issues and causes of concern in the communities that they were seeking to serve.

Those are the facts, and they were produced with good will and good intentions. Can the Minister really come to the Dispatch Box and tell us in good faith that section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 should not apply to housing associations? I suspect that he cannot. I suspect that he will find great difficulty in doing so. He is an honest man, so I hope he will recognise that something has to be done. Something must be done about racial harassment, homelessness and the housing associations.

When the Minister looks at the likely impact on the black community of the change in landlord provisions in the Bill, can he say that it will not be necessary to introduce the amendment? He has an opportunity to redeem his reputation. He need not necessarily go down as the third party to that triangle between Caligula and his horse. This is his opportunity. We look forward to hearing what he says. We look forward to seeing his commitment in a practical sense to creating a successful multiracial society in terms of housing provision. We look forward to his demonstrating in a practical way his commitment to ensuring that the real patterns of deprivation and disadvantage in housing are not replicated in the experience of Britain's black community.

We wait for the Minister's answers, but we do not wait with bated breath, because our experience of his previous contributions in this respect is not a happy one. However, the communities that we represent are tired of waiting. They want justice and they sent us here to get it, and justice we shall ensure that they have.

Mr. Waldegrave: Those who were not fortunate to be on the Committee that considered the Bill will have seen that one reason why it was so enjoyable was the speeches of the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) which have a style and panache which always make them a pleasure to listen to, even though they sometimes depart from the direct line of the argument.

I am becoming a little confused by the hon. Gentleman's references to Suetonius. Yesterday I was likened to Caligula's horse. I have now gone up to the senator. That seems to be progress in the right direction, but as far as I know, remembering that book, there is nothing to say that either the horse or the senator did not live to a happy old age, so that analogy may be perfectly satisfactory.

I think that by the end of the hon. Gentleman's speech we were coming back on to the track, because he and I are not far apart on these issues. I recently spoke to the annual general meeting of the Ujima housing association, a huge meeting with a number of housing associations serving minority communities. I do not think that he was present on that occasion, but I think that he has been present on similar occasions in the past.

There is no question but that the examples that the hon. Gentleman and others can give show that housing is one of the areas in which racial discrimination has been frequent and can be damaging. But during the course of that meeting, one remark by a delegate from the floor of the hall stuck in my memory, because sometimes the conclusions are not always what one expects. He was an immigrant from Jamaica, and he said that when he and his friends and relations first came to Britain they certainly faced discrimination—very largely, as he put it, from the public sector. He reminded the meeting that it had often been the private sector, with all its faults, that had provided any housing at all in those days. Faults are to be found not only in one sector.

That is why I want to say straight away that there has been no backing off from the commitment. As a matter of fact, I did not make a commitment in Committee to ask the Commission for Racial Equality to bring forward a code on housing practice. I said that we would look at that. We have decided that we should do that. We have decided to invite the CRE to bring forward a code covering all housing. I am no expert in these matters, but we wish this to cover all housing, not just rented housing.

The hon. Gentleman may have seen a recent controversial film made by the local television company in Bristol, which showed that discrimination could be found not only in rented housing but in other forms of accommodation. The rules of another place may allow us more easily than those of this House to introduce an amendment to which could be attached a code dealing with all housing. That is our intention, and that is why the amendment is not down at this stage. It is, of course, for the CRE to bring forward the code, which must be discussed before it is finally approved by the Secretary of State.

10.45 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): My hon. Friend will recall that race relations and racial harassment on estates were debated in a genuine spirit of bipartisanship. It is inherent in deciding whether the Government are following the right course for us to know at least some of what will be in my hon. Friend's mind when he brings forward the code. I accept that it is a matter for the CRE, but the task will be very difficult unless he is able at least to raise the curtain slightly and show us what he is looking for.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend—who, I know, has considerable interest in these matters—will know that it is for the CRE to bring forward the code, after which there will be widespread consultation on it. We have committed ourselves to giving the code a statutory basis and inviting the CRE to bring it forward—an invitation that that organisation has welcomed. I do not consider it right in this instance—as opposed to others that we shall discuss later tonight—to try to foreshadow completely what will be done. The CRE is the expert, and it must bring forward its proposals.

With one exception to which the hon. Member for Brent, South referred, we accepted the proposals put forward from both sides—my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) spoke on the matter in Committee—and agreed to make section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 bite on the Housing Corporation and on housing action trusts. We did not go the step further that the hon. Member for Brent, South wanted, which was to make it bite on housing associations individually as well.

We considered the proposal and listened to the arguments put in Committee, but we believe that section 71 is a duty specifically tailored for public authorities and those who hold wider responsibilities. It applies to local authorities; it should apply to the Housing Corporation, because the corporation, in the more pluralistic social housing sector, will have some of the wider responsibilities of local councils; and it should apply to HATs, because they will be standing in temporarily for local authorities in some of their funcions. However, while the housing associations will be relieved of none of their duties to behave properly about discrimination we do not believe that section 71, which is aimed at public authorities, can be suitably applied to the specialist providers of housing, with their narrower function.

That is not to say that it is not vital for social or any other landlords to conduct their affairs properly. They are already subject to the provisions in the 1976 Act which make it unlawful to discriminate in the provision of services and accommodation. I do not feel, however, that what might be called the "promotional" side of section 71 relates to their primary function.

I hope that, underneath the enjoyable rhetoric, the hon. Member for Brent, South, and my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West, will agree that we have moved rather further than we said we would in Committee in one important respect. We have invited the CRE to bring forward a code, and promised an amendment in another place to give it a statutory basis. That shows that we share the hon. Gentleman's view that the subject is important. I hope that he will agree, in a spirit of fairness, that we are moving a long way in the right direction.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): The Opposition will not divide the House on this issue. We recognise that there was a measure of bipartisanship in Committee and that the Government have come forward with something of a concession. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) said, we are not satisfied with

[Mr. Allan Roberts]

the Government's concessions. We are not happy, because the code that we were promised is not before the House now for us to judge.

Mr. Waldegrave: It was not promised.

Mr. Roberts: The Minister says from a sedentary position that it was not promised. We were told that we were going to get it. We are now told that we shall get it in another place.

The general problem with the way in which the Government have dealt with the Bill, not just on Report now but in Committee, is that everything has been up in the air. The Government have promised to do something and then said that they are not sure about the proper form for doing it. They said that we would know where the housing action trusts are by Second Reading, but we still do not know where they are and we still do not know what criteria will apply to them. There will be a code in relation to the social landlord, but that will not be included in the Bill now. We shall have that code after we have considered the Bill, and we shall not know whether it will be satisfactory. We are in the same position now, as the Government have said that there is a code in relation to racial discrimination, but they will not let the House see it before we pass the legislation in this place. They said that it will be introduced in another place. We shall not be able to judge whether the code is satisfactory while we deal with the amendments and Third Reading in this place.

We believe that the Government have treated the House with contempt. This Bill is completely different from the one that we debated in Committee. Even now, with the 180-odd amendments, new schedules and new clauses which amount to a total rewrite of the Bill since it came from Committee, we are told that other major amendments, including a whole code on the very important issue of racial discrimination, will be tabled in another place. That is what the Minister said.

The Minister said that there would be a major amendment on the issue in another place because the procedures in another place are a better way of dealing with the matter and getting it through. It is a strange admission for the Minister to make that it is easier to get amendments and legislation through, another place than the House of Commons. If that is the case, perhaps the House should scrutinise the matter and make it a little more difficult for the Government to push this through.

The Minister might be pleased to hear that we accept that there might be an amendment to deal with the issue in the spirit of the concession or commitment that the Minister gave. He seems to believe that no commitment was given, but we think that one was made and it seems to have been followed up by the Minister, at least to the extent that we have a commitment that we shall get the code. We have had a concession from the Government on that. Therefore, we shall not divide the House.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I want to be brief— —

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Very brief.

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend says be brief, and I will be.

After the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boeteng) finished giving us his racing tips for Epsom when he talked about horses, he made a very serious contribution and I agreed with the points that he made.

I regard this as an extremely important issue. If we talk to anyone who has suffered racial harassment in housing or any other sphere of activity, we realise how serious this is and what a degradation it is to those people. It is an affront that this still happens.

It is important that the Department of the Environment drives towards a proper code of practice and that the matter is not simply left to the Commission for Racial Equality. I do not want to make disparaging comments about the commission's abilities, but it took many years to put together a proper code of practice for employment. I would not like us to have to wait two, three or four years for the code of practice that so many of us seek so urgently in this area.

I commend to my hon. Friend the Minister not only the work by Leeds city council, but previous important and serious work by the Greater London council and by some boroughs in the east end of London. They uncovered some problems which had not been brought to light previously. That is more apposite and useful than the draft code of conduct that I have seen from the Commission for Racial Equality to date.

By the time this Bill goes to the other place and subsequently returns, I hope that we shall see some significant progress in this area and that the Government have been able to satisfy the hon. Member for Brent, South and me. I hope that we shall have made progress in helping people who urgently need our help.

Mr. Boateng: I wonder whether the Minister could clarify one or two points for us about this code of practice, aspects of which are only now coming to the fore. Has he any timetable for its presentation? Is it to see the light of day during the deliberations in the other place? Will the other place be treated to insights into its contents, to which we have not been treated, or will it simply be given the option to amend the Bill to enable it to exist at some later date within a statutory context?

The Minister talks about the breadth of consultation. Will it include the National Federation of Black Housing Associations and local authorities which have some experience of seeking to address these issues? How wide will consultations be? Will it draw on the fund of knowledge and experience to which the Minister referred in relation to the Ujima housing association and others in terms of making the provisions work in biting and impacting on the sort of problems that are faced within housing associations—the sons and daughters rule, for example? Can the Minister flesh out the proposals for the code of practice in that respect? If he cannot, we shall continue to have real doubts.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I should like the Minister to enlarge on the code, because it forms a semi-area of delegated legislation. As Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, I believe that it is important that the House should have some details.

The way that we deal with delegated legislation is inadequate, particularly with codes of practice, because they inhabit a sort of never-never land: they are not the rule of law, yet they are invoked in prosecution cases. Breaches of the code are primie facie regarded, if it is a

statutory enforcement, as breaches of a statutory requirement. Can the Minister enlarge on this, particularly regarding consultation? The Government are moving increasingly to codes of guidance and practice, which is less than satisfactory. Statutory instruments at least have the merit of being clear, in that they are delegated legislation. They are not in the in-between position of simply being a guide so that a breach is not a breach of law. Therefore, consultation is important. We should know in detail which bodies will be consulted, and this House should be consulted.

We are all keen for outside bodies to be consulted, and we want to know that that is happening. It amazes me, however, that this House, which is the most important legislature in the country, is often presented with a fait accompli. No consultation documents are made available in the Vote Office. Hon. Members are unable to obtain such documents or to submit amendments.

11 pm

One of the problems with delegated legislation—for the purposes of discussion I shall include codes of practice—is that there is no opportunity to amend it. Primary legislation is amended as it makes its passage through the House. Committee members may amend a Bill in detail and every hon. Member may amend a Bill on Report.

I guess that the Minister will produce a code, describe it as a step forward and say, "Take it or leave it." He will not use such words, of course, but that is the effect produced by the Executive presenting such a document to the House. The Government will consult outside bodies and may consider amendments—frankly, I hope they will.

I hope that the Minister will assure us that he will present an outline code to the House and invite comment upon it; otherwise the code will be presented as decided by the Minister—that is the only process available for dealing with it. There are no Committees that can examine such codes and there are no other means by which they can be debated in the House. Statutory instruments are subject to the negative procedure and if a prayer is put down there is a chance for debate. An affirmative resolution must receive the resolution of the House and is at least dealt with by the merits Committee upstairs. There is no procedure to allow a code to be examined, challenged or amended.

The Minister may say that the code is only a guide, not legislation, and that it is simply something that the Government expect people to follow. If people breach that code they are in danger of having a case found against them. Codes of practice are being increasingly used by the Government. Absolute provisions relating to health and safety at work are being supplanted by codes of practice. I regard that as watering down standards.

I hope that the Minister will adopt a conciliatory attitude and will agree to produce an outline proposal so that hon. Members can make suggestions. Anyone who takes an interest in housing would want to make such a contribution. Such consultation should be additional to the consultations that the Minister has already mentioned.

Some of us have deep suspicions that Ministers are producing the code of practice to act as a sop to criticisms, and that they have no intention of utilising legislation through delegated powers because they want to deal with the matter in a way that satisfies all parties. It is difficult to do that in this circumstance because racial discrimination is not a subject on which we can be nice to all sides. We must tackle the matter firmly. In such circumstances, legislation is the best and only way in which to do it. The Minister may be aware that codes of practice do not have to be considered by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments or by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments—there are no provisions for such consultation.

I hope that the Minister, who I know takes an interest in the detailed application of these things, will examine this matter and return with it to the House, so that we can see what sort of improvements he has in mind for our scrutiny of this area, which is of great importance.

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): I support the demand for an effective code of conduct. The problem has been greatly oversimplified. Some of the nationally published reports show that, in Liverpool, for example,

"black people usually have to wait longer for Council housing and when rehoused tend to be given lower quality accommodation."

In Hackney,

"black applicants seem either to have difficulty in obtaining access to Council housing, or consistently receive poorer-quality accommodation than white applicants."

This problem also applies to Leeds and every other major urban centre with a high immigrant population.

This is not only a problem of the direct exclusion of black people, or of poorer provision and longer waiting periods for black applicants. There is no housing policy designed by most local authorities or housing associations to deal with the problems of the Asian population of Bradford and other parts of the country.

I refer to a report done for Bradford city council in the Manningham area of Bradford. Of the housing used by immigrants in that area, 92·2 per cent. was late Victorian, much of it back-to-back; 86·3 per cent. was owner-occupied; and only 13·7 per cent. was rented. The reason for that was that in the appalling economic conditions that prevail, more than 35 per cent. of the houses surveyed contained no one in full-time employment. More than two thirds contained only one person in full or part-time employment. Most of the families in the properties were grossly overcrowded and living in appalling conditions. It is not as if they wanted to purchase their properties. They would have much preferred to rent, but that sort of property is not available.

The vast majority of housing association accommodation is single or two-bedroomed—for one or two people, or for families with one or two children, or for elderly people on their own. Hence there is no provision for the extended families of Asian households and large houses in housing associations are generally not used as such but are converted into flats and bed-sits. It is impossible for Asian families to move in and use these facilities.

The Manningham survey frankly pointed to the surprising fact that Asian people prefer to live in the inner cities with their communities, because of racism, other pressures and problems of language. They want the protection that the community spirit affords. There are plenty of slum-clearance areas in the inner cities, but they are not being used for housing provision for ordinary families—particularly, not for immigrant families.

It is nice, of course to have a code and to say that a certain proportion——

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) said earlier that he had seen the draft CRE code to which my hon. Friend

[Mr. George Howarth]

referred earlier. Knowing my hon. Friend's interest in this matter, I wondered whether anyone had bothered to show him a copy?

Mr. Wall: I have not seen a draft of the charter. No doubt I can trot over to the other place and see my old friend Bill Sefton, now Lord Sefton of Garston, in whose house I joined the Labour party. He will tell me what is going on in that place and we can discuss it and I can find out more about this problem.

I should like to quote from the Manningham association report in relation to the question of owner-occupation. It says:

"The existence of owner-occupation cannot be taken as an indication of high standards of housing or indeed wealth. Owner-occupation has become the only alternative to over-occupied scarce rented housing. In order to meet the economic burdens of mortgage repayments and housing maintenance the sharing arrangements of large Asian families alleviates to some degree the serious levels of poverty.

High percentages of home ownership have therefore been achieved by economies of scale in the presence of relatively larger numbers of persons per house. The cost of home-ownership in social terms is revealed by cramped and severely overcrowded conditions within the Asian community. The largely held assumption of home ownership being linked to prosperity is therefore deceptive. Whilst there undoubtedly exists a greater inclination and desire for owner-occupied housing within the Asian community, the availability of large rented houses is non-existent."

That clearly expresses the present difficulty.

The report goes on to deal with local housing associations. The Brunel and Family housing association and the North British housing association have made an attempt to provide some large accommodation for Asian families, but that has by no means met the need. The Manningham housing association was founded deliberately to tackle the problem. However, it is under-resourced and under-funded, and for those reasons it cannot make any inroads into the appalling overcrowding and social problems.

The report on Manningham says:

"The housing associations which operate in the Manningham area cater largely for single persons, lone parents and the elderly. Large families sized accommodation is broadly speaking not provided by these associations. The rehabilitation work undertaken by housing associations has undoubtedly removed the larger properties from the private market. The larger houses are invariably converted into bedsits and flats. The lack of provision of larger family units by housing associations is due mainly to demand pressures for single persons. The future possibilities of undertaking rehabilitaion projects for the purpose of family accommodation is increasingly diminishing. Clearly, as associations successfully convert this dilapidated housing into flats and flatlets, less become available for alternative uses.

The ethnic minorities tend to be under-represented in housing association properties. Those who do keep ethnic records should be encouraged to publish their statistics and implement equal opportunity policies. The National Federation of Housing Associations has provided a comprehensive guide as to how this can be achieved. The creation of a specialist Section 11 post of Housing Association Development Worker could monitor and develop the equal opportuntites progress of Housing Associations."

I press quite strongly for the needs of Asian communities to be taken into account. Bradford has the most abominable housing conditions in Britain. I must press especially for the Asian community to be represented on the governing bodies of housing associations. Only when such representation is reflected in the associations will Asian needs begin to be met. Only then will a code of conduct be of any use. If a code of conduct applies to housing associations with small units of accommodation, it will serve no purpose for the vast majority of Asian people in Bradford, Leicester, and other cities. I hope that when the Minister replies he will not only give us some assurance about an anti-racist and fair code of conduct, but deal with the problems of Asian and other people who prefer to live in large family units.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall speak briefly. I do not want to set myself up against the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who is such an expert on the arguments about the control over delegated legislation, which go back many years.

As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, the code would be one of those codes which, with a statutory peg, could be taken into account in court proceedings brought under the 1976 Act. In that sense, we would be returning to the express provisions of a broadly bipartisan Act that was introduced by our predecessors to deal with racial equality.

The one matter that is, perhaps, different from the point made by the hon. Gentleman is that we would not be taking the initiative in drafting the code. The Commission for Racial Equality asked us to provide the power under which it could produce a code of practice. The hon. Gentleman has asked me to be conciliatory, and I shall try to be so. The best thing that I can do is direct his words to the attention of the CRE so that it might offer to consult interested Members of the House. The procedure for this code is equivalent to the employment code—and I believe that there will be one coming forward on education—which is that the Secretary of State approves it and it is then laid before the House. I do not want to commit myself to any new procedure that I cannot subsequently deliver, although I shall draw the CRE's attention to what the hon. Gentleman has said.

11.15 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Has my hon. Friend seen the draft code of practice that has been drawn up by the CRE, which it gave me during the Committee stage of the Bill and on which I made some comments at that stage?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall not claim that I know it by heart, but I know that it exists. I have looked through it. I have confidence in asking the House to follow the usual procedure, because I know that the CRE is well forward with its work and that the procedure is in train. As my hon. Friend says, there is a first outline, rough draft in existence.

Mr. Boateng: Why is it that some Conservative Members have had access to the draft code and Opposition Members have not? This is the first that the Opposition have heard of such a code. If it is circulating among Conservative Members, why has the National Federation of Housing Associations not been consulted about this code? Why is that the local authorities have not been consulted about this code? Why should it be only the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) who has been made privy to the thoughts of the Commission for Racial Equality?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am answering outside my responsibility. I have no idea how my hon. Friend the

Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) gained access to the code. Perhaps the hon. Member should address his question to the CRE.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) wish to withdraw his amendment?

Mr. Boateng: May I make a few points in conclusion?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has addressed the House twice, so he cannot speak again.

Mr. Boateng: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it right that there should be introduced into the House at this late stage a document that is clearly relevant to the procedures before the House, but about which we have been given no prior notice whatsoever——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for the Chair; it is a matter for debate. The hon. Gentleman has addressed the House twice.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The usual procedure is that when the Government introduce a document, they lay it on the Table of the House. The Minister referred to a CRE document, which, as you have heard has been distributed to some hon. Members. The Minister referred to the code which the CRE is developing, and which will apparently be the subject of approval by the Secretary of State——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I neither know, nor is it within my responsibility to know, to whom the authors of the document referred. That is not a matter for me. Does the hon. Member for Brent, South wish to withdraw his amendment?

Mr. Boateng: No.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 47

RECOVERY ETC. OF GRANTS

Mrs. Roe: I beg to move amendment No. 254, in page 35, line 14, at end insert

'and a direction under paragraph (c) above requiring the payment of any amount may also require the payment of interest on that amount in accordance with subsections (7) to (9) below'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 255, in page 35, line 39, at end insert—

'(7) A direction under subsection (2)(c) above requiring the payment of interest on the amount directed to be paid to the Corporation shall specify, in accordance with subsection (9) below,—

(a) the rate or rates of interest (whether fixed or variable) which is or are applicable;

(b) the date from which interest is payable, being not earlier than the date of the relevant event; and

(c) any provision for suspended or reduced interest which is applicable.

(8) In subsection (7)(c) above—

(a) the reference to a provision for suspended interest is a reference to a provision whereby, if the amount which is directed to be paid to the Corporation is paid before a date specified in the direction, no interest will be payable for any period after the date of the direction; and

(b) the reference to a provision for reduced interest is a reference to a provision whereby, if that amount is so paid, any interest payable will be payable at a rate or rates lower than the rate or rates which would otherwise be applicable.

(9) The matters specified in a direction as mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) of subsection (7) above shall be either—

(a) such as the Corporation, acting in accordance with such principles as it may from time to time determine, may specify as being appropriate, or

(b) such as the Corporation may determine to be appropriate in the particular case.'

Mrs. Roe: The purpose of the amendments is to give the Housing Corporation power to charge interest on repayments of grant directed under the clause. Under existing legislation, the Secretary of State has power to charge interest on payments from grant redemption funds, and under clause 51 that power may be delegated to the corporation.

The provision of a similar power for housing association grant and revenue deficit grant will provide a simple and direct incentive for associations to make prompt repayments of grant.

Mr. Simon Hughes: In itself, the provision is not undesirable, and it appears logical. However, will the Housing Corporation have to pay interest for late payments of housing grant to housing associations? I hope that there is reciprocity, with interest payable in either direction by anyone who is late making repayments.

Mr. George Howarth: The Minister justified the amendments on the ground that they would simplify the system.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): She was reading her brief.

Mr. Howarth: As my hon. Friend suggests, that is what the Minister's brief says.

I am at a loss to understand how anybody could think that the provisions, or anything to do with revenue deficit grant, could be simplified. The amendments will not simplify anything; they will just add another level of complication. It is beyond me how anyone can use the word "simple" about the grant redemption fund and revenue deficit grant. Indeed, if the truth be known, I suspect that it is also beyond the Minister.

The amendments need to be examined within the whole context of the Government's approach to housing associations. It is impossible to isolate the amendments —we must refer to a much wider discussion about what the Government expect from the housing associations, what their job has been, is and will be, and their position within the totality of the housing market. We cannot isolate the Bill's provisions and the amendments from the whole of that market. As we cannot consider the provisions without considering other forms of tenure, we should spend some time examining the whole role of housing associations in relation to other tenures.

It is important to analyse the Bill's provisions in the wider context, and I want to know how the Minister envisages the housing associations, their job, their functions——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I fail to understand how this arises under the amendments.

Mr. Howarth: My argument—I saw you take advice, Mr Deputy Speaker, while I was making it—is that the provisions strike at the very core of the practices and procedures of the housing association movement, and can

[Mr. Howarth]

be judged only within that context. I shall be guided by your greater wisdom regarding that subject, and I am sure that, if I move too far off the track, you will bring me to order. We cannot isolate those matters from a wider consideration of the housing association movement and its role, as we are dealing with the financing of housing associations. We cannot deal with the role of housing associations without making comparisons with other forms of tenure, including owner-occupation and local authority sector tenure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The proposals relate to the making of grants to housing associations. That is different from the general financing of housing associations. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will confine his remarks to the measure before the House.

Mr. Howarth: I am sure that you will guide me if I am wrong, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but, as I understand it, the provision enables the Government, through the Housing Corporation, and directed by the Secretary of State, to charge interest on any housing association grants that they decide to claw back. That means that the whole basis of housing association finance is affected dramatically by the provision. It therefore appears impossible for the House seriously to consider the Government's proposals without spending a considerable time discussing how that will affect housing association finance in general. Equally——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That would be stretching the amendment far too wide. I am not prepared to allow such a debate.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This measure precedes another which will claim back half the grant as well as the interest on it. If housing associations are to have their grant clawed back, the way in which they are financed is central to the debate, as my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) said. Some Conservative Members, not least an hon. Member who, last night, I recall——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not making his point, because he is making a long speech, which I am not prepared to allow. He must not challenge my ruling. We are debating not the clause as a whole but two new provisions and the debate must be confined to them.

Mr. Howarth: I accept your ruling, Sir, although I regret not being able to pursue my argument.

Mr. Boateng *rose*——

Mr. Howarth: I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Boateng: Perhaps my hon. Friend will reflect for a moment, giving us the benefit of his considerable experience of these matters, on the impact of the provisions and their implications for the proper administration and the finances of individual housing associations. Am I right in thinking that the measures would affect the viability of some housing associations, particularly those able to meet the special needs of some of the most deprived sections of our community—for example, those that work with the disabled, the elderly or people who are vulnerable in some other way?

Mr. Howarth: I ask you to bear with me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I say that housing developments are funded through a system called housing association grant. Every housing association, with the exception of some unregistered ones, is financed in that way. That grant is administered by the Housing Corporation. Each scheme receives that grant in respect of its costs.

The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) is valid when we consider that, under this measure, the Government are proposing that housing association grant can be clawed back with interest at the request of the Secretary of State. Therefore, the whole way in which housing associations are administered is being called into question in any transaction into which any housing association could ever enter if financed through the Housing Corporation or, as the Government propose, through a combination of the Housing Corporation and some other financial body. Therefore, each transaction will be affected by the provisions.

11.30 pm

I crave your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for my argument that that has a profound and fundamental effect on the system of finance for housing association grants, and therefore for housing associations, because every development within a housing association is funded by that mechanism.

I realise that I shall be skating close to the line in my next argument, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I think that it is justified and I am sure that you will tell me if it is not. If the provisions that affect the funding of that type of tenure are being changed, it seems perfectly valid and reasonable that, when discussing the amendment, we should make comparisons between other types of tenure. At some point, I hope to introduce into my argument some material about interest rates and the funding of other types of tenure so that we can make comparisons between what the Government are proposing in this and in other areas of housing.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does my hon. Friend agree that implicit in this Government amendment is the assumption that the Housing Corporation is always right? In fact, there have been cases in which the Housing Corporation has not acted correctly and has materially affected the work of housing associations. For example, it all but closed down the Family Housing Association. Nick Raynsford wrote an interesting book about that, entitled "Quis Custodiet?", and rightly, as that means talking about——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be brief.

Mr. Banks: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In that case, I merely point out that the amendment has a great bearing on the whole nature of housing associations and their function because it is based on the assumption that the Housing Corporation is always right.

Mr. Howarth: I share my hon. Friend's fears but have an even greater fear. Beyond the Housing Corporation, an even more fearful sight on the horizon is the Secretary of State himself, because it is the Secretary of State who will be empowered by this provision, and the Secretary of State is none other than the man who deregulated the buses. He is the Minister who will be responsible for triggering those mechanisms.

I recall that, shortly after I became a Member, the Secretary of State made an intervention to the effect that when he was the Secretary of State for Transport he had been responsible for deregulating the buses and was still waiting for Opposition Members to thank him for that. At this late date, many months later, I have some news for the right hon. Gentleman. While he is still waiting for thanks from our side of the Chamber, many of our constituents are still waiting for the buses. I make that point now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I did not have the opportunity of making it at the time.

Mr. Simon Hughes: That point was well worth waiting for. I have an important point on the subject of waiting, which I should have made in my short speech. One problem at the moment is that this provision allows the housing associations to be charged interest. Among the worst offenders in terms of money delayed are the Government. When asked to consent to a measure that would save a lot of money, they sit on the decision for months and sometimes years. Can we be assured that this provision has an equitable parallel and that the Government as well as the Housing Corporation will have to pay after they delay and hold on to money?

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for supporting our point. We must make comparisons. It is very much a question of who gets what and to what end it is directed. Housing associations providing particular types of housing may be affected by this measure. Part of their grant may be recalled by the Secretary of State and they may be asked to pay interest.

Mr. Battle: Would my hon. Friend like to ask the Minister how much the Government expect to save on the interest repayments? Might not that amount, small though it is, be much less than the business expansion scheme grants given in the Budget? Might it not make such a financial difference that small housing associations become bankrupt and unable to develop and deliver schemes?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend makes the point well. The Minister for Housing and Planning is reading a book that does not appear to have much to do with this debate —*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is looking at mugshots, but I am sure that he has noted the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle). In due course, the hon. Gentleman will come up with figures, which probably will not satisfy us.

Mr. Boateng: We want to hear from the Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. Howarth: I am sure that the hon. Lady has the figures on the tip of her tongue. Given her experience in Finland last week, she may well sing them to us rather than speak in her normal dulcet tones.

As the Minister knows, the types of housing association services which are funded by housing association grants are many and varied.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend's experience of housing associations is very valuable. Does he agree that, because of the extent to which some housing associations will be financially penalised, life will be that much more difficult for families who cannot be rehoused by their local authority and cannot obtain a mortgage? Does my hon. Friend agree that the problems of overcrowding and homelessness will therefore be that much worse? The amendments direct our attention to the housing difficulties.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend makes a good point; I would go one step further. When the Bill was published, the Merseyside Federation of Housing Associations, a subsidiary of the National Federation of Housing Associations, said that its ability to continue to provide housing for people in need in areas of high cost and low value would be curtailed and the recent housing benefit changes would exacerbate the problem.

The type of people my hon. Friends and I have in mind —families in need who are not catered for by local authorities and who are unable to obtain mortgages, a subject to which I shall return on later amendments—are often precisely those whom housing associations can assist by way of tenancies. This is especially so for households without an economically active member, and for the elderly. The changes in housing association finance will directly affect that category, whose plight will be exacerbated by the latest Government proposals.

Mr. Winnick: Perhaps we are witnessing a deliberate attempt by the Government to drive as many people as possible into the privately rented sector. Clearly, the Government are not concerned with local authority tenancies; most local authorities such as mine have not been able to build council accommodation for eight or nine years. Now, because there is to be no distinction in rent levels—because housing associations will have to charge much higher rents—it must be the aim of the Government to provide profit for private landlords by encouraging people to enter the privately rented sector. The splendid work being done by genuine housing associations will be undermined.

Mr. Howarth: I agree, and the Minister has proclaimed frequently and with pleasure that he supports the concept of the privately rented sector. Indeed, that is an essential part of the Bill. My hon. Friends and I have said time and again that we are not opposed to responsible private landlords. While I would not accuse the Minister of State of wishing to promote Victorian-type landlordism, I fear that the Secretary of State believes that there are lessons to be learned from colourful pictures of the landlords of those days evicting widows and children. Perhaps he would like to return to those days.

Many housing associations deal sensitively and effectively with the needs of the elderly, and some associations in Merseyside specialise in building bungalows and sheltered accommodation, with wardens and security devices, for the elderly and needy. These associations are often small and deal with the specific needs of the elderly people in a locality. The amendment empowers the Secretary of State to charge interest. Because of the criticism from this side of the House, the Secretary of State has declined to stay; I understand that he has gone for a fag. If I had realised that, I might have got someone to make a long intervention so that I could join him.

11.45 pm

The Secretary of State will have power to claw back the grants and to charge interest to these small, sensitive housing associations. The Minister and his colleagues may ask, what is wrong with that? They may think that, if the

[Mr. Howarth]

Government pay a grant, they are entitled to claw it back and to charge interest into the bargain. It would be with great reluctance that I gave the Secretary of State power to have anything to do with these small, sensitive, local housing associations which are dealing with the needs of the elderly. On a dark night, some of the elderly people might be frightened if they were to see the spectre of the Secretary of State haunting their sheltered schemes. When the Secretary of State has not had a fag for a long time, he may not be a welcome sight.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows very well that we are discussing interest charges. Perhaps he will return to that.

Mr. Howarth: I know that you are aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Secretary of State is mentioned in the amendment. The Secretary of State is the person responsible for triggering the mechanism whereby the housing association grant may be clawed back and interest may be charged. So I mention him simply in the context that he is a central part of the process. However, I will be guided by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The future financial basis of the schemes could be affected by the Government amendments. My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) and I have in our constituencies a unique housing co-operative. The amendment would apply to housing co-operatives as well as to housing associations. Housing co-operatives are housing associations but with a slightly different legal form. This is a unique organisation called the Huyton community co-operative for the elderly, which was funded by the Housing Corporation and could be affected by this provision.

Various local people serve on that co-operative. It exists to provide a good standard of housing for elderly people in the Huyton area of Knowsley. It has built 24 units of accommodation in Huyton. On 5 July, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales is to present a design award for that scheme. The future tenants—the elderly people who had retired from work and who had much experience of life—were able to influence the design of the scheme. The architect, Bill Halsall, a good friend of mine, is to be congratulated. He is not here; had he known that I would mention him, he might have come to hear the debate.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): We would like to know more about him.

Mr. Howarth: I will do as my hon. Friend asks, because as the architect of a scheme that may be affected by the amendment, his involvement is relevant. He will be very upset if the management of that scheme could be prejudiced by the Secretary of State deciding in his wisdom —if he ever exercises such a thing—to charge the housing association interest.

Bill Halsall was also the architect of the very first new build housing co-operative in the country, Weller street. It too could be affected. As my hon. Friend asks me to say more about Bill Halsall, I shall tell the House that he was one of the real pioneers of such developments—not just one of the people we hear about who hold high office in the Royal Institute of British Architects. Bill Halsall pioneered community architecture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interesting though that may be, it has no connection with amendment No. 254, to which I hope the hon. Gentleman will now address himself.

Mr. Howarth: Perhaps I may explain the logic of my argument, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall be guided by you, if you think it is inappropriate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman keeps asking for my guidance but just as regularly ignores it. I hope that for once he will take account of it.

Mr. Howarth: I shall try to keep my remarks to a line of argument that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will find acceptable.

Bill Halsall was the original architect of a co-operative scheme and of the Huyton community co-operative, both of which may be affected by the amendments. He will be interested in any financial changes affecting those schemes, both of which are the subject of design awards. One has already been given an award by the Royal Institute of British Architects, while the Huyton community co-operative for the elderly is to receive an award on 5 July. I have been invited to attend on that occasion, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South. He is not present in the Chamber, but would wish to be associated with my remarks.

I shall make no further reference to Bill Halsall but rather to his work.

Mr. Boyes: I regret intervening——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should address the Chair and not turn his back to it.

Mr. Boyes: I say, "Hear, hear," to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It offers a much preferable view.

I regret the fact that my hon. Friend is leaving the subject of Bill Halsall.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman would be well advised to leave the subject of Mr. Halsall.

Mr. Boyes: My hon. Friend's comments concerning Mr. Halsall relate to my interest in this amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that we may return to the amendments before the House.

Mr. Boyes: I was attempting to return my hon. Friend directly to the subject matter of the amendments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already performed the function of returning the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) to the subject matter of the amendments.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for attempting, along with yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to steer me in the direction of the amendments, which are of great concern to both the Huyton and the Weller street co-operatives. I shall decline to mention any architect, other than to remark that there is a whole gaggle of community architects—if that is the right term—or a whole collection of them. There is a collection of community architects in the Merseyside area, some of them very distinguished, who are too many to mention. Many of them will be concerned about the amendments because they have been responsible for schemes which will

be directly affected. That is the point that I was trying to make, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I recognise your forbearance in allowing me to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South made a spirited and eloquent speech earlier in which he referred to the concerns of the black community and the schemes that housing associations may or may not bring forward to deal with them. He also mentioned, in passing, the role of specialist black and Asian housing associations.

By their very nature, those associations are small. They do not have a wide asset base and they often sensitively provide housing services for black and Asian people. Housing associations that work particularly with the black community provide a good standard of housing in circumstances where there is often no other choice.

Reference was made earlier to Tower Hamlets and other such areas. I am sure you will intervene, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I am out of order, but I am serving on the Committee considering the City of London (Spitalfields Market) Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is out of order.

Mr. Howarth: I was merely going on to point out that part of that redevelopment of the Spitalfields market site involves the construction of 118 houses that will be divided between local housing associations, one of which—which brings me to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South—I understand, is the Spitalfields housing co-operative.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman just asked for my advice and I have offered it to him. Now he is ignoring it. The Bill is in Committee and it would be quite improper for the hon. Gentleman to pursue the line that he is currently pursuing.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall not pursue that point.

My hon. Friend's point was that some housing associations specifically deal with particular ethnic groups, such as the Asian community in Bradford or in one of the Yorkshire cities, or the Afro-Caribbean communities in some of our inner cities.

Will the Minister, or better still, the Secretary of State, if he finishes his fag in time, assure us that he will not at some future date claw back grants of housing associations that deal with the specific needs of black members of the community and charge them interest into the bargain? That would be a dreadful thing to happen. I shall give way to the Minister if she will assure me that those housing associations dealing with black and Asian people will not be penalised by the devide that the Government have brought before the House.

Mr. Battle: There is an example in the constituency of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), who is supporting the Government's policy on housing associations: a housing association project for young homeless black people. That housing association—the Unity housing association—is tiny, and if the interest is clawed back from its budget it will not be able to continue to provide housing for homeless blacks in an inner-city stress area in the constituency of a Conservative Member.

12 midnight

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend has illustrated very well the point that I was trying to make. I cannot add much to what he has said, other than that I expect no less from him than to steer the House——

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Howarth: May I just finish praising my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle)? He accompanied me, and other Opposition Members, through three and a half months of the Standing Committee on the Housing Bill—at which time, I must add, these amendments were not discussed. I see that the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) is in his seat. I have listened many times to his eloquent remarks on the Bill. While no doubt he agrees with these measures, he will confirm that the amendments were not brought forward at the proper time.

Let me return to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West. Burning the midnight oil, he often puts the Government on the rack with great precision, and he has done it again tonight.

Mr. Cummings: My hon. Friend mentioned ethnic minorities such as Afro-Caribbeans. Would he care to reflect on an ethnic minority in the county of Durham—the Durham aged mineworkers? The Durham aged mineworkers housing association is a charitable association founded 100 years ago and funded by the pennies from miners' pay packets, earned from the pit point. Does my hon. Friend not agree that it would be a tragedy if the interest that has accrued to that account were clawed back by the Secretary of State, whose forefathers have a vested interest in coal mining in Northumberland and Durham and whose fortune was made from the same pit point that provided the finances for the aged mineworkers?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend's considerable local knowledge, and his concern for the Durham aged mineworkers' housing association and the retired miners living in housing controlled by what sounds like a splendid body, make his point. I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), who is sitting on the Front Bench, is a member of the organisation. I am bound to say that he does not look much like an aged mineworker to me, although I stand to be corrected. I shall say only that he seems to be taking very well to the night shift, which may suggest that at some stage he wielded a shovel below ground.

Mr. Boyes: No.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend says no. I shall not go into what he may have wielded below ground, because I am not sure whether the House would like to share that knowledge.

My hon. Friend the Member for Easington made a good point. At some point in future—I do not know when—are we to witness the horrible spectacle of the Secretary of State for the Environment carrying out some kind of ancestral vendetta? I can just see the glee on the Secretary of State's face as he stands at the Dispatch Box, probably in reply to a private notice question from my hon. Friend the Member for Easington, trying to justify why he is

[Mr. Howarth]

charging the Durham aged mineworkers housing association interest. What a terrible prospect. What a mind-blowing event that would be.

With all humility I must state that my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington has told me that he has never toiled below ground. However, I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Easington has toiled below ground. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), who is sitting on my left—topographically speaking—has worked underground. In the fulness of time, as his parliamentary career passes its autumn stage, he may seek accommodation from the Durham aged mineworkers housing association or the Yorkshire equivalent—if there is such a body in Yorkshire.

My hon. Friend may decide to spend the twilight of his years recovering from the damage to his body caused by the time that he spent underground—not in this place, I hasten to add—and he might seek the help of the Durham aged mineworkers housing association for accommodation. He may settle happily in one of the association's cottages with his wife—his children will presumably have left home by then. My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley is on the edge of his seat and is obviously keen to tell me of his expectations about the Durham aged mineworkers association, although he may have other things on his mind.

If my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley becomes a tenant at some point in the future of the—all together now—Durham aged mineworkers housing association, will we see the ghost of the Secretary of State at the Dispatch Box saying that the Government will charge the association interest?

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): With his fag.

Mr. Howarth: As my hon. Friend says, with his fag. The smoke may smell rather strange because by then he will be in another realm. However, that is another story.

Mr. Barron: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Howarth: The shame at the prospect of his old age has caused my hon. Friend to intervene.

Mr. Barron: Although I do not want to delay the debate, I want to state, as both a son and a grandson of Durham miners, that I think it likely that the family of the Secretary of State for the Environment at some time received some of the wealth created by my forefathers in the Durham coalfields, where they worked for many years before they had to move down to Yorkshire. Perhaps the Secretary of State owes the debt to me and not I to him. As he stands at the Dispatch Box, he should think about giving back some of the coal royalties to the Durham aged mineworkers housing association instead of taking any more money from it in his capacity as Secretary of State.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend makes a point, about which he had pondered hard. For some five minutes I hoped that he would rise to speak, knowing his great expertise on houses for miners, and he did.

I may return to miners' housing and black and Asian housing, but now I turn to housing for general family needs. Many housing associations provide housing for that purpose, and associations on Merseyside and other deprived inner-city areas—and outer-city areas; there is activity in my constituency in outer areas—have traditionally provided housing of a high standard for groups of people in housing need. It is exceedingly well managed and finances have been generous under housing association grants, but they need to be able to plan ahead in order to assure the future of their tenants. Knowing that the Secretary of State may say, "I am clawing back your grant and charging you interest," how can an organisation plan ahead?

Earlier today in the other place I celebrated the 10th anniversary of Merseyside Improved Housing, which is a fine body. Its chief executive, Barry Natton, is a great friend of mine. I know that the Minister, and I think the Under-Secretary of State, have met him, and I am sure that they will agree that he is a fine man. I had a vol-au-vent and a glass of orange juice, which I thought wise, knowing that I would probably address the House later. Today that body manages more than 20,000 properties. I have not counted them recently, as they are spread throughout Merseyside and I might have difficulty doing so. Will it be greeted some day by the Secretary of State saying, "I am calling in some of your housing association grants and charging you interest."?

Mr. Allan McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Nobody has mentioned Airey housing, of which the Minister is fully aware. Government policy caused housing associations to step in and replace those houses. The Government removed capital grants, so housing associations had to step in. Airey housing is in the most vulnerable areas and as it is open to the elements when it is being built, it takes longer to build. If the Secretary of State claws back the interest on the money lent to replace the substandard property, that will automatically increase rents in those deserted areas. The policy all along has been completely wrong.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend demonstrates his detailed knowledge of Airey housing. He points out that this provision could make a bad problem even worse and certainly could drive up rent levels, resulting in other unintended consequences.

Mr. Cummings: Does my hon. Friend agree that the power that the Secretary of State has returned to himself for clawing back interest rates and surpluses could be regarded as robbing charity? Many housing associations, such as the Anchor housing association, are registered as charities. Is it the Minister's intention to rob charities?

12.15 am

Mr. Howarth: The Secretary of State is not here because he does not like the criticism that my hon. Friend and others are meting out. A glance at the right hon. Gentleman's countenance, however, would suggest that he is the sort of man who would like to take money from charities by claiming interest rates. When the Bill receives Royal Assent, we will ask why he is taking money from charitable organisations and at the same time charging them interest. That is a disgraceful prospect.

Mr. Boyes: I intend to read my hon. Friend's speech to my management committee—that will save my hon. Friend the bother of travelling from Knowsley to Houghton and Washington. My committee will be

particularly interested in the references to me toiling with a shovel. There are miners here who spent many hours underground——

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will the hon. Gentleman address the House rather than his colleagues?

Mr. Boyes: On a previous occasion, I was asked to address the Deputy Speaker. If the hon. Gentleman had been in the Chamber as long as me, he would understand the matter. He should not think that there is any credit due to him in Darlington. What I am saying is of great significance to the people of Darlington, which is part of County Durham, who live in the type of housing that we are discussing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) is making a superb speech, which is appreciated by all except the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon). He does not understand it, because he has missed three hours of the debate. There is a lot more to come. My hon. Friend is just on his preamble; that is why I am getting my question in now, because I am on the morning shift.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman gets his question in quick, because he is making a long speech of it.

Mr. Boyes: I am not making a speech; I was interrupted by the hon. Member for Darlington, who is showing no interest in the Bill except to interrupt proceedings.

Subsection 7(a) states:

"the rate or rates of interest (whether fixed or variable) which is or are applicable."

My hon. Friend has been discussing planning, budgeting and rent levels. How can such things be determined unless there is some guidance in clause 47 or elsewhere in the Bill? How are the interest rates to be determined? They could be determined at any level.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Boyes: It is in order to refer to the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman can be out of order by making an over-long intervention.

Mr. Boyes *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps he will let his hon. Friend reply to his question.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend has raised an issue that I had not intended to discuss until later, but I have with me an article by Christopher Huhne that appeared in *The Guardian* on 1 June. The article is entitled "Stopping price boom before it ends in tears". It is difficult to get across the point of the article without reading it all out, but it makes a crucial point about interest rates, which was the point to which my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington referred. I shall try to explain how it is relevant to the amendment. It is not long, and I should get through it in 10 or 15 minutes:

"Britain's housing boom is now so out of hand that the surge in prices is beginning to swamp whatever other economic decisions most households make. It is common, for example, for home owners in the South-east to find that their capital gains——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before he proceeds any further, the hon. Gentleman must assure me that this is relevant to the amendments. On the strength of that assurance, I shall allow him to proceed.

Mr. Howarth: The article is relevant, in that it discusses the economic consequences of interest charges—the issue raised by my hon. Friend——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What causes me anxiety is not that the article contains a passage about interest rates, which might be relevant, but that a great deal of what the hon. Gentleman proposes to read out might not be relevant to the amendments. If he assures me that the article is relevant, I shall allow him to proceed, but I very much hope that he is not misleading me.

Mr. Boyes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. No point of order arises.

Mr. Howarth: The article deals with interest charges. If, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you think that I read too far without getting to them, I am sure you will stop me. It builds up a logical sequence of argument. I genuinely seek not to abuse your understanding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but if you feel that I do, I am sure you will tell me so.

This situation

"makes a mockery of the incentives economy. The need for restraint is urgent.

One consequence is the reviving interest in credit controls, however difficult they are to justify in conventional liberal terms. If the Government's own finances are in balance and it is therefore making no contribution to credit growth, why should the authorities presume to dictate what borrowers and lenders freely agree?"

This is the point: there is an interesting relationship between borrowers and lenders.

"The answer, of course, is that supervision is necessary on macro-economic grounds, but that is a Keynesian reply. We are all demand managers now.

In general, though, policy makers should not fret too much about the growth of credit. The reality is that there is no stable relationship between broad money and total spending, even in the long run. There is no economic evidence *per se* to suggest that credit growth is inflationary. Indeed, there are several reasons for supposing that the increase in the amount of credit (and hence, broad money) compared with national income over the last decade is the product of several underlying if unpredictable, factors.

The first was the removal of direct controls on credit as the financial system was progressively liberalised. The second was the intense competition between banks and building societies for a share of the new market.

The third factor, highlighted in work by Professsor Marcus Miller, is the reduction of the spread—the bank or building society's profit—between the interest rates paid on deposits and the interest rate charged to lenders. That spread is a key determinant of borrowers' willingness to borrow. The extreme case arises if someone can borrow and then on-lend in other markets at even higher rates, in which case there is an explosion of credit. That opportunity—so called round-tripping—has occasionally arisen for companies. Normally, of course, borrowing costs are higher than deposit rates. However, the narrower the spread between deposit and lending rates, the less the cost of having easy access to money (liquidity) and the greater the likelihood that people will borrow merely for the convenience of being more liquid. Clearly, the more competitive environment because of financial liberalisation has reduced spreads, which in turn helps the credit balloon. It does not necessarily have any macro-economic effects.

Why then should we now be worried about the personal credit explosion? Essentially, it is because there is clear evidence that it is not merely a financial phenomenon, but is

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spilling over into asset prices and hence is likely to boost consumption at a time when imports are already soaring and the current account going sharply into deficit. The danger, as this column argued on February 3, is that without some direct controls on lending, a self-feeding bubble of credit and rising house prices which provide collateral for more credit will get wholly out of hand.

The latest quarterly analysis"—

Mr. Fallon: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have been more than tolerant with the House. *[Interruption.]* I submit that a discussion on the amendment about interest and interest payments relates to interest on a grant under clause 47 of the Bill and has no bearing whatever on any interest that might or might not be paid on loans. That is what the hon. Gentleman is discussing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) is right in general.

Mr. Battle: He is not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a matter for my judgment. I regret that the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) did not have regard to the point that I put to him before he embarked on this long quotation. I regret that he seems to have misled me. I hope that he will now address himself to the amendment.

Mr. Boyes *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. George Howarth.

Mr. Howarth: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Boyes: I should like to help my hon. Friend to stay in order. I have listened to what he has said. I asked in my intervention whether the rate or rates of interest, whether fixed or variable, could be determined by the Secretary of State without defining in the Bill the level at which rates of interest can be set. My understanding from the article that my hon. Friend has read to the House is that the Secretary of State is quite free to set the rate at whatever level he wishes. Perhaps my hon. Friend will confirm that. The Under-Secretary of State does not intervene to say that that is incorrect.

That means that housing associations and other such bodies cannot possibly plan and determine rent levels. That is because the Secretary of State might set a variable rate of interest that could vary in the short and long term by large amounts. Despite what Christopher Huhne says, that gap can be narrower or wider——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must tell the hon. Gentleman, not for the first time in the debate, that interventions must be brief.

Mr. Howarth: Perhaps I could ask for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is my contention that the housing association borrows given amounts of money and gets spending power from the Housing Corporation. Out of the rent collected, a given amount of housing association grant is paid back towards the loan for the properties. Therefore, housing association grant is also a loan. The article from which I was quoting deals with interest charges and also with the competitive market for loans. In that context, I think that the article is relevant. *[Interruption.]* If hon. Members would care to listen, they will find that the article is educative.

Mr. Battle: Does my hon. Friend agree that housing association projects are presently funded by housing association grant and by a residual mortgage loan? That is why, from a sedentary position, I pointed out to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) that he was wrong. If he does not understand the financing of housing associations, that is his responsibility, and he should look into it. The funding is made up of a combination of grant and loan, and that is why the interest rate is important. It may be that it is a loan from a local authority or from the Housing Corporation, but it is a joint structure of financing, and the interest rates are important.

12.30 am

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend has explained it well.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has been doing his level best to explain the point about the loans, the interest, the grants and everything else. It can be compared with the debts of the Third world, which has loans and grants, but it cannot pay back the money. It then pays a bit off the capital, or if it cannot manage that, it pays a bit off the interest.

My hon. Friend might turn his attention to another point—how could those housing associations calculate what proportion is made up of interest, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer is having a row with the Prime Minister about the interest rates pushing up the bank rate one day, bringing it down another, and then pushing it back up again? It is forecast that tomorrow it will go up again. They must have problems when they do not know how to calculate whether it is 8, 8·5, 9, 9·5 or 10 per cent. The suggestion has been made that by the end of this year, the interest rate will be well into double figures —perhaps the highest lending rate ever.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman address himself to the amendments that are before the House?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend makes a point that is illuminating. The Government not only have the power to claw back those grants but—this is the other point—the little operation that takes place from time to time between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister, in which the whole world shares, may also influence the matter. I hazard a guess that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has some knowledge of the subject. It may be that my hon. Friend, who has a shrewd nose for the difficulties that the Government from time to time experience, has got wind—*[Interruption.]* That might explain why he has left the Chamber. My hon. Friend might have some knowledge that there is about to be another disagreement between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor.

I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) has rejoined us. So far, his remarks have all been made from a sedentary position, but perhaps, he might intervene and make some points that we might be interested in; otherwise, perhaps he will cease making snide remarks from a sedentary position.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) looks rather tired, so we will leave him alone. On

the interesting point made by my hon. Friend for the Member for Bolsover on the interest charges, would my hon. Friend remind us of the second paragraph of the article in *The Guardian*, as he read the article too quickly? He will remember that that passage refers to the manner in which interest charges were fluctuating, which is relevant to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Howarth: I know that my hon. Friend listened intently. I had not actually reached the end of that article. It continued:

"The third factor, highlighted in work by Professor Marcus Miller, is the reduction of the spread—the bank or building society's profit—between the interest rates paid on deposits and the interest rate charged to lenders. That spread is a key determinant to borrowers' willingness to borrow. An extreme case arises if someone can borrow and then on-lend in other markets at even higher rates, in which case there is an explosion of credit. That opportunity—so called 'round tripping'—has occasionally arisen for companies."

Mr. Winnick: Will my hon. Friend read the next paragraph as well?

Mr. Howarth: I do not want to move on to the next paragraph——

Mr. Boyes: My hon. Friend is making one of the most brilliant speeches that I have heard in this place. I am sure that when I read it out at my constituency meeting there will be stupendous cheering and clapping. That is why I want to clarify a tricky point. I realise that tonight my hon. Friend has had to deal with difficult mathematics, statistics and economics, but he has presented them with great clarity——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. This is not a Committee, but I have the impression that the hon. Gentleman thinks it is. Interventions must be brief.

Mr. Boyes: I want to explain how I know that we are on Report, just in case anyone reading the report of the debate thinks that I am on the wrong theme.

When I speak to my general management committee, it will want to know whether it is possible for the rates of interest charged to be well above the bank interest rate and even above the rate mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Even if the rate rises to double figures—perhaps the 12·5 to 15 per cent. suggested by my hon. Friend—the Secretary of State could still level a variable rate of interest much higher than that. That would make planning and rent level determination impossible.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend rightly suggests that the Bill would allow that to happen. I am sure that he will not only report my speech, but speak at length about the matter to his general management committee.

The Secretary of State declines to sit and listen to criticism. He is not only the judge and the jury but the hangman. He might be responsible for clawing back money from the Durham aged mineworkers housing association while charging it interest into the bargain. That interest might be set not at bank interest rate, but at a level that he determines. Given his background, he may decide to act out some sort of ancestral punishment on the miners of Durham, based on that provision.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): An illustration of my hon. Friend's point is that housing co-operatives that bought ex-Coal Board property cannot understand why they are forced to increase their rents to themselves above what is necessary simply so that the rents become the same as comparable rents in the private sector or for council property. They have to do that to achieve the maximum interest rates for those who lent them the money. They can be forced to do that up to the fair rent level, when they could have charged themselves less. That is bad enough, but if the Secretary of State fixes the interest rate it will be horrendous.

Mr. Howarth: I referred earlier to housing co-operatives, which will be confronted with the inevitable upward hike of rents as a result of the Bill when it is enacted, although it is unnecessary for them to raise rents, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) said. They have sufficient money to manage their repairs. They have cyclical maintenance and management allowances, yet they do most of the management themselves.

Mr. Skinner: Actuarially they are sound.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend uses the words that members of the accountancy profession would use. I understand that he is acquainted with that profession, although one step removed from it.

The housing co-operatives do not need to raise rents, yet, at the behest of the Secretary of State in these provisions, their rents will inevitably rise and the consequences will be felt unnecessarily in the pockets of the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North, simply because the Secretary of State got out of bed the wrong side that morning and decided to dabble with interest rates.

Mr. Skinner: I hope that my hon. Friend is not seriously suggesting that the Secretary of State will fix interest rates. If so, I would argue the case against him. I do not believe that the Secretary of State has the time to be pottering about. He might just give a nod and a wink to some junior official in his Department to get on with the job, while he spends his time protesting about people wanting to build in his own back yard. "Not in my back yard," says the Secretary of State. He allows everyone else to roam all over the green belt, yet he tries to stop people building in his own back yard.

Is my hon. Friend seriously telling the House that the Secretary of State has time to fix interest rates when the Chancellor of the Exchequer does not know what they will be from day to day because the Prime Minister has not told him? That is just too fanciful for words. I want my hon. Friend to deal with facts. We should talk straight. A tinpot junior official will have to do that job within the general parameters of what the Secretary of State has to say. That is what I think.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend has given us an insight into the daily life of the Secretary of State and his concerns. The Minister of State appears to have gone off for a sleep and left his Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. Skinner: She could not sleep in that frock.

Mr. Howarth: That may be so.

The Secretary of State is spending his time ensuring that the builders build not in his back yard, but in everyone else's back yard, including that of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North and perhaps in my own

[Mr. Howarth]

area. In addition, the press tells us that he has the Minister of State on daily report to explain why, for example, when the Bill was in Committee, it did not go quite as the Secretary of State wanted it to go. The Secretary of State is fighting battles in all corners of his party, some of which he is winning while losing others. I am not sure whether he will have time to give his full and undivided attention to interest charges.

The canvas has been filled in a little more. The Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister are having some difficulty in agreeing on that matter. The Secretary of State is not present. He has left the Chamber yet again, perhaps having anticipated my hon. Friend's intervention. If the Secretary of State has his hand on that set of economic levers, that does not leave me with any confidence that he will ever make a sensible decison in future—or, indeed, any decision at all.

12.45 am

I take issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover on only one point. The Secretary of State seems to want the powers. It may well be that at some future date, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer goes off to a better paid job in the City—we read from time to time that that is what he is angling for—and perhaps when the Minister of State goes on to better things, or sideways or down, and the Prime Minister retires—some say that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) or others, such as the Foreign Secretary, may find themselves sitting in her seat—when all those things happen and when houses are built in the constituencies of my hon. Friends but not in the Secretary of State's back yard—the right hon. Gentleman has won that battle—this provision may still be at his disposal and he will start to use it. That is the danger as we see it.

Mr. Skinner: It has just crossed my mind that there is another scenario, and I should like my hon. Friend to turn his attention to it. Why should the Secretary of State concern himself with variables, such as interest rates and loan charges, when he has no need to do so? I shall tell my hon. Friend why. It is because this Secretary of State prides himself on being the retrospective record holder Secretary of State. He has brought in more retrospective legislation in the short period that he has been a Minister than any other Minister I have known.

I think that the Secretary of State's scenario is, "Let them potter and worry about the interest rates. I shall not because I can always come to the House of Commons and tell my Back Benchers to stand on their heads because we did it the wrong way. I can ask them to turn upside down and to vote the other way so that I can bring in retrospective legislation." They have been dummies for him several times already, so I reckon that that is his plan. The Secretary of State will not worry about the interest rates because he will bring in retrospective legislation to cover his tracks if he makes a mistake.

Mr. Howarth: I suspect that my hon. Friend has got the point about interest rates slightly wrong, and I will tell the House why. I agree with my hon. Friend that the Secretary of State is the all-time greatest retrospective legislator in this place, and certainly in the previous Parliament——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howarth: In a moment, but I am still dealing with the intervention made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover. I think that I owe it to him to satisfy the points that he made, but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman when I have done so.

My hon. Friend is right so far as his point about retrospective legislation goes, but one must ask why the Secretary of State is a retrospective legislator. It is because he gets it wrong so often. The difficulty is that the Secretary of State may get it wrong and then go in for retrospective legislation, but, if he has got it wrong, all the housing associations, including the Durham aged mineworkers housing association, could be the victims of his mistakes. I give way now to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick).

Mr. Patnick: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) did not make himself very clear. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) will give way so that his hon. Friend can explain a little more and I can follow every word?

Mr. Howarth: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knew the intention behind his intervention. I am glad that I did not share any of his outlook, because his point escapes me entirely.

I should like to proceed with the important point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover. I notice that my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) is starting to form some idea about what he might want to say on this important subject. The Secretary of State is trying to keep in line the Minister for Housing and Planning, who no doubt will be here on Report at 9 o'clock in the morning. It must be difficult for the Secretary of State to keep the hon. Gentleman in line, given that their views do not always converge.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): He has not resigned yet.

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Gentleman comments from a sedentary position. He must have some forewarning of the Minister's intentions. The Minister may be so fed up with the Bill—which he has never denied is a mess—that he is about to resign.

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Mr. Howarth: I give way to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin)—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman has sat down again. Perhaps he has not quite formed his ideas.

Some of my hon. Friends would argue that the Minister should resign. This Bill, for which he has been responsible and which has been virtually rewritten "on the hoof"—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hoof?"] Other hon. Members obviously went to a different school and pronounce it differently. This Bill is such a dog's breakfast that some hon. Members think that the Minister should resign.

Mr. Devlin: On the contrary, the Bill is such an excellent piece of legislation and has had such excellent steering that the only way I can see my hon. Friend the Minister leaving his post is when he goes to a higher Government post.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not talking about which Minister is in which post. The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) is allowing himself to be distracted. He keeps talking about "this Bill"; I hope that he will return to "this amendment."

Mr. Howarth: Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Winnick: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Howarth: I give way.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not of some interest that, although Conservative Members have constantly lectured us on the need for housing associations—saying why there was no need for local authority dwellings and why housing associations could fulfil that task—they do not seem to have any enthusiasm to speak to the amendment to which my hon. Friend has directed his attention throughout his speech? Clearly, the amendment will result in much harm to the financial position of these organisations.

Mrs. Roe *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Winnick: The Minister shakes her head, but she must answer the valid points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) and to be made by others, including me, who have yet to speak. It is interesting that Conservative Members show no interest in coming to the defence of the housing associations, the very organisations on which they are supposed to be so keen.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend makes the point well. Our difficulty is that the hon. Member for Stockton, South and his colleagues from time to time stand up and say, "This is a good Bill and we support it." But they decline to say why they support it or what is good about it.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): When we last debated the Bill the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) harangued the Minister about the way in which he was handling the detail of the measure. But a little later, when my hon. Friends made precisely the same criticism of the Minister and divided the House, the hon. Gentleman went into the Lobby in support of the Minister. I am wondering why the hon. Gentleman is present tonight and why he is not making a valid contribution on how the Bill will affect Stockton, South.

Hon. Members: Answer. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for Conservative Members to make remarks about the height or size of hon. Members on the Opposition Benches? I distinctly heard references to the size of my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). I regard that as disgraceful, and I would be grateful for a ruling from you on that point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us get on with the debate.

Mr. Howarth: Hon. Members who served on the Standing Committee will agree that the size of my hon. Friend's contribution has little to do with his stature.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order. I seek your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is not the first time that odious remarks have been made about the proportions of my stomach, and so on. If Conservative Members want to have a go at me, I shall be happy to debate with them the issues of the Bill, but I beg you to protect me from their sizeist remarks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure the hon. Gentleman is well able to look after himself. The point that he makes is not really a point of order.

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Member for Stockton, South asserted that this is a good Bill. I recall that, with few exceptions, Conservative Members sat through the Committee stage without uttering a word. On a memorable occasion one of them—I forget who—produced a graph and lectured us about a supply and demand curve displayed on it.

Mr. McCartney: I can help my hon. Friend. The Member in question was the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies). After spending about an hour and a half trying to explain the graph to us, two men in white coats came in and took him away, and he has not been seen since.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I feel sure that the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) will not allow himself to be distracted from the amendment that is before the House.

I am

Mr. Howarth: I would not dream of speculating on who the two men in white coats were, apart from pointing out that I think I heard my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) asking for two choc ices.

For three and a half months the amendment was not supported by the Government. No Government Back Bencher or Minister ever stood up to say that this was something they should do. Now we find that the Government wish to give further powers to the Secretary of State—a man for whom many of us on this side do not have much regard and of whose intentions we are fearful. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover gave an interesting analysis of the Secretary of State's locus in this.

In Committee, the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) treated us to the display of a graph which he could not explain and which we could not understand. Perhaps the Minister could explain the relevance of the graph. Was the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding giving us a glimpse of what was to come in the amendments? Was the graph related to the Bill? Perhaps the Minister should explain.

Mr. Skinner: Perhaps it dealt with interest rates.

Mr. Howarth: The graph must have had what economists call an exogenous influence on interest rates.

Mr. Tony Banks: It was erogenous.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend says it was erogenous. I will not go into that. Obviously he knows more about it.

The graph must have had something to do with interest charges. Perhaps the Secretary of State should, with the aid of the graph which was used in Committee—against the advice of the Clerks, I might add, because it could not be put in *Hansard*——

Mr. Winnick: This is all very interesting, but even more relevant are the fifth and sixth paragraphs of the article in *The Guardian*. I hope that my hon. Friend does not think that I am criticising him, but, when he read out the earlier

[Mr. Winnick]

part of the article, he summarised rather quickly the other parts to which I am referring. Therefore, will my hon. Friend refer back to the parts of *The Guardian* article which dealt with interest rates? He summarised them so quickly that I do not think the House appreciated the point he was making at the time. Perhaps my hon. Friend would be good enough to read the other paragraphs which are relevant to the amendment that we are discussing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) were to do so at length, he would be bordering on tedious repetition.

Mr. Howarth: Nothing is further from my mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

If I may help my hon. Friend, I have found two shorter paragraphs which do not repeat what I said earlier and which may be guidance to him. These are from an article in *The Guardian* of 1 June 1988. These paragraphs may help my hon. Friends who were concerned about housing for people who are unemployed. The article says:

"There are probably two reasons why British house prices do not fall in money terms. The first is that there is little rental market (unlike in the Netherlands or Belgium) so that people cannot simply treat their home like any other asset and sell at the top of the market to buy shares while renting instead.

The second is that the Government's arrangement for paying the mortgages of people who have become unemployed are, by international standards, relatively generous. Even in the 1979-81 recession, there was little distress selling and hence no nominal price falls. When the market slows, sellers merely stay put, prices mark time until earnings catch up, and the amount of buying and selling dries up."

Those points may be of assistance to my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick)—even if I have incurred the wrath of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover.

Mr. Skinner: I cannot let my hon. Friend get away with quoting articles from *The Guardian*, which anyway tend to favour the sloppy Liberals most of the time. That article makes no reference to the remarkable regional variations to which we all know that house values are subject. If my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) wants the facts, minus the graph, he should pay attention to the way in which property values vary in the north, Scotland, Wales, the south of England, and in the commuter territories.

He should note also the way in which house values are increasing in Grantham, Newark and Retford. I mention Grantham even though the shop in which the Prime Minister was born has gone bankrupt. I do not know whether that was caused by the interest charges based on regional variations, but that business has gone bang. It is dusty and scruffy inside. It is worth anybody having a look at it. I gave a speech to the Grantham Labour party a few weeks ago and made a special visit to those premises. The business there was one of the 150,000 company liquidations and bankruptcies which have taken place——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is long enough for an intervention.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for opening up a new vista. Regional differences in property prices are a matter of great concern. Last week, I gave a speech in Norfolk—perhaps on the same night as that of my hon. Friend—and was told that in some parts of that county house prices have quadrupled because they are within striking distance of central London.

Young people working locally there earn far less than they would in London, and they are unable to enter the housing market in parts of Norfolk because prices are geared to London, not to local salaries and wages.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend makes a relevant point. To the extent that there are such fluctuations, in many parts of the country buying a house is beyond the reach even of people on average earnings, let alone those who earn less. Given that the number of local authority dwellings being built is almost nil, there is all the more reason why we should protect genuine housing associations. The two amendments will financially harm people in desperate need who cannot obtain a mortgage and who, like people in my own constituency, cannot be rehoused by the local authority. Such people—who are a matter of concern at least to my hon. Friends—will be in even worse difficulties, and will be unable to afford market rents in the private sector.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has managed to draw the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover about regional variations back to the amendment. This will have an effect on housing associations, which may also be affected by the Secretary of State clawing back housing association grant and charging interest into the bargain.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. He is making an important speech. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred to variations between Scotland and the regions of England. I have been looking at the Housing (Scotland) Bill, and I think that I have found the answer to the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings).

There appears to be no provision for a clawback of, or the charging of interest on, housing association grant to be imposed by the Secretary of State for Scotland on the proposed Scottish Homes organisation. The answer might be for the Durham aged mineworkers housing association to register itself as a housing association in Scotland and thereby avoid running the risk of a clawback and interest charges. There may be a loophole here, from which my hon. Friend could benefit.

Mr. Howarth: Just as the Government are writing the legislation on the hoof, to use the pronunciation of the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South —that seems to be the form adopted by the BBC—my hon. Friends and I, perhaps on the other hoof, as it were, are finding the loople les as we go along. It may well be——

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has not suggested a loophole, but rather dangerously given the Scottish Ministers a nod and a wink to end a benefit to Scotland. My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) should get on with the variations in regions other than Scotland and not give the Government any more chances. They will probably seize on this. The Chief Whip has a grin as broad as a Cheshire cat. He is thinking of telling the Secretary of State for Scotland—*[Interruption.]* He might telephone Chris Moncrieff—who

knows! My hon. Friend should steer clear of what my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian has said. We are concerned about the Scottish interest. I have a colleague from Scotland sitting next to me. Stick to the regional variations.

Mr. Howarth: The interventions are coming faster than my ability to reply to them.

While areas such as Norfolk and the centre of London are experiencing a huge explosion in property prices, in my constituency in Stockbridge village—I have discussed this with the Minister—houses in a shared ownership scheme, built, I think, by Barratt, three or four years ago, at a price of about £22,500, are now worth between £5,000 and £10,000. The Minister should intervene to stop the private landlord who is trying to buy up a number of those houses and turn them into some kind of housing management scheme that would be unsatisfactory to the residents. I hope that the Minister will intervene and enable the Stockbridge village trust to buy them, because it would be a far more responsible landlord than the private landlord.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I wonder whether my hon. Friend would care to suggest to the Minister that if he does not believe what Opposition Members are saying about regional variations and the important implications of the amendment for interest charges, he should consult his hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. He was in my constituency only yesterday, when we were able to show him a new development being built by the Bradford and Northern housing association. Just across the road were improved houses selling—because of the decline in population—at £6,000. The Minister can obtain that information from his colleague, so, if he has any doubt about what we are saying about the problem, he should check. The Government Chief Whip, who was a neighbour of mine and represented part of Burnley for some time, is also well aware of the problem of low house valuation in north-east Lancashire.

1.15 am

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I should point out, however, that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) says that I have spent rather longer on my feet than I had intended, so I shall take no further interventions.

The truth is that we do not trust the Secretary of State—or any Secretary of State—with the power not only to manipulate interest charges but almost arbitrarily to call in the housing association grants with which these schemes were funded and to charge interest into the bargain. This seems to me a thoroughly bad measure which I do not think the House should support, and which I hope hon. Members will oppose in the Lobby.

Mrs. Roe: We have heard a lengthy and wide-ranging contribution from the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth). I shall confine my remarks to the amendments.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) raised a point about the Housing Corporation paying interest for late HAG payments. There is no specific provision, but the manner in which housing association grant will be paid is a matter for determination by the corporation, after consulting the movement and with consent from the Secretary of State and the Treasury. It would be perfectly possible for a similar rule for interest on late payment to be incorporated into those determinations.

Let me say to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that the amendment does not imply that the Housing Corporation is always right. A grant might be overpaid through the fault of either the association or the corporation; or circumstances might change after grant has been paid, through the fault of neither party. That does not alter the principle that, if the repayment is delayed, interest should be recoverable.

Mr. Battle: Will the Under-Secretary answer the central question: when will the interest rate be fixed by the Secretary of State? Will it be fixed in advance, when the project is drawn up, or will it be retrospective? This is a crucial point that could affect the financing of the whole scheme.

Mrs. Roe: I shall come to that in a moment. It is on my list of points to which to reply.

I regret that I am going to puncture the fantasy conjured up by the hon. Members for Knowsley, North and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). The fact is that the power provided by the amendments to require the payment of interest is a power for the Housing Corporation, not for the Secretary of State. I suspect that the Public Accounts Committee will be very surprised by the Opposition argument that when a grant has been paid which ought not to have been paid, or when the purpose for which it was paid is frustrated, and the association delays repaying it, it is somehow unfair or unreasonable to charge the association interest.

I must tell the hon. Member for Knowsley, North that the amendments do not have the significance that he has attributed to them. They deal with an extremely simple point of housekeeping. If grant has to be recovered, it is right that the association should be put under reasonable pressure to repay promptly, and the taxpayer has a right to expect that. A grant that should not have been paid is tantamount to a loan, and it is right that interest should be recoverable.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 152, Noes 51.

Division No. 351] **[1.18 am]**

AYES

Arbuthnot, James	Emery, Sir Peter
Batiste, Spencer	Fallon, Michael
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Favell, Tony
Bowis, John	Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Bright, Graham	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Burns, Simon	Forth, Eric
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Fox, Sir Marcus
Carttiss, Michael	Franks, Cecil
Chope, Christopher	Freeman, Roger
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*	French, Douglas
Colvin, Michael	Gale, Roger
Conway, Derek	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre Forest)*	Gill, Christopher
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Goodhart, Sir Philip
Cope, Rt Hon John	Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Cran, James	Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Gow, Ian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*	Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*	Gregory, Conal
Day, Stephan	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Devlin, Tim	Grist, Ian
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James	Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Dover, Den	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Durant, Tony	Hampson, Dr Keith

Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stral'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon Sir Charles
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Alton, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dixon, Don
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Illsley, Eric
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendment proposed: No. 25, in page 35, line 39, at end insert—

'(7) A direction under subsection (2)(c) above requiring the payment of interest on the amount directed to be paid to the Corporation shall specify, in accordance with subsection (9) below,—

(a) the rate or rates of interest (whether fixed or variable) which is or are applicable;

(b) the date from which interest is payable, being not earlier than the date of the relevant event; and

(c) any provision for suspended or reduced interest which is applicable.

(8) In subsection (7)(c) above—

(a) the reference to a provision for suspended interest is a reference to a provision whereby, if the amount which is directed to be paid to the Corporation is paid before a date specified in the direction, no interest will be payable for any period after the date of the direction; and

(b) the reference to a provision for reduced interest is a reference to a provision whereby, if that amount is so paid, any interest payable will be payable at a rate or rates lower then the rate or rates which would otherwise be applicable.

(9) The matters specified in a direction as mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) of subsection (7) above shall be either—

(a) such as the Corporation, acting in accordance with such principles as it may from time to time determine, may specify as being appropriate, or

(b) such as the Corporation may determine to be appropriate in the particular case.'—*[Mrs. Roe.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 151, Noes 52.

Division No. 352] **[1.32 am**

AYES

Arbuthnot, James
Batiste, Spencer
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowis, John
Bright, Graham
Burns, Simon
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stral'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*

Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Alton, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dixon, Don
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 49

TAX RELIEF GRANTS

Amendment proposed: No. 256, in page 36, line 29, leave out

'341 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970'

and insert

'488 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988'.—*[Mrs. Roe.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 144, Noes 41.

Division No. 353] **[1.42 am**

AYES

Arbuthnot, James
Batiste, Spencer
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowis, John
Bright, Graham
Burns, Simon
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry

Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bradley, Keith
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dixon, Don
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Illsley, Eric
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Ruddock, Joan
Spearing, Nigel
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Bob Cryer

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 50

SURPLUS RENTAL INCOME

Mr. Battle: I beg to move amendment No. 85, in page 38, line 4 leave out subsections (6), (7) and (8).

The purpose of our amendment is to challenge the Government on this clause, which proposes to claw back surplus rental income. Although we suggested in Committee that the whole clause be deleted, we are now by the amendment trying to delete the final subsections so that, if the Secretary of State were to claw back the surplus rental income he would not be able to use it in any way. In other words, our amendment would neuter the purpose of the clawing back.

Today has been a strange day for me, as I have experienced a case of upstairs and downstairs. Today, in the Finance Bill Committee, on which I also serve, we discussed housing. The Government's attitude in that Committee contrasts strongly with the statements by the Minister of State in the Housing Bill Committee. This afternoon we discussed the business expansion scheme and, when we put to the Financial Secretary the phrases that the Minister of State introduced so often into our debates on the Housing Bill, such as the social charter and the social rented housing sector, a phrase that he used earlier in this debate, those statements were rebuffed by the Financial Secretary and his supporters, who want to push housing into the fair winds of the private sector without any social protection whatsoever.

A conflict is emerging at the heart of the Government's housing strategy. It has been put together in a piecemeal fashion. When we were discussing the Housing Bill in Committee, the civil servants were drawing up proposals to undermine the Bill by the business expansion scheme included in the Budget.

The Minister appears to be trapped in trying to find the difficult middle way between the public and private sectors. He is trapped at the heart of the Government's policy towards housing associations. In Committee the Minister often used the phrase "meet me in the middle". Earlier, one of his colleagues was anticipating his early retirement from his post. He may well go down as the Minister of "meet me in the middle". One of his typical remarks in Committee was, "Come a bit further to meet us and I am sure that together we can do a great deal more." He has echoed those words as he has gone round to meet members of the housing association movement to suggest that he is holding to the difficult middle way between the public and private sectors. Although the Minister may support the social aspects of the policy, the Secretary of State is firmly undermining the market aspects of the policy, so they contradict one another and the Minister is overruled.

If the axis lies between the public and private sectors, where will the housing association movement fit under the Bill when, in the past, it has lain between the two sectors, with some support from each? Will it be pushed into the free market and be unprotected or, even worse as is suggested in the clause, will its revenue surplus be milked? Although it makes a profit in the free market, that profit will be clawed back by the Government in a form of interference that undermines the whole policy of the free market.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): My hon. Friend is making a good point about the money being milked. Has he noticed subsection (3), which states:

"the surpluses in respect of a period shall be calculated in such manner as the Secretary of State may from time to time determine"?

The Secretary of State could fiddle the books so that it would look as though the association was making a surplus, when it was not really doing so, and he could then milk the money.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will bear in mind the fact that we are discussing subsections (6), (7) and (8)—not subsection (3).

2 am

Mr. Battle: Thank you for that advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would add only that what happens to the surplus and how it is determined is a moot question affecting the entire clause. I hope that my hon. Friend's points are taken on board by the Minister and that we get a reply so that we do not get the impression that the Secretary of State wants to fiddle the books in the background once the projects have gone ahead.

Earlier in the debate I was surprised to discover that Conservative Members, especially the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), did not seem to have the foggiest idea about housing associations. The hon. Gentleman intervened to correct my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) when he was describing the funding structure. It is worth reminding ourselves that at the moment housing associations are funded not only by the housing association grant, which is commonly known by the acronym HAG, but by a residual mortgage loan, which is provided either by the Housing Corporation or by a local authority.

I should like to emphasise the role played by local authorities in the past.

Mr. Cryer: Will my hon. Friend explain that it is common practice in the Civil Service that, whenever a brief is prepared, any abbreviations in the speech are set out in

full? For the record, and to ensure that there is no misunderstanding when people read *Hansard*, will my hon. Friend explain precisely what HAG is, so that nobody could possibly conclude that he was continually referring to the Prime Minister? I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would intervene if you thought that my hon. Friend was doing that.

Mr. Battle: I am sure that you would intervene in those circumstances, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I can assure my hon. Friend that HAG refers to housing association grant. I serve notice on my hon. Friend that I shall refer later in my contribution to GRF, which is another technical term with which we should all be acquainted. It means grant redemption fund, which is the clue to the whole purpose of the clause and the amendment.

Apart from the acronyms for describing the legislation relating to housing associations, I am struck by the fact that Conservative Members seem to fail to acknowledge the central role played by local authorities in supporting housing associations in the past. Yesterday, for example, the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) failed to acknowledge that. Although the hon. Gentleman claims to be a supporter of housing associations, he is prepared to speak and vote against the very means of supporting them in the form of local authority funding. Unless Conservative Members are aware that local authorities contribute to the funding of housing associations, the means of funding them will not be properly understood.

Mr. Winnick: Does my hon. Friend agree that local authorities and housing associations have rarely disagreed about their respective functions and that local authorities, like housing associations, recognise that the councils used to provide the bulk of rented accommodation and that housing associations played a minor role? The housing associations have never disputed that. The extent to which the Government now want housing associations to take over the major responsibility for rented housing goes not only against the wishes of local authorities, but against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of housing associations, which understand that they have a more modest role.

Mr. Battle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention because he reminds us—I am sure that all hon. Members could give examples of this—of how closely housing associations have worked with their local authorities to draw up various proposals. The very amount of housing association grant is determined once the final scheme costs and the amount of fair rent are known. Drawing up such schemes and getting to that equation demands a great amount of work, in co-operation with local authorities, to put the package together.

Mr. Skinner: I do not want to stop my hon. Friend's flow, but I do not agree with the point that he has made several times. I find it more than a little irksome when my hon. Friend keeps saying that, by their very nature, local authorities work closely with all housing associations. That is not quite the truth. I wish that my hon. Friend would take account of the fact that in some areas the old Coal Industry housing association did not always find favour with the local authorities. Local authorities were keen to ensure that their houses were brought up to a decent standard and they allocated sums of money per house. The Coal Industry housing association ran into a lot of trouble in its later period and paid little attention —especially when MacGregor was at the helm—to providing amenities and ensuring that houses were brought up to a decent state of repair. I hope my hon. Friend will ensure that in all future references he does not make a general point about the "natural togetherness" of the two bodies. In doing so he frustrates my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), who, I think, wants to point that out.

Mr. Battle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. I do not think that I said that all housing associations had such a relationship. I agree that the relationships between local authorities and housing associations have been patchy.

In making the equation to get access to grant, the housing associations believed that the grant would cover the unexpected increase in cost or any unforeseen delay in implementing the contract. In the past, housing association grant has been available to meet the full costs of repair works to properties. When rental income—after deductions for management of housing associations have been made and day-to-day and cyclical maintenance have been carried out—does not meet the mortgage repayments, there is usually a discretionary revenue deficit grant —or, for hostels, a hostel deficit grant—which is made by the Secretary of State to tide them over and ensure that projects are viable. These projects will not be viable under clause 50. Although Conservative Members say that they are friendly towards, and supportive of, housing associations, their legislation proves the exact opposite.

Under clause 45, the Housing Corporation alone will be given the power to make grant payments, but the removal of the power of local authorities to pay housing association grants on behalf of the Secretary of State will end local authority funding for housing associations. No mention is made of housing association payments for major repair schemes where the local authority holds the mortgage for the original scheme. At present, the Housing Corporation will fund major repairs for such schemes only if no, or only the minimum, housing association grant was paid on the original scheme.

Clause 50 replaces the existing grant redemption fund —I apologise if I refer in future to GRF—with a provision for a rent surplus fund, to be established where a housing association has previously received housing association grant under existing legislation or where it receives the new housing association grant once the legislation becomes law.

Mr. Cohen: I have looked at the figures for housing associations and am interested in the idea of the "rent surplus fund". Rents for housing associations have increased substantially, while housing benefits have decreased. For many low earners, annual rents can be 40 per cent. or more of their annual income. How can there be a rent surplus fund? Is it not purely at the expense of the low earners, who are paying such huge amounts? Surely it is wrong that the Secretary of State should take unto himself and the Treasury powers to take that money from the housing associations and out of the pockets of those poor individuals. Is that not a scandal?

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend has done his homework well, because when, in 1987, the Department of the

[Mr. Battle]

Environment published proposals for financing housing associations, the Government envisaged that there would not be a rent surplus fund, since a surplus would not arise on new schemes combining public and private finance. That was acknowledged in that consultation document last year. Why will the Government not take notice of that advice and incorporate it in the Bill? Instead, we have a provision that reflects the rubber stamp of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Cryer: Pensioner couples in my constituency have had their housing benefit reduced by over £5 a week, yet they are facing increases in rent and service charges—the latter being a vague area which many tenants do not properly comprehend—by the Anchor housing association. Any rent surpluses should be used to keep rents to the absolute minimum for tenants who are struggling to make ends meet under this vicious Government, who are robbing them of housing benefit.

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend highlights where this surplus money will come from. When, in Committee, we asked the Minister whether increases in rent would be matched by housing benefit, he said that they would. But the graph of housing benefit in the public expenditure White Paper shows that housing benefit is being reduced each year. There is no sign in that White Paper that housing benefit resources will be increased to pay for the rent increases that will occur under this measure.

The Minister told me in Committee that he would give me a prize if, on reading the *Official Report* of the proceedings, I found six references to the Bill providing housing benefit. Such references do not exist, because the Minister has not obtained from the Treasury a commitment to fund the housing benefit. The result will be not only increased rents, but people having to find the money from elsewhere to pay those increases. And when the housing associations have rent surpluses, that money will be creamed off under this provision.

Mr. Winnick: Housing associations would like to be in a position to charge fair rents. Under the Bill they will have no alternative but to grant tenancies on an assured basis, and that will represent a market rent. This will be a devastating blow to those who in the past were helped by housing associations but who will now be offered accommodation at a rent which most people in housing need will consider exorbitant, and who, if they had that sort of money, might wish to buy their own homes.

Mr. Battle: That is right. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) speaks of those who will have to pay rent increases, and my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) points out that those increased rents will be at market levels because housing associations will lose their protection under the Bill. As a result, the Secretary of State will be able to direct housing associations to set rent surplus funds, from which he will be able to claw back surpluses accruing from higher rents.

2.15 am

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is making a good point. As you probably noticed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is keeping very close to the terms of the amendment. He is telling us all about clause 50, and HAG, GRF and all the rest of the gang. What worries me is what will happen to the money that is clawed back. I want to know whether in Committee they discussed what the Secretary of State will do with the surplus money. We know that there is a balance of payments deficit approaching £7 billion. It will increase as North sea oil is gradually frittered away. Has my hon. Friend discussed where the money is going?

There is a suspicion in my mind, based upon the information which my hon. Friend has given us, about where the money is going. I suspect that it will be used to balance the nation's books. So people who are up to the neck in debt and who cannot make ends meet will be helping to meet the growing deficit in the balance of payments so as to keep the Tory Ministers in jobs. I want to know——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is enough for an intervention.

Mr. Battle: That is an important point. In Committee we did not discuss what the Secretary of State would do with the surplus, because we expected the Minister to withdraw the clause, not least because the National Federation of Housing Associations had petitioned him to do so because it wanted the grant redemption fund to be abolished. Unfortunately and surprisingly, the Minister was not prepared to withdraw the clause in Committee.

My hon. Friend has asked a good question. I suspect that the money taken from people who had their housing benefit cut and who have had to find extra money to pay their weekly rent will go into the surplus fund and will be clawed back. No doubt that money will be used for future business expansion schemes that are put forward to fund private landlords who want to develop housing which will give no protection to tenants.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Before he goes on to the iniquitous business expansion scheme, can my hon. Friend clarify whether, when this was discussed in Committee, the Minister was aware of cases like that of a widow in my constituency who in March was paying in rent and rates, after a rebate, £3·96 a month but in April was paying £144·22 a month? Is that what is building up the surplus? Is that what the Secretary of State means when he says that rents are far too low and will have to be doubled? Is it to go towards the new surplus fund which will not be ploughed back into housing but will help bail out the Government?

Mr. Battle: As always, my hon. Friend gives the details graphically. He has spelt out the impact of the Government's cuts in housing benefit, despite the fact that the Prime Minister stands at the Dispatch Box and announces that everybody is benefiting from prosperous Britain. My hon. Friend has a reputation for regularly pointing out the lie of that claim.

Mr. Winnick: Will my hon. Friend bear with me? Does he agree that, when we talk about a rent surplus, we should bear in mind cases such as that of a constituent of mine, a lady in her 70s, who burst into tears when explaining to me at my surgery a substantial rent increase which she could not afford? Does my hon. Friend agree that that was embarrassing and distressing for me as a Member of Parliament? I never thought I would see the day when a person in her 70s would burst into tears in my surgery because of the hardship that she was suffering over rent

increases, even though I explained to her that, since she had lost much more than £2·50 per week, there would be at least partial compensation. *[Interruption.]* It is easy for Tory Members to make derogatory noises. I wonder what they would say to their own constituents who are in the same position as my constituent. It is disgusting when such people are penalised day in, day out.

Mr. Battle: The clause will result in many people going to their housing associations and bursting into tears after being asked to pay increased rent and then being told that they will be evicted if they are unable to make up the difference between the shortfall in their housing benefit and the new market rent needed to generate the surplus that will then be creamed off.

Mr. Redmond: Does my hon. Friend agree that, since 1979, successive Conservative Governments have attacked public expenditure and sought to reduce it, and by so doing they lowered income tax? One wonders whether it is the Government's intention to claw back any surplus in order to make further tax concessions to their rich friends in the City. Does my hon. Friend agree that such is a possibility? If it is not, perhaps the Minister will say so.

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend has cited a classic case of taking money from people who need it in the publicly supported sector whom we have always supported in the past. Earlier in this debate, and in the debate on the Finance Bill, there were expressions of surprise that there was no longer a consensus on housing policy. When the House is presented with clauses such as this, which suggests that surplus rents should be used to cut income tax to 20p and put more money in the pockets of those who are already better off, it is hardly surprising that there is no consensus.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Does my hon. Friend concede that subsection (6) makes it clear that interest too can be demanded by the Secretary of State, so that people who have lost housing benefit, who have been penalised because they have a pension, and whose rents have rocketed to record levels, may not only see surpluses clawed back by the Secretary of State for another, no doubt nefarious purpose, but may also be confronted with interest at penal rates?

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend refers to a point made earlier, when the subject of interest was debated in relation to another clause. Section 53 of the Housing Associations Act 1985 provides that any associations receiving a grant and whose projects yield a surplus arising from increased rental income are required to establish a grant redemption fund. The purpose of that provision has always been to allow the Secretary of State power to recoup the original grant over a period of time. This clause would reinstate that provision with vigour.

Both my hon. Friend and the National Federation of Housing Associations have pointed out that there is no need for redemption fund arrangements, which in the past have yielded only relatively modest sums for the Government and the Housing Corporation. Nevertheless, those "modest" sums are gleaned from the pockets of precisely the people to whom my hon. Friends have referred.

Mr. Clay: The more that my hon. Friend goes into this horror story, the more it seems to me that a better choice of words for the graph and the Bill would be the Capitalist Robbery Action Programme. Will my hon. Friend care reflect on the acronym for that, because it seems rather appropriate?

Mr. Battle: I thank my hon. Friend for putting it into plain language. Anyone who is struggling to understand the Government's policy must wonder why on earth this proposal to milk back the increase and route it into the central kitty for the purpose of making further tax cuts can be explained as freeing the market and generating profits that can be used however the market wants.

We cannot at this stage suggest that the clause be deleted, although that is what we would like to do. Instead, the amendment seeks to ensure that the Secretary of State cannot use any means, whether by paying back and cutting taxes or through the business expansion scheme, to take away that revenue surplus. In that sense we would urge the Minister to step back from the proposal and support the amendment.

Mr. Skinner: Is my hon. Friend referring to HAG or GRF or CRAP? My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) referred to the Capitalist Robbery Action Programme. That sums it up in a nutshell, and from now on, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), who knows all about these matters, should refer to the combination of GRF and HAG under the title of CRAP. I am trying my best to get it in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Battle: The title chosen by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) to describe the scheme finds an apt response in the Government's consultation document. There we read about this great deregulation proposal and how it will affect housing associations. It says:

"If rents are to keep pace with those applying to mixed funding schemes"—

we shall come to those later—

"surpluses are therefore likely to build up and it seems necessary to contemplate the retention of the present GRF machinery in some form as an offset to the relatively generous initial HAG payment. As an incentive to efficiency and to the maintenance of sensible rent policies, however, it would seem desirable to enable associations to retain a proportion of those surpluses."

The Government have introduced another phrase in that document—"sensible rent policies". I should be interested to know what they are because we have already had references to market rents and affordable rents. Is that another category in the ragbag in the Government's rent policy?

Mr. Simon Hughes: In Committee, the Minister said that the words "sensible" and "affordable" were interchangeable. He never defined them in terms of pounds and pence, but since they are interchangeable the hon. Gentleman may feel free to use either.

Mr. Battle: I am grateful for that comment on the Minister's language. He seems to use many interchangeable phrases but there is no flesh and blood on, or definition of, any of them. It reminds me of the social charter that we were promised for the landlords, which has done something of a disappearing act. It simply is not in the Bill. There is no substance or reality in the Minister's

[Mr. Battle]

words and that sums up the difficulty. He puts smooth words on the policy but the Bill hits tenants hard and pushes housing firmly into the private rented sector.

Mr. Cohen: Various titles which make it easier to follow the debate have been suggested. We have heard about HAG and GRF and CRAP, but may I suggest another? We have discussed how money will go to the Treasury and be wasted on all sorts of things for the Government's friends. Could we not call that Squandering Housing Income from Tenants, which could also be known by its initials?

2.30 am

Mr. Battle: I am convinced that my hon. Friend's long description of that policy fits tidily with the other description. It reveals what is at the heart of the policy. As for whether the terms are interchangeable, I refer that to those who may have better knowledge.

Let us get away from HAG and the rest, and turn to the new financial arrangements set out in the consultation paper "Finance for Housing Associations: The Government's Proposals". The Government come up with proposals for how to use the surplus which are very interesting. They suggest that retained surpluses will be needed to fund the proposed progressive phasing out of grant for major repairs and the service deficits which many associations are incurring. The document also acknowledges that surpluses will need to be accumulated to strengthen associations' balance sheets to attract loans from the private sector. The problem is that those proposals are undermined by the proposals in clause 50.

Mr. Redmond: If associations have surpluses, the Government intend to claw them back. If they do not, how can they attract the private sector money? It is a contradiction in terms.

Mr. Battle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making the point so clearly and succinctly. Housing associations that take part in schemes funded partly by private borrowing and partly by public grant will be expected to bear the major risks, as the grant is likely to be determined when a scheme is first drawn up and will not be increased to take account of any unforeseen or increased costs. That will mean that schemes are not viable.

To expect housing associations to bear the full burden of the risk is also to take away the prospect of their building up any form of surplus that would enable them to take such risks in the first place. It is the same as the equation of capital receipts, in which the Government claw back money to prevent development work from proceeding. The Minister needs to explain how housing associations will be able to build up the reserves to enable them to develop and manage the houses that they already have and hope to extend. They will not be free to do that; they will be chained down because the surplus on the rental income is being clawed back.

A letter from the Hanover housing association is very pertinent to the clause. It says that the National Federation of Housing Associations' stance

"is to compromise by discussng the extent of a set-off for major repairs; and long term effects of the ADP."

That is a new acronym for me to introduce to hon. Members.

"Abolish GRF in principle, but in practice mitigate it."

The letter continues:

"We are also told GRF is not a matter for the Housing Bill, but for discussion later."

Throughout the Committee stage we were promised that the discussion would come later. The Minister said that if we would come a little way to meet him he would come a little way to meet us, and that if we withdrew our amendments he would table amendments on Report that would take account of our objections. The reckoning time for the Minister is now. Where are the Government's amendments to meet our objections in Committee? By and large they are not there.

We asked for more than 101 concessions on the Bill and those requests can be found in the *Hansard* report of the Committee's proceedings. However, the Government's amendments that we have considered over the past few days and those we are considering now show that the concessions that the Minister promised have not been delivered. It is not surprising that many people are now cynical about the Government's approach to their Committee work and the way in which Bills are brought before the House and are developed.

The letter continues:

"We were also told GRF is not a matter for the Housing Bill, but for discussion later. Why? GRF was created by statute, and can be abolished by statute. There have been so many changes to the current Housing Bill—why not the addition of a clause abolishing GRF?

The writers represent two very different housing associations—one national, specialist, principally newbuild, paying GRF; the other community-based in London, traditionally rehab, in receipt of RDG. Yet we and many others that we have spoken to agree totally that the abolition of GRF is the single most important matter"—

I want to repeat that—

"the single most important matter affecting housing associations today, and must be accomplished quickly if we are to continue to keep our properties in good repair and produce new homes to the standard and quality that our customers, and the government expect in an era of mixed funding."

I hope that that goes some way to answering the point raised earlier.

Mr. George Howarth: The letter from which my hon. Friend has quoted makes his point very well.

Will he speculate on the problem facing housing co-operatives which are affected by the same funding regime? My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) has quoted a housing association with a wide asset base commenting on the effect that the funding regime will have, while housing co-operatives do not have that wide asset base because they have few assets.

Mr. Battle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me to make that point and I hope to comment on that in detail later.

The Minister must tell us whether he will continue the 100 per cent. funding for housing co-operatives. Without that funding, they will fail, go under and have no chance. At this late stage, we hope that the Minister will come clean and tell us whether he intends to continue that funding. If he will give us that commitment now, it will save us time later.

Mr. Redmond: I am afraid that I must disillusion my hon. Friend if he expects the Government to make any concessions that would be helpful to tenants in the private sector. The whole thrust since 1979—I keep repeating this —has been against tenants in the public and private

sectors. Successive legislation has borne down on tenants. We must understand that each successive Bill gets worse as it progresses. It becomes more of a mess and the anomalies are sorted out in the courts. The Secretary of State has to come back to the House to rectify matters. I am sorry to have to disillusion my hon. Friend, but we can expect no concessions from the Government.

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend has introduced a hard note of disillusionment. I try to retain hope that the Government might change their mind, but perhaps that is a false dream.

I believe that the Government might change their mind because I find it totally inexplicable for Conservative Members to claim to support housing associations in the press and in public—as the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East claimed—but to vote in Committee and on Report for the clauses that damage housing associations.

Mr. Kirkhope I have had to listen to an awful lot of nonsense tonight. I am quite prepared to sit here and listen —as I must—to the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues going on and on, but most of what they have said is pretty irrelevant. However, I would be grateful if they would keep me out of this. I am happy to sit here, but please would hon. Members not bring all this irrelevance and nonsense into the discussion.

Mr. Battle: With the greatest respect, it is a little late in the day for the hon. Gentleman to say that we should leave him out of this, because he has publicly claimed to participate in the debate. I know that housing associations in his constituency have petitioned him on this matter and expect him to represent them.

Mr. Winnick: I do not know where the Secretary of State is now—probably asleep—but is not his one virtue that he states facts and opinions frankly and does not beat about the bush, like the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope)? In his Second Reading speech at the end of October, the Secretary of State emphasised rented accommodation in the private sector and paid little attention to housing associations. He probably takes the same view on housing associations as on local authorities. He basically wants the bulk of rented accommodation to come from the privately rented sector, with a clear profit for landlords and property companies.

Mr. Battle: In public, Conservative Members are caught in the same trap as the Minister. The Secretary of State wants privatisation, and tenants to be pushed into the fair winds of the free market, and as soon as Conservative Members are leaned on by their constituents and constituency associations, they make statements, for example in the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, about how supportive they are of housing associations, while they vote for clauses that will damage associations.

Mr. Kirkhope: I wish to be left out of what I consider to be a wholly irrelevant filibustering attempt. I should like to be involved in a sensible discussion in sensible circumstances on the future of housing associations and the benefits that they can obtain from Government proposals. I have not been petitioned, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, by housing associations in my constituency. That is nonsense and I should like him to withdraw that allegation. I have been involved in constructive discussions, listening to anxieties and passing them on to the Minister. I am happy that many of these proposals reflect those anxieties and will be of great help to my associations.

Mr. Battle: I do not intend to withdraw what the hon. Gentleman calls an allegation, because I know it to be true. I need only repeat the sentence in the letter which states: "the abolition of GRF is the single most important matter affecting housing associations today."
I know that the Leeds federated housing association mentioned that in its submission to the hon. Gentleman. He simply says that he has passed anxieties on. Perhaps that is what many Tory Back Benchers say whenever they meet a problem. Perhaps they say, "I'll look after you and pass on the matter to the Minister." They believe that that is action, but they do not know what goes on in our long hours of debate when we go through the Lobbies and approve clauses that damage the people whom they say they will support. That should be public information.

Mr. George Howarth: Does my hon. Friend agree that the position of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) is analagous to that of the first world war parson who used to say to the troops departing for the trenches, "May God go with you and I will go as far as the railway station,"? Is that not what he is saying to the Leeds housing associations?

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend, with the eloquence that has marked him out tonight, picks up another characteristic which perfectly describes the actions of Conservative Members.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend's speech because I know that he is just getting going, but I draw your attention to the fact that the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) referred to filibustering. You know better than me, Madam Deputy Speaker, that filibustering is in breach of the Standing Orders; it is not permitted and it would be a criticism of your conduct in the Chair. I would be grateful if you could confirm that the Standing Orders have been complied with.

2.45 am

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Gentleman can leave this matter in my capable hands. I am in charge of this debate for the next few hours and I shall see that it is conducted properly.

Mr. Battle: I was tempted to ask the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East to withdraw his allegation of filibustering, because I have tried hard to stick to the detail of the clause. We are discussing the Bill precisely because the Government have tabled amendments at a late stage and that has not enabled us to discuss them properly in Committee.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) has failed to grasp that subsections (6), (7) and (8) give a new power to the Secretary of State to Build Additional Liable Levied Surpluses—or BALLS to the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Battle: I hope that the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East will carry that message back to the housing associations when they call him to account should he vote with the Government against our amendment.

[Mr. Battle]

Mixed funding is an important issue to consider. Yesterday the Minister—I hope that he has now woken up—referred to mixed funding as an experimental scheme despite the implications that it is going ahead with a speed that is incompatible with experiment. The housing association movement is being shifted into mixed funding whether it likes it or not.

The Minister admitted that a mistake had been made in the first year when he said:

"the mixed spending scheme has only just started with a tiny sum of money in the first year and the grant levels too low. Therefore, we have put more money into it and we are developing it as we go along. The scheme is now beginning to work."

We are getting used to housing policy being developed as we go along.

Later in his speech, the right hon. Gentleman referred to the "experimental mixed funding scheme" and

"the second year of the experimental programme".—[*Official Report*, 13 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 85.]

How long will the experiment last and how will its effects be assessed? How is the experiment reconciled with the way in which his Department and the Housing Corporation are now pushing mixed funding as though it were going out of fashion? There is no experiment. What we have is a forced changeover to mixed funding without any time or mechanism for properly assessing the consequences for housing associations and for tenants, for whom we are particularly concerned. There are no proposals for assessment.

How things have changed since the Minister stood up in Committee and said:

"we must go carefully with the introduction of mixed funding scheme".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 9 February 1988; c. 726.]

The Minister is pushing the Housing Corporation into mixed funding like a bat out of hell. It is not a question of treading carefully, and tenants of the housing associations will pay the price.

Mr. Pike: As my hon. Friend goes on in the House he will realise that, unfortunately, the Minister to whom he is referring is not responsible. We must look to the Secretary of State, who has gained a hard reputation on every Bill with which he has been concerned. One day I hope that someone will take him to the Ridley evangelical hall, which is just off Queenstown road in Battersea, where he might be converted. He could then introduce some positive legislation that does good for housing and local government instead of mounting constant, vicious attacks on both.

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend is right. I am sure that the Secretary of State regularly advises the Minister to get on with it and push them into the private sector, regardless of the consequences—and to drop his references to the social charter, and so on.

Mr. Clay: My hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) has a copyright on this, too. While we are discussing the Secretary of State, and as another contribution to our collection of acronyms, it strikes me that the Bill could be described as a private rented income crookery kit. The acronym for that would be a good description of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Battle: The ingenuity of some of my hon. Friend's attempts to characterise the Bill defies description. The Minister should explain the Government's intentions toward the speed of transfer to mixed funding. What is his commitment to small-scale housing associations, particularly to those that meet the needs of the ethnic minorities in inner cities? The co-operatives are all continuing on a 100 per cent. pack. Has that commitment been dropped? Will they all be pushed into mixed funding with indecent haste?

The Minister said that mixed funding was experimental—but is it? The Housing Corporation is pushing housing associations to change over to mixed funding now, and yesterday the Minister referred to housing associations overbidding. They are overbidding because the Housing Corporation is exhorting them to change over. If the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East thinks that that is irrelevant filibustering, he must face up to the small housing associations in his constituency. They also exist in the constituencies of other Conservative Members. He must tell them how they will survive when they lose their 100 per cent. because of having been pushed into mixed funding.

Mr. Cohen: I am amazed at this term "overbidding". I have details of disrepair among houses in London. The number of houses needing more than £5,300-worth of repairs was about 255,000 when the Government came to office in 1979, and 360,000 in 1984—up by 42 per cent. It has probably risen considerably since then. Most of those houses are in the private sector, the very sector in which the housing associations will need to be active to get the houses back into use, so that they will not lie empty. How can the housing associations be overbidding when the extent of the problem is so great?

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend has done his research and is well aware, as are Conservative Members, of the submission that those of us who served on the Standing Committee received from the National Federation of Housing Associations. The document was called, "Rents, Rights and Risks". I am sure that the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East will have read it in detail, given that he says that he passed the federation's concerns on to the Minister. One of the things that the federation highlighted was the need to manage the speed of change. It wanted the change to be gradual, because of the backlog of repairs, to ensure that their organisations kept going.

The effect on small associations and on rents needs to be carefully assessed, as does the ability of housing associations to attract the private finance that the Minister and Secretary of State seem to think will beneficently flow to them once they are pushed into the freedom of the open market. If they are to attract private finance on reasonable terms and bear the risks that the Government ask them to bear, their request to shift gradually to mixed funding, rather than to be forced over to it, should be taken seriously.

In Committee, the Minister gave the cosy impression that he was willing to accept the argument of the National Federation of Housing Associations that was presented in the document entitled "Rents, Rights and Risks". He said:

"The introduction of the mixed funding will not be total. A considerable number of 100 per cent. funded schemes will continue, we shall go carefully and watch how the mixed funding schemes work."

He also said:

"We are in early and experimental days. That is why we must go carefully with the introduction of the mixed funding scheme,"—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 9 February, 1988; c. 725-6.]

In March he commented on the increased percentage of the housing association grant. I apologise for again dragging HAG into the argument. The Minister spoke about the increase in housing association grant for mixed funding as an experimental scheme. He said:

"I am grateful for the slightly grudging welcome that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) gave to the increased HAG rate in the experimental scheme . . . The experimental scheme—this is still its second year—will have now a higher percentage rate than we first set out." [*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 3 March 1988; c. 1350.]

Despite the reasssuring warm words from the Minister, all the signs are that the Department of the Environment, pushed by the Secretary of State and the Housing Corporation, is pressing ahead at great speed with mixed funding schemes without waiting for their effects to be properly assessed. Obviously, there are dangers in doing that, especially in working with private finance—which is precisely the purpose and point of the Bill.

The experience, especially of smaller associations, of the changeover to mixed funding shows that it is not experimental. The small associations will be firmly priced out. The change to mixed funding is going ahead and its speed shows that the interests of smaller associations, those dealing with special needs and housing co-operatives, are no longer the Government's priority. Yet the Government claim that housing associations were set up to look after such interests. That policy is being undermined by the clause.

Will the Minister guarantee that 100 per cent. publicly funded schemes will continue for small associations? That guarantee is vital to the existence of emerging associations, especially those associations dealing with ethnic minorities and to co-operative housing associations. If the Minister cannot give that guarantee, there is little prospect of those associations getting started. If they do, they have little prospect of ever being able to increase their housing stock, the housing stock they have will decline and they will not be able properly to repair it.

Do the Government intend that associations that cannot use mixed funding, for whatever reason, should develop or will they fall behind as the lame ducklings of the clause?

Mr. Redmond: One can only conjecture about the possible strategy of the Government. Could it be that the Government intend deliberately to run down properties by withholding finance? That would bring them to a state of disrepair and the private sector, the sharks from the City, would be allowed to come in and take over valuable assets at a cheap rate.

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend makes a helpful point. Once such a takeover happens, the properties may well benefit from the business expansion scheme, the £500,000 tax gift that has been given to private landlords. There would then be no controls on rents or measures for the protection of tenants in property that has fallen into disrepair. They would be completely removed from the social charter. As we said earlier, business expansion scheme landlords will not be covered by the social landlord charter and will be free to do what they want. As my hon. Friend reminds me, the Government's policy has been to undermine the housing associations and, if the Minister continues to withdraw public support, there will come a point when they are no longer sustainable.

3 am

We should be aware that the housing association grant is being cut from 80 per cent. to 50 per cent. All those measures mean that housing associations can no longer fund inner-city projects. A practical example of that is in Leeds, where many of the rows and rows of back-to-back houses had, not surprisingly, many cellars. When they were knocked down, it was difficult to build on that land without filling in the cellars. However, once a cellar is filled in on a building contract, that counts as an abnormal cost, which then pushes up the cost.

If an association does not receive public support for that, or if it built on land on which there had been a gasometer, the land becomes sterilised and extra funding is needed to make it viable to build houses in inner-city areas. That cannot be done without public subsidy.

Mr. Skinner: It has crossed my mind that it is not just inner cities. The Government have made great play about inner cities and they attempt all sorts of things, but we know that that is a load of whatever acronym was used way back. I am worried about what will happen to agricultural land that is set aside and not used for agricultural purposes for several years. There is compensation of about £200 per hectare. When the farmer has that, along comes a developer, who manages to gain planning permission on land that used to be agricultural, and they make money that way as well.

I do not know whether my hon. Friend has discussed that at any level. It is not just a matter of inner cities. A great deal of money can be made. Housing associations obviously would not benefit, but it is conceivable that some of the surplus funds that are creamed off could be used for those purposes.

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Perhaps the Bill should be called not the Housing Bill, but the Housing Market and Sales Bill, because that is really what it is. An interesting point in the discussions on the Bill has been the background debate emerging between the Secretary of State for the Environment and the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), the previous Minister of Defence, who seems to take the line that we should not build in the green belt because he wants developments in the inner cities, supported by public subsidies. That is a contradiction of the heart of Government policy because the Secretary of State for the Environment appears to believe that the free market means that one can build anywhere.

Mr. Skinner: Even in his back garden.

Mr. Battle: Yes, even in his back garden.

There should be public assistance in developing some areas and planning to decide which areas should be developed. There should be a planned programme for housing in Britain. We must protect not only the green belt in the rural areas, but the green belt in the inner cities as well. Unless we have a planned programme for housing development in green belts, which the Government appear to be abandoning, it seems that the Government's policies for housing, land and planning will be left in fragments.

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend mentioned long-term planning, but, of course, that is alien to the Government, whose whole thrust is that market forces will determine the day. If that is so, there cannot be long-term planning. The only long-term planning that I have seen is the demise of the rented housing sector, public and private. If we want sensible planning, do not expect the Government to do it.

Mr. Battle: The planning point has been admirably made by my hon. Friend. If we leave everything to the market and the short-term, cash-in economy that the Government are developing, inevitably many people, organisations and developments will pay a heavy price. The question raised by our amendments is, if the Bill is carried, who will pay the price? The Bill will hammer small-scale housing associations and housing co-operatives out of existence. It will defeat any attempt to provide for ethnic minorities.

Mr. Winnick: Does my hon. Friend agree that much of the debate about green belt and housing development does not take into account the type of housing so desperately needed by those who cannot afford to buy? There is a need for low-cost housing, housing association dwellings and so on. Is it not unfortunate that the whole emphasis of the Bill is to provide large profits for the private landlord, while making no provison for renting? Will not our constituents who cannot afford a mortgage find themselves in an even worse position when the Bill becomes law?

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend is right. Housing association policy will be shredded by the clause because the special needs category and inner-city developments will not be underwritten. It is imperative that the Government support the amendment. If they really want to convince the housing associations that they are their friends—they make great play of that in public—they must show it in political action by supporting the amendment. We need a clear commitment from the Minister to 100 per cent. housing association grants for the smaller associations and co-operatives. They do not want to be pushed into mixed funding, but if they are they will be priced out of existence.

I urge the Minister to resist the total takeover of mixed funding——

Mr. Cryer: I have followed my hon. Friend's valid argument about market forces. The parts of the clause that we wish to delete relate to the process of moving housing associations towards the market, because the Government are concerned only with the market.

Will my hon. Friend compare the Government's attitude in moving the housing sector into the market with such zest and determination, with their attitude towards the farming fraternity—where market forces do not apply and, for example, cereal farmers receive a guaranteed income whatever their output? Many of them receive a guaranteed income for storing the food for which they had already received a guaranteed income. The Government make little effort to change that because the farmers pay money into the Tory coffers.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The amendment deals with housing associations.

Mr. Battle: The issue of pushing housing associations into the free market is vital because the Minister is abandoning his commitment to social responsibility and is shifting the housing sector into what the Government see as the fair winds of the market sector.

Mr. George Howarth: My hon. Friend has dealt thoroughly with what will happen to small housing associations. Does he agree that one of the problems for smaller associations on outer estates—never mind the inner cities—will be coping with private finance, often in the context of declining property values, especially in the north of England? Will he comment on the likelihood of a building society or any other financial institution wanting to lend to build something that is likely to decline in value? In many cases the building societies and financial institutions will not wish to do so, which will effectively terminate any housing association developments on outer estates where property values are declining.

Mr. Battle: If a housing association scheme is to be viable and produce reasonable rents, it must take account of the costs of borrowing the money for refurbishments and maintenance. It should also take into account the cost of a sinking fund to cover future major repairs.

Some such schemes were explored by Leeds council in association with local housing associations and the private funding agencies, but the problem was that the outturn costs were found to be excessive. No schemes could be set up because index-linked funds are not available and mortgage fund finance is restricted to smaller scale loans. It may well be, as my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North reminded me, that the stock exchange is the only source of finance these days at a very high price. However, to put together a stock exchange deal to finance a small-scale housing association is out of the question, given how difficult and complicated that process would be.

Mr. Michael Welsh: Is it not a fact that housing associations, especially small housing associations, need 100 per cent. Government grants and loans, and that they need to be protected from the market economy? Surely, in any society, it is the Government's duty to look after the unfortunate and ensure that they have reasonable housing so that they can lead the good life in society.

Mr. Battle: There appear to be many contradictions in the Government's policy. If the Bill is enacted, housing associations will be pushed into the same kind of funny money deals that local authorities were prevented from entering into under local government legislation earlier this year. Local councils cannot organise their finances in the open market and go to the stock exchange because a clause was entered in the local government legislation, as a result of what happened in Sheffield, to prevent them raising finance in that way in an attempt to make schemes viable.

There is a great deal of double-think going on in the Government's policies. They suggest going to the free market, but when local authorities and housing associations want to step into the great market of the finance sector, the Government prevent them from doing so. The Minister will have to attempt to square this Bill with legislation elsewhere.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend made an interesting point before he was diverted on to other legitimate points. He gave the example of a cellar having to be filled in at an exceptional cost. That reminded me of a recent case brought to my attention by the local branch of Friends of

the Earth concerning a factory in Redbridge that was leaking radiation into the ground. That factory was knocked down and I have now received a letter saying that houses will be built on that dangerous site. Great costs will be incurred to prepare that site for houses, and a housing association may be involved. Under the terms of the amendment, the Government could then add insult to injury and charge those poor tenants, who probably do not know that they are going on to land soaked with radiation, increasingly large sums for attempting to remedy the problem.

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend is right. Ideally, we would not choose to build on many of the sites that we must build on to develop housing. There are also problems with mining subsidence. In one case, Barratt built some homes on a site next to a tip and methane gas was later discovered in those houses. Many problems are emerging in connection with the building of houses, contrary to the Secretary of State's notion that one can just go out and build a house on a green field. That policy appears to underline the idea that the magic of the market will provide. The notion of total commitment to the magic of the market appears to go beyond even what Adam Smith suggested, that all the excessive individuals should have some point of social reference.

I am reminded of a preface written by the former hon. Member for Leeds, North-East, Sir Keith Joseph, to a pamphlet entitled "The Social Market Economy". The pamphlet may have given some people the misleading impression that social values would be brought into the market place and into policy. The Government seem to believe that they have cracked the economy in some mechanistic, materialistic manner, but having, according to them, got the base of the economy right, they are now moving on to tackle areas of social policy such as local government; social security; health; education; and now housing. However, they are not moving social values into the market place—they are moving the market to the heart of those areas of social policy.

3.15 am

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend should not assume that throughout his life Sir Keith Joseph believed in the monetarist philosophy and the system of the market place, or in the "fair winds" as he called it. When Sir Keith Joseph lost his ministerial car on ceasing to be the Secretary of State for Education and Science, the first place he went was across the road to Westminster tube station to get his photograph taken because he wanted a free bus pass. So he was in favour of market forces while he had a ministerial car, but the moment he lost it, he was into spending public money in a big way.

Mr. Battle: I defer to my hon. Friend, who is absolutely spot on in always exposing the contradictions that are at the heart of the Government's policies and practices; has a record second to none for doing that. He has reminded me that even in the clause that we are discussing, we are told that the Bill's purpose is to free the housing associations into the market, but in the clause, we read that although they are free in the market, woe betide them if they make a surplus on their rent account because they are not free to use it and it will be clawed back by the Government.

In conclusion—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."]—I urge the Minister not to use housing associations as a sideline for generating revenue for other unspecified projects, the likes of which we could begin to define and at which my hon. Friends have hinted. We should like to know whether housing associations will be contributing to the Treasury to help to get taxes down to 20 per cent. or to fund the business expansion scheme.

I quietly advise the Minister that the housing associations have asked him to abolish the grant redemption fund. They have made their view plain and have lobbied Conservative Members about it. We have been assured tonight that those concerns have been passed on to the Minister, so he must have had innumerable requests from housing associations and his own Back Benchers. Why will he not abolish that tonight? If he cannot do that, why does he not accept our amendments to neuter the effect of the grant redemption fund? Otherwise, the Minister and his Government are clearly pushing housing associations hard and fast into the private sector.

The Minister for Housing and Planning has clearly signalled that he has now abandoned that difficult middle way between the public and private sectors that he has struggled to hold on to throughout this Parliament, but on which he has been losing ground fast because the Secretary of State is leaning on him, and telling him to push harder for this privatisation policy for housing.

This clause will cast housing associations out into the market, abandoning the social responsibility to which the Minister referred regularly in Committee. The Minister can no longer claim the role of the socially responsible Minister, hanging on to the social aspects of the policy, because the market is being wheeled into housing policy. He cannot hold the ends together and, as a result, his time will come—I hope that it is now—because he promised throughout to deliver a socially responsible Housing Bill. He has referred to the needs for social charters and for the social rented sector, but this Bill is a hard and fast Privatisation of Housing Bill. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) suggested earlier, it is a Bill that simply sets up the conditions such that it would be better called the Housing (Marketing and Sales) Bill.

The Bill will split housing associations by setting the big fry against the smaller fry and will undermine exactly the purposes for which housing associations were set up in the first place. In conclusion, I am sure that after tonight's debate, the housing associations will be absolutely clear about what is happening and what is being done to them and by whom, and about who their real friends are in this Chamber.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I support the amendment. This is the last debate that we can have on housing associations on part II. I hope that it is clear by now to the Government and the public that the House considers that housing associations are important and is willing to dedicate a significant time to debate their financial future.

We have had controversial and important debates on the private rented sector. We started today's debate with the amendments and new clause which I tabled, which are linked to the subject on which the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) spoke and dealing with affordable rents and where the money in the cycle of provision, from taxpayer to user, ends up.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

The hon. Member for Leeds, West did a sterling job in moving the amendment. He may not have noticed that he marginally lost the battle of the roses, in that his colleague from the other side of the Pennines—the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth)—managed to outstay him slightly. Perhaps, by a slight abbreviation of the comments on this measure, the battle between Leeds and Knowsley could end up evens.

This amendment, and the first group, expose the Government's contradictory policy. The Government have argued that they want private money in housing associations. Amendment No. 85 deletes those parts of clause 50 that would allow the Government to take back money in housing association reserves. As the Government have said, the biggest housing associations —from the largest, the North housing association, with 21,000 members, to the 10th largest, the Northern Counties housing association, with 8,500 members— would be expected to be entirely self-financing, to carry their own risks, not to come to the Government for money and to bail themselves out of difficulties.

The smaller housing associations—some of which are very small—may need private money coming in and need to look to the Government for help if costs overrun. The housing association movement argues strongly that retained surpluses—which the Government want the power to take back—will be needed to fund the proposed progressive phasing out of grant for major repairs and the service deficits which many associations are incurring.

There is an important contradiction. Associations that take part in schemes funded by private borrowing as well as by public grant will be expected to bear major risks, because the grant is likely to be determined at the beginning of a scheme and will not be increased to take account of unforeseen increased costs. To expect associations to bear that risk and at the same time to take away their only prospect of building up a surplus is not only inequitable but contradicts the Government's strategy.

How can the Government tell housing associations to be financially independent and at the same time give themselves power to raid their reserves when it is vital for the associations to retain surplus rental income so as to bear the risks of private finance without raising rents? If the Government claw back those reserves, housing associations will have only one way to raise more funds, and that will be by demanding more from their tenants in increased rents. For many of those tenants housing benefit will not be available because they are working, which will mean them leaving that form of accommodation.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): The only revenue that housing associations have comes from rents and they can build up surpluses for reinvestment purposes, repairs and so on. Taking that from them will be like taking the crutches from a cripple and telling him to stand on his own two feet.

Mr. Hughes: I agree. Having said that they want housing associations to be independent, the Government give them the facility to walk, allow them to build up some reserves and then raid that money. The housing association movement must be extremely unhappy at the thought of the Secretary of State being able to raid those reserves whenever he wishes.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): If an association is given a grant to get started and, having got started, builds up reserves which are surplus to its needs, how can they be described as crutches? Surpluses are not crutches.

Mr. Hughes: I do not think the hon. Gentleman was present for the earlier debate. The Government claim that they want to use private finance to supplement public finance—I do not dissent from that—to strengthen housing associations. Any reserves built up will be needed, especially by medium and small associations, to avoid them asking the Government in times of difficulty to bail them out. They need the cushion that reserve funds provide. Indeed, the Government agree that without that cushion the private sector will not invest.

I wish to refer to two letters, the first of which was written by an ordained minister in Luton. It was sent today to the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and copied to the hon. Members for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and for Luton, South (Mr. Bright), with a copy to me as my party's spokesman on these issues.

This is part of the letter from the Rev. W. J. Salmon:

"The government intend to encourage the sale of council estates to Housing Associations, and claim that rents will be similar to those at present paid to the Local Authority. At the same time the Housing Corporation are reducing their financial support to Housing Associations, encouraging them to find on the open market. The Associations are therefore having to pay a high rate of interest, which they can only recoup through increased rents. The experience of Housing Associations is that this has forced rents up to unacceptable levels. It would seem to me that these two moves are incompatible."

The author of the letter makes it clear that he is not a politician, because he ends by saying:

"I write not as a belligerent prophet, or a 'Moaning Minnie', but as a Christian Minister seeking to serve to the best of my ability those among whom my Lord has placed me.".

He was writing about Luton, which is hardly regarded as the least affluent part of the United Kingdom. Clearly he understands the problems of reducing funding and not protecting people against the consequences.

3.30 am

The other letter was sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) after he had visited Bradford earlier this year. The letter is from Mr. Leaper, who is the regional director of Anchor housing association. He may have written to other hon. Members about the matter. He wrote after my hon. Friend had been to Saddlebrook court, which is an Anchor housing association development in his area. He said:

"I am grateful for the interest you have shown in Saddlebrook Court by visiting it today. It is, unfortunately, likely to be one of the last category 2 sheltered developments Anchor is able to provide, if the new Housing Bill becomes law and there are no amendments to the new Housing Benefit regulations.

Many Anchor tenants have already lost up to £20 per week in Housing Benefit as a result of the recent changes in the Housing Benefit regulations.

If Saddlebrook Court were built today at the proposed HAG level of 50% (it actually enjoys 91·39% HAG) the current basic rent of £14·80 for a single flat would rise to over £34."

I am sure that hon. Members who represent Bradford and the surrounding areas could confirm this.

"Rents at this sort of level simply are not on for pensioners of modest means and I hope you will use every effort to persuade the government of the need to improve the Housing Benefit arrangements.

I am sure you will have been bombarded with criticism of the proposed legislation and I apologise for yet another letter to read, but I feel that the issues are too important for me to miss the opportunity to make you aware of our concern."

My hon. Friend asked me to raise this although I have not visited the development. He intends to contribute to the debate on part IV because he has had experience of the Scottish provision. He is aware, like all hon. Members on this side of the House and, to be fair, some Tory Members, that we cannot take away the protection that is needed for reserves and funding that have been built up over the years without a clear implication that rents will go up.

Mr. Redmond: The hon. Gentleman might suggest in answer to the letters that he has received that the only way to get the Government to move is to drop one of their own Tridents on them. I am not sure whether even a hydrogen bomb would shift them. They are so dogmatic and so uncaring about the needs of housing associations that one despairs at times about their lack of Christian charity. Certainly they have not shown any since 1979. Yet they continue to argue that they are helping the poorer people and the associations to stand on their own feet, when the reverse is true.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is right. I have quoted a minister of the church and a professional in Britain's second largest housing association. They are neither of them politicians but are concerned with meeting need. They say in letters to hon. Members that it is vitally important that resources can be built up and protected.

They say also that if the Government are serious about wanting housing associations to play a greater role—and the Government certainly intend that local councils should play a lesser role, and have always accepted that there will be a large rented sector however much success they have with the right to buy—it is vital that there are affordable rents and adequate funds to ensure that tenants do not have to bear the high and substantal risks of the Government's policy. If the Government are not prepared to ensure that, there can be only one implication. It is that tenants will be priced out of the very market which the Government allege they are trying to create for them.

Mr. Waldegrave: This debate has been of a looking glass nature, because both the hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) know that their arguments do not accurately reflect the real situation. The existing GRF power to claw back funds was not invented by the Government but was imposed by the Public Accounts Committee, and some Opposition Members may have been signatories to the report in question. Certainly it was an all-party Committee.

The replacement power contained in clause 50 will permit to be done some of the things which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey wants, and which could not be done under the 1985 Act. The GRF does not allow us to negotiate with the associations, as we should do to ensure that they have proper sinking funds, can deal with repairs and so on. I am sure that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey knows that we are already having important discussions with the National Federation of Housing Associations. That is how the surplus rent fund will work.

Neither the Public Accounts Committee nor the House would thank the Government for reverting to a system under which the surpluses——

Mr. Redmond *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: If I may complete my argument, the hon. Gentleman may find that I will answer his point.

There have been some very jolly ideas about what should be done with the surpluses. One was that they could in some mysterious way be used to pay off the balance of payments deficit. I have not figured out how that can be done using internally generated funds, but never mind. The surpluses will be returned to the Housing Corporation and then ploughed back into the housing association movement. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey well knows, that is what was done with surpluses collected under the GRF system and will be under the new system as well. The funds will not be taken out of housing.

The argument is that, if the total surpluses are left where they fall because the grant has turned out to be more generous than was calculated when the project was put together, one association will enjoy a windfall while others who may need the money more will receive less. However, that line of argument—whether in respect of the GRF or the new system—has no connection with reality. I repeat that we do not intend that the rent surplus fund system will apply to schemes funded with a mixture of public and private finance. A good many of the other arguments we have heard fall on that.

The clause is not as exciting, let alone as dangerous, nor does it have such wide implications, as Opposition Members have suggested. I suspect that, if we did not have it, we would be rightly criticised by the Public Accounts Committee and perhaps by the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond)—whom I promised to allow to intervene.

Mr. Redmond: There is some argument about how the surpluses arise in the first instance. Surpluses can only arise through rents. Is it the Department's intention to instruct those housing associations to increase their rents to enable the Government to claw back surpluses, and what does the Minister consider is a surplus? Housing associations may well be gathering some money together for a capital expenditure project. Would he allow them to carry that money forward from year one over five or ten years to enable them to obtain the necessary finance to embark on that capital project?

Mr. Waldegrave: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman, who is learned in these matters, is not as confused as he pretends to be. He knows where the surpluses arise from. Most housing association schemes are financed with a conventional mortgage, plus HAG. HAG is set high at the beginning because there is no rent income. If interest rates and rents move so that less uprun money is needed than was predicted, there is an unexpected surplus. That is why the PAC rightly said that in those circumstances, since it did not arise from anything that the housing association was doing in terms of its own or Government policy, we had to claw that back. We then put it back into the ADP of the Housing Corporation to go to other associations

[Mr. Waldegrave]

which need the money more. Everyone who knows this subject knows where such surpluses come from. They have come for many years; that is why the PAC asked us to introduce this system.

We are now saying that under the present legislation we cannot do what the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) wants, which is to build up sinking funds against capital expenditure and major repairs that may fall to be done. Indeed, it may be right to say that there should be some element of building up reserves, particularly to enable the smaller associations that have been mentioned to borrow on the market, as we hope they too will be able to do.

I can assure hon. Gentlemen that there are no nefarious purposes in this, as I think they know in their heart of hearts. Indeed, if we did not introduce such a provision, we would very likely be in trouble with them when they were wearing different hats.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Why then is it necessary to include in subsection (6) not only the power for the Secretary of State to appropriate or apply funds for purposes that he specifies, but also to require associations to pay them to him, which is a different and much more far-reaching provision? In addition, will he confirm that the National Federation of Housing Associations is in favour of the abolition and non-replacement of the grant redemption fund system and is not keen on a far-ranging power that allows the Government to retrieve whatever they might choose at any particular time?

Mr. Waldegrave: Not surprisingly, the associations have always been in favour of allowing extra surpluses to accrue where they fall. It is much easier for those associations to argue to keep unexpected surpluses than for other associations who have not received the money from the redestribution to argue for that. I must refer the hon. Gentleman to the PAC's arguments on that.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): If I heard the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey correctly, he said that the Bill would drive up some housing association rents from £14 a week to £34 a week. Can my hon. Friend refute that allegation and explain why the Bill will not do that?

Mr. Waldegrave: We had a long discussion earlier about rents. We are now talking about the rent surplus fund, but nothing in the rent surplus fund does what my hon. Friend is asking about.

Mr. Battle *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that the hon. Gentleman may have said enough already in his magnificent speech. I hope that, having heard that a large part of that fine oratorical effort was entirely misplaced, he may now consider withdrawing his amendment.

3.45 am

Mr. Cryer: The Minister is trying to get away with the granting of extra powers to the Secretary of State by suggesting that the Public Accounts Committee imposes something on the Government. The PAC, as he knows full well, has no power to impose anything on them. I dare say that I could pluck half a dozen reports from the PAC that have never even received a response from the Government, let alone been accepted by them.

Obviously some reports have more merit than others. The Government make a selection, rejecting some arguments and accepting others. The notion put forward by the Minister that the repayment of GRF surpluses should be accepted by the Government willy-nilly because of a recommendation by the PAC simply does not wash. If he had said that they had considered it a reasonable recommendation and followed it, that would be one argument, but it is not true to say that the Government had to accept it—that it was imposed on the House. *[Interruption.]* That is what the Minister said. I have got it down.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am perfectly prepared to say to the hon. Gentleman that the PAC suggested the proposal and argued for it, and that the arguments were overwhelming.

Mr. Cryer: That is a change from what the Minister said at first. He said that it was imposed by the PAC, and it will be in *Hansard*. That is mistaken: all Select Committees can merely recommend. But if the Minister is now saying that he accepts the PAC's argument, that is entirely different.

The Minister went on to say that the funds are returned to the Housing Corporation for reallocation to the housing sector. That, of course, is understood and welcomed. Under clause 47, however, the Housing Corporation has fairly wide-ranging and arbitrary powers to reduce, suspend or cancel grants. We are confronted by a pretty arbitrary sort of Government.

The Housing Corporation is run by appointees, and nearly all the Government's appointees have been in line with their philosophy. It is a characteristic of the Government that they have been careful to appoint people who share their political philosophy. As a matter of fact I do not entirely dissent from that; the philosophy on the basis of which the Government appoint people just happens to be the wrong one. It means that an arbitrary Government can encourage the Housing Corporation to use the arbitrary powers incorporated in the legislation. At present housing associations may build up prudent surpluses that they can spend on repairs and on development of one sort or another connected with their properties, but the powers for the Secretary of State that are embodied in clauses 6, 7 and 8, which we seek to remove, reduce that discretion.

The Minister argues that the discretion should be removed by action of the Secretary of State, so that he can then instruct the Housing Corporation to have the money, make a judgment and allocate the funds that it considers in the best interests of housing in the housing association sector. That is a very odd philosophy for a Government who believe in the kind of voluntary aided sector which it could be argued that housing associations represent. It is an odd philosophy from a Government who believe in allowing decision-making to develop in what they fondly describe as the enterprise culture. The Government claim that a central organisation should determine where surpluses are distributed instead of leaving the housing association with at least some discretion to develop surpluses when it believes that, in the circumstances, it needs a surplus to develop flats because of local conditions.

Perhaps the Housing Corporation will take local needs into account. However, surely some discretion should be allowed to the housing associations instead of the Secretary of State giving notice to an association under this part of the Bill requiring it to pay—with interest if demanded—the outstanding rent surplus fund at the end of a period of account.

Our other reservation is that we know that the Secretary of State is a fairly arbitrary Secretary of State. We are not convinced that he would use those powers with the understanding and delicacy that is required because he is not known for his understanding and delicacy. The Minister who replied to this debate did so briefly without the characteristic allocation of time devoted to the debate by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle). In different circumstances, the Minister might have devoted more time to it.

However, the Minister does not have responsibility for these matters. Although certain work is allocated to him, he knows that the civil servants will tell him that the Secretary of State has the legal responsibility to determine the notice. The Minister of State may recommend to the Secretary of State, but in the final analysis the Secretary of State has the power. When the House grants legislative power to Secretaries of State, the powers leave the House and are vested in the Secretary of State who holds office at the time.

We must be very careful. We must bear in mind that, no matter how liberal a furrow the Minister tries to plough, the fact is that the Secretary of State is an illiberal Secretary of State.

Mr. Winnick: He is Stalinist.

Mr. Cryer: I would not put the Secretary of State quite in that category. In fact, he might feel vaguely insulted if I did, although that would not prevent me from doing so. However, that description would be inaccurate.

In many respects the Secretary of State is the author of the current satanism spreading through the land, called Thatcherism or monetarism. He is determined, and therefore we must consider his powers and his ability from time to time to give notice to housing associations. Therefore I suggest that the modest amendments to remove clauses 6, 7 and 8 should be supported.

I will not be long because to some degree we have dealt adequately with the clause and I know that many of my hon. Friends want to speak and I can see several of them straining at the metaphorical leash.

I want to refer to Anchor housing, mentioned by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). When the hon. Gentleman replies to the letter from the regional director of Anchor housing, I hope that he explains that the proposal to increase rents, possibly to produce a surplus fund to develop Anchor housing units in my constituency and elsewhere, has been made at the most inappropriate time because housing benefit has been withdrawn in varying degrees from many people. I think that the letter says that up to £20 has been withdrawn from individual tenants.

Therefore, it is not a clever time to start the process for increasing rents through the fair rents procedure. As the changes in housing benefit regulations were not a secret —it was known that they would be introduced after 11 April—Anchor housing might have been more judicious in applying for the increases well after the housing benefits had been brought into operation and the cuts were known. I have received a petition from tenants expressing anxiety at housing benefit cuts and pointing out what difficulties will arise.

If rent surpluses are to be redistributed by the Housing Corporation, it will be to areas of need, according to the Minister's explanation. The redistribution will be a curious phenomenon because the Housing Corporation will be redistributing from need to need. I do not know of any Anchor housing, for example, where the tenants are living in the lap of luxury or of any rent surplus that can be more equitably moved from them elsewhere. All the tenants that I can think of in the north will be in difficulties because of rent increases and housing benefit cuts. Therefore, the notion that the Housing Corporation will have this redistributive effect, without further details from the Minister, does not seem to be convincing. Tenants in my constituency are worried about the changes in housing benefit, rent increases and service charge increases and they have written to me about them. Anchor housing has not given a convincing reply.

In addition, Anchor will have to face the effects of this legislation on already slim administrative resources. One anxiety advanced by the Opposition relates to the difficulties that will be forced on tenants by the Secretary of State exercising what he fondly imagines to be a redistributive measure through the Housing Corporation by clawing back housing associations' surpluses. Those surpluses will accrue to prudent associations charging rents which they think will give them sufficient income not only to meet repairs and maintenance, but to produce a modest surplus to provide for needed developments. The position is so generally unsatisfactory that we should vote for the amendment which removes these subsections.

I am also worried that the Secretary of State is given absolute powers. The Minister may say that that is standard practice and it has happened before, so we should carry on. The Bill states that he may

"from time to time give notice to an association to which this section applies."

Civil servants like absolute powers because they do not have to bother preparing briefs or do anything much except go into a room in Whitehall, Victoria street or Marsham street and shove a document before a Minister and say, "Look, Minister, we have calculated that housing associations have £x million surplus, so you should give notice that this should be clawed back because the Housing Corporation says that it needs development money and it can best make a judgment." The Secretary of State then simply has to give notice without justifying it outside the cosseted rooms of Whitehall. That is less than satisfactory.

4 am

Mr. Tony Banks: Did my hon. Friend do that when he was a Minister?

Mr. Cryer: Whenever I wanted to do anything I found that a succession of civil servants wanted to talk to me for long enough to stop me doing so. When I was a Minister, the problem was not to get me to do things but to stop me doing things. In my leisure moments, when I wash aside the misery I underwent when I was a Minister, I am proud of the fact that civil servants were trying to outwit me all the time.

Mr. Redmond: The Minister said that the Government intended to take surpluses from those associations that held large ones because if they were allowed to keep them other associations would suffer. The impression was that such money could be redistributed to those associations that were living from hand to mouth. The Minister suggested that he intended to rob Peter to pay Paul. If I have got that wrong, perhaps my hon. Friend or the Minister could clarify the position. There has been much discussion about interest rate charges, but I am not sure about the level of the interest rate. British Coal borrows money from the Government and pays a damn sight higher rate of interest than if it borrowed on the open market. How will the rate of interest be clarified?

Mr. Cryer: In the clause, the rate of interest is determined by the Secretary of State, with the consent of the Treasury—that keeps a grip on the Treasury. That means that a deputy secretary will have a chat on the telephone with somebody at the Treasury—of course, on the same grade—and they will reach agreement on the interest rate. The deputy secretary will put a piece of paper in front of the Secretary of State, tell him that it is the interest rate to be charged and that the Treasury has given consent. That means that a civil servant at the Treasury has put a bit of paper in front of a Treasury Minister, who has nodded and signed the paper. That is how it is organised.

The Bill does not give absolute power to the Secretary of State, but that power is qualified only by a friend of the Secretary of State, a Treasury Minister. They are both guided by the Civil Service.

The Government have introduced a great deal of complicated legislation and in the maze they are finding it easy simply to say, "We will give the Secretary of State power." That takes such power away from this place and makes it easier for the Government to exercise such powers. I am not in favour of that—I favour scrutiny by this House or scrutiny by Committees of the House. That is another reason why I believe that we should vote against the clause.

Mr. Michael Welsh: If the Secretary of State has absolute power, does my hon. Friend agree with what Lord Acton said about absolute power?

Mr. Cryer: That is a problem. Those who advise Secretaries of State use that power in an arbitrary fashion. Often Secretaries of State, especially in Labour Governments, do not have the countervailing information to match the power of the inner, secret constitution of our system of government.

I conclude by saying that my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) was right: this is robbing Peter to pay Paul. Housing associations will, by and large, apply their money to the worthy objective of developing housing in any case. Their surpluses will be taken from them and given to other housing associations that are not in quite such a good seam and do not possess overwhelming surpluses. They will be given the money to develop housing. That obscures the important underlying need for an injection of new money, so that housing associations can develop both surpluses and housing.

Local authorities should be given new money too, instead of being continually cut back. These clauses will allow the Secretary of State to supervise a diminishing amount of money in the housing association sector, whose effect will be to cut back something that has played a useful part in providing rented accommodation for people who in the main could not otherwise obtain decent accommodation—certainly not from private landlords, whose standards are variable, to say the least.

Mr. Redmond: The general trend is to give housing associations money to allow them to develop their stock, improve their standards and possibly take over council houses. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is contradictory and morally wrong of the Government to run down local authority involvement in housing, to reduce the money that local authorities spend on maintaining housing stock and to restrict the numbers of dwellings that local authorities can provide for senior citizens? In a range of other issues, the Government have said that we need competing forces for the benefit of the consumer. If there is only one sector, freedom of choice for the consumer will not exist.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend makes an important point. This is a provision to allow the housing associations to generate their own funds for further development and for redistribution through the Housing Corporation. The Government's policy is to cut local authority expenditure on housing. Every local authority can testify to that. The waiting lists for council houses for rent are increasing and the amount of money available for new build has decreased, or certainly failed to increase, year by year. Since 1979 local authority expenditure on housing has been massively cut back. Because of that, housing associations are under pressure to provide more housing. So my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West was right to say that these clauses will bring pressure to bear for increased rents, which will be used to generate funds for further development.

To illustrate what I mean, I give the example of people who have been to see me. Those people struggle from week to week to make ends meet. A couple who came to see me said that they were pensioners and had one week's holiday a year. They do not go to the Costa Brava or Costa del Sol but to Morecambe or Blackpool, to a cheap boarding house, because that is all that their income permits. They told me that a holiday can no longer be taken because of the cuts in housing benefit. Of course the Government will say that only pensioners in the City should be allowed to have holidays and that workers should sit in grim, stark rooms and be thankful that they have a miserable gas fire to look at. That is a reality for many people.

Mr. Allen McKay: I appreciate the work carried out, and the help given me by my hon. Friend when he was a Minister. We are talking about a surplus in rents. We can only get a rent surplus by an increase in efficiency of the organisation or by making rents too high. The Minister says that a surplus should be moved into another area and should not be spent on those who created the surplus. We are only a step away from the Minister saying to a council that it should create a surplus on rent and plough the money into the rate fund.

Mr. Cryer: In essence, that is what the Government are doing in the housing association sector. They could apply that policy to local authorities.

The people who look for rented accommodation are those who cannot afford mortgages. Young couples often do not have the money for a mortgage. Certainly in

London and the south-east the mortgages required are astronomical. Young unemployed couples who want to buy a house, even in the north where prices are lower but are regrettably catching up on the south-east, have no alternative but to look for rented accommodation. They simply cannot afford to buy. They will be faced with a housing association sector that is increasing rents to generate its own developments of more housing and a local authority sector that is being cut. That will force people to go to the housing associations, and the associations will be forced to increase rents.

Mr. Tony Banks: The only reason that I earlier asked my hon. Friend about what he used to do when he was a Minister was to draw to the attention of younger hon. Members the fact that he used to be a Minister. He was a very good Minister and that was the history lesson that I wanted to teach the younger and more enthusiastic hon. Members.

Last Friday I had a case in my advice surgery that proves my hon. Friend's point. A constituent fell into arrears with the mortgage payments and the house was repossessed. The local authority had to put that person into bed-and-breakfast accommodation at a cost greater than the mortgage repayments. That is the lunacy that we are getting ourselves into.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right. If the Government had any sense they would put money into new build houses to be constructed by housing associations and local authorities. That would save the enormous sums that local authorities have to pay for bed-and-breakfast accommodation. The victims of the Government's economic policies, the three million people who have been made unemployed and who face difficulty in paying mortgages, are picked up by the local authorities and helped with council accommodation. However, the local authorities are under pressure. It is a disgraceful situation and has been brought about by the wretched policies of the most disgraceful Right-wing Government we have ever experienced.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: I am pleased that that tribute has been paid to my hon. Friend's record while a member of the Labour Government. He will confirm that the Labour Government's record between 1974 and 1979 on housing associations in Scotland was that of a more than fivefold increase in spending on housing associations resulting in a diversity of housing for rent. On the other hand, the Government's record has been a paltry 50 per cent. increase in eight years. Is that not a lamentable record and a contrast that goes to the heart of the Bill?

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of some statistics about housing associations in Scotland which, I confess, were at the back of my mind. The Labour Government encouraged housing associations and local authorities to build houses. That is shown by the figures for homelessness, which have shot up since 1979. An underlying economically deprived class is developing, comprising victims of the Government's economic and social policies and cuts in local authority provision.

4.15 am

I do not wish to extend my contribution, but I emphasise my reservations about subsections (6), (7) and (8). If the House approves their deletion, but the Secretary of State wants some reserve powers, the Government could come back via the other place, of which route they are so fond—and that is hardly surprising as they brought in 138 members of the geriatric wing of the Palace of Westminster to ensure a majority for the poll tax Bill—and table an amendment that would, for example, give the Secretary of State power to place a motion on the Order Paper requiring the associations to pay as provided for under subsection (6), with all its powers.

At least, that would be the subject of a motion and would therefore be debated in the House. It would be only an hour-and-a-half debate. It would be unusual procedure —in fact, I do not think that we have ever required a Secretary of State simply to say, "I am giving notice, and I want a motion approving this." However, it would not be a bad thing. We might have to alter the procedures a little, but if we are to get any sort of grip on the Executive, we must stop giving Secretaries of State the power to do virtually anything that they wish. We must restore some power to this place.

When television comes into the Chamber, it will add to the pressure on Ministers. I voted for television cameras so that attention would be focused on this place. Committees do important work, but the Chamber is the most important place and it should be used to provide supervision and scrutiny. It helps Secretaries of State too, because they know that, if they have to come to this place and be scrutinised, they must know their subject pretty well. They must have the argument at their finger tips, because one of the virtues of this place is that it gives Ministers a rough ride if they do not.

Mr. Hawkins: I cannot believe it.

Mr. Cryer: The Government contain their complement of incompetents, but on occasions this place can be incisive, scrutinise Ministers and give them a rough ride. My hon. Friends will remember that when my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was the Minister and the Tory party were in opposition, there was sustained hissing from the Conservative Members and piles of questions and points of order. My right hon. Friend was certainly put to the test, and he came through it magnificently. Ministers must know their subject thoroughly when coming to this place to answer questions. I do not underrate the power of this place to exercise scrutiny if it so chooses.

Mr. Hawkins: It would be interesting to put the hon. Gentleman's supposition to the test tonight. Earlier, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) alleged that some housing association rents would be put up from £14 to £34 a week. I asked my hon. Friend the Minister whether that was true. The hon. Gentleman's belief appears to be that by asking questions of Ministers, one receives answers. I shall be greatly interested to discover whether my hon. Friend will answer my question. We shall then know whether the hon. Gentleman is correct or whether my more cynical view is correct.

Mr. Cryer: I do not judge the whole issue by a single question. However, the Minister could stand up now and guarantee that there will not be an increase from £14 to £34 a week. He has a couple of civil servants available who can wave notes at him so that he can find some form of words to use. It is all part of the testing process. Questions

[Mr. Cryer]

can be asked, and if they are not answered the hon. Gentleman must draw his own conclusions. Rents will increase under this Government, and we have been saying that since the debate on the Bill began.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I understand my hon. Friend's comment about this Chamber being a place for incisive debate. I know that he is doing his best, but I do not think that anyone would describe tonight's debate as incisive. Is he aware that the Secretary of State is no longer with us? Apparently, he is the author of the legislation, which probably accounts for the number of Government amendments. Will my hon. Friend comment on why the Secretary of State is not here to answer his serious points about the Secretary of State's personal legislation? Instead, the poor unfortunate Minister of State—who probably does not agree with a word in the legislation anyway—has to plough his way through this God-awful rubbish and cannot answer any of my hon. Friend's questions.

Mr. Cryer: I cannot believe that the Minister is so cynical as to support the legislation with his vote while fundamentally disagreeing with it. I am sure that if he felt that way he would have a word with the Prime Minister and resign from the Government. That is the honourable course to take if his leader produces legislation with which he does not agree.

The three clauses give the Secretary of State a great deal of power and we should give the Government the opportunity to table an amendment in the other place that would still give the Secretary of State powers, but qualified by scrutiny in this place. If the right hon. Gentleman has indeed written this legislation, I am not surprised that it gives him such unqualified powers. There is, therefore, an even more urgent necessity to get rid of the subsections by voting for the amendment.

Mr. Battle: I listened carefully to the Minister's reply to the debate on rents. First, he said that we had already had a debate on rents and, secondly, that the clause would not have any effect on rents. That must be true because the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) voted for the clause on rents. He could not have known what he was voting for because it is the very clause that will put up rents. The Minister could not refute that in our earlier debate.

Mr. Cryer: I do not criticise the hon. Gentleman. I am always pleased that, in spite of having been bludgeoned into the appropriate lobby by the Conservative Whip, he realises that he has made an error and, having listened to the debate, has begun to recognise the horrendous consequences of the clause for which he voted. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey raised the question of increasing housing association rents from £14 to £34 per week, and he is keen to intervene on that point.

Mr. Simon Hughes: It is an important point and, as I understand it, the inquiry was made in good faith. The figures were given by a housing professional and happen to be for the region covering Bradford. The second largest housing association in the area asserts that the combined effect of the Bill and the changes in subsidy and housing benefit will be an increase of between £14 and £34. That point was put to the Minister and he did not dissent from it. The matter should be pursued and I will willingly let the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) have a copy of the correspondence. The Government must answer the questions, because the combined changes will produce such increases in rent levels. I am sure that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) will be keen to ensure that the Minister is not let off the hook on the good example of the effect of this loosely drafted piece of legislation.

Mr. Cryer: The Anchor housing association tenants who have written to me are already in the £14-plus increase bracket, because of the combined effects of rent increases proposed by the housing association and the cuts in housing benefit. I do not claim that they are in the £34 bracket that I have come across, but I can assure the House that I have received many heated representations from righteously angry constituents who face massive rent increases by virtue of that combination of changes. I am hardly surprised that the Government are not able to give that guarantee. I shall give way to the Minister if he wishes to intervene to say that the rent increases would not be of the order of £14 to £34.

Mr. Corbyn (Islington, North): My hon. Friend is right to point out the level of potential rent increases. I have received similar representations from my constituents. The hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins), who raised the matter, did not say that he was against the rent increases. As I understood it, he was happy that such large increases should go through. If I do him an injustice, I am sure that he will rise and say that he is opposed to housing association tenants being forced to pay through the nose because of the Government's legislation and presumably he will vote with us when the opportunity arises.

Mr. Cryer: I shall give way to the hon. Member for High Peak in a moment, but I want first to reiterate my comment that he can make his position clear, thanks to my innate generosity, and to say, secondly, that he will have the opportunity to vote against the clauses by voting for the amendment which will have the salutary effect of sending a quiver through the Government and also ensuring that, if they so choose, they can bring back some modifications through the Lords which will replace the arbitrary powers given to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Hawkins: I did not imply in any sense that I favoured rent increases of 250 per cent., or of the figure suggested by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. I was merely trying to find out, on behalf of my constituents in High Peak and other constituents elsewhere, whether the hon. Gentleman's allegations were correct. It would be nice to know for the record whether the allegations are true or false.

Mr. Cryer: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has intervened to make clear his position and, moreover, sent off the Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary, who was whispering in his ear, telling him, I suspect, not to make such a fuss about those massive rent increases which will occur under this legislation but to keep his mouth shut. Some credit is due even to the Government Benches, for the fact that he sent the PPS away with a flea in his ear to scurry around on behalf of the Minister, sending messages to Conservative Members that they should keep their mouths shut because all of a sudden the Government are concerned.

However, there are not many Conservative Members for him to be concerned about. There is one in the far corner who is taking a close interest in the Bill—*[Laughter.]*—and four others. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) took a close interest when he wanted to go to New Zealand to watch trees grow. However, this is a different time and a different place.

4.30 am

Mr. Winnick: Although my hon. Friend has somewhat unfairly woken the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), does he agree that having a sleep over there is far more comfortable than the situation of people who, less than a quarter of a mile away are having to sleep in cardboard boxes because of the lack of accommodation and whose plight will not be improved by this rotten Bill?

Mr. Cryer: I was saying that the Member for High Peak, who raised with his Minister the question about the increase from £14 to £34, was showing a commendable interest in the Bill and in subsections (6), (7) and (8) about which we are worried. The effect of the clawback that the Secretary of State has powers to impose under clause 50 will force up rents because the Secretary of State will seek to use the provisions to obtain income for redistribution to housing associations for the development of further housing.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths *rose*—

Mr. Cryer: I shall give way to my hon. Friend in a moment.

That is why we are delighted that at least one Conservative Member is taking an interest, albeit somewhat belatedly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West has pointed out. If only he had taken an interest earlier—he could have approached the Parliamentary Private Secretary and said, "Put the Minister's bag down and listen to me for a moment. Have a word with the Minister and tell him to stop some of this wretched legislation." But, alack and alas, the revelation has come a little late—although, as we always say, "Better late than never."

Mr. Griffiths: My hon. Friend's expertise in these matters is second to none and, like other hon. Members tonight, he has dwelt in detail on the effects of the subsections and why they should be deleted. Do not Conservative Members want to have it both ways? On the one hand, they want to reassure their tenant voters that they will keep rents at relatively low levels and that they will certainly not cause them to go shooting through the roof. On the other hand, however, they are telling their backers—their landlords and speculative investors—that they want rents to shoot up so that their profits will shoot up as well.

By exposing the contradictions, my hon. Friend has galvanised the one Tory Back Bencher who is paying any attention into action to try to defend his own constituency interests at the price of exposing his hon. Friends to the economic fact that they do not just want rents to double—they want them to more than double, so that their friends' profits can shoot up.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise that this legislation, which seems so academic and remote, is a cloak for rent increases in the housing association sector. Rents are increasing in any case in the local authority sector to build up a plateau so that private landlords who are benefiting under this Government, not least from the nefarious business expansion scheme, will see rents climb and their profits increase.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) pointed out that, not far from here, there are people who have no alternative but to sleep fitfully through the night, as some of us are doing. But we have comfortable beds available and those people are on the pavements because of the massive increase in homelessness brought about by the Government's vicious, anti-local government attitude and their careless attitude towards the housing associations. Housing associations have helped to fill a gap. With encouragement and support, local authorities could have provided the necessary housing without the use of housing associations. But housing associations exist, we stand on this bridge, and we must do our best for them. I am pretty sure that all the members of the housing associations know on which side of the Chamber—ours—their friends sit. The managers, organisers, members of boards and, most of all, tenants know that their defenders are on the Labour side.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the role that housing associations wish to play in alleviating and ending homelessness, especially in inner-city areas such as London where they deal specifically with those people who sleep on the streets. Is my hon. Friend aware that homelessness is beginning to gnaw at the Government a little? Instead of doing anything about it, they apparently now have friends in central London who encourage use of the Public Order Act 1986 to drive away people who sleep in cardboard boxes. A group of lawyers at Lincoln's Inn are petitioning Camden council to shift these "dossers", as they put it, out of the way because it damages the tourist trade and they do not like waking up in the morning and finding people sleeping on the grass outside their houses. Is that not the ultimate condemnation of the divisions in Tory Britain?

Mr. Cryer: I agree. That point may seem remote from subsections (6), (7) and (8), but the potential rent increases to produce the surpluses which the Secretary of State can claw back will increase homelessness. Who would imagine that there is likely to be a homeless problem in Dulwich, near the £500,000 fortified gates behind which the rich elite live because they are frightened?

Mr. Tony Banks: The Dulwich bunker.

Mr. Cryer: For the Prime Minister, there is the Dulwich bunker, as my hon. Friend says.

Mr. Banks: Neo-Georgian.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is producing so many words that I cannot repeat them all to get them on the record, but I know that he wants to speak later. He has a valuable contribution to make, like my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall), who can testify to everything that I have said about housing associations.

Instead of using a mean-minded approach in this legislation, the Government should inject money into housing. There is a need and a desire among people for a decent roof over their heads. There is no reason why that need and desire should not be met.

[Mr. Cryer]

The Minister may say, "We are short of money." One can reel off the billions of pounds that the Government are spending: £1·7 billion in the last Budget in tax concessions to the better-off, £1·5 billion for Sizewell B; another £1·5 billion for Hinkley B—nuclear power stations which we neither need nor want and which are potential sources of hazard—and £11 billion for Trident nuclear weapons, which breach the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty. I could go on and on; the money is there if there is the political will. The Opposition say to the Government: get some political will to get some money into housing.

Mr. Winnick: If our proceedings were being televised, viewers would see the interest that is being taken by Labour Members in the whole issue of housing associations and the lack of interest on the part of Conservative Members. Indeed, apart from the Minister, nobody has spoken from the Government Benches, and some minutes ago there were present one Government Back Bencher, the Minister, his PPS and a Whip.

Mr. Corbyn: What about the one who was asleep?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must relate their remarks to the amendment that is before the House.

Mr. Winnick: The one who was asleep is still asleep. The assurances that we have been given by the Minister about clawing back the surplus rent funds of housing associations have failed to satisfy us. We have drawn a distinction between the views on that issue of the Secretary of State and those of the Minister for Housing and Planning.

If those in housing hardship—in many cases in housing misery—cannot be rehoused by local authorities and cannot obtain a mortgage, the housing associations may provide the only solution. In the main, those who work for housing associations are dedicated and are not motivated by profit and a desire to see tenants pay the largest possible rents.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend aware that many of the pay levels of staff employed by housing associations are considerably lower than the remunerations in equivalent posts in local government? But that has not diminished the dedication with which they undertake their duties.

Mr. Winnick: They are, in the main, dedicated. They believe that they have a role to play in helping to provide adequate rented accommodation for people in need. There has been no dispute between local authorities and housing associations. Housing associations have not asked for more responsibilities or told local authorities that they want to take over large amounts of their housing stock. There has been a partnership. In the main, the people involved in housing associations recognise that the main supplier of rented accommodation is the public sector, but the housing associations will provide the additional accommodation that local authorities are not able to provide.

4.45 am

Of course, in the last eight or nine years the position has changed to the extent that local authorities such as mine have not been able to build any houses or flats. Therefore, the function of housing associations has become more important. I emphasise that point because we are dealing with people who cannot obtain mortgages.

Mr. Michael Welsh: That is an important issue. If the Bill is passed, the Secretary of State will be able to raid housing associations at any time he desires and take away the rents. Is this not similar to what happened to local authorities which sold houses? They have a large fund of money but are not allowed to invest it in housing and repairs. I hope that I am not giving ideas to the Minister, but I am afraid that the Government may be thinking of raiding the funds of housing associations.

Mr. Winnick: We should all bear in mind the point that my hon. Friend has made because we are dealing with a Secretary of State who, unfortunately, takes an irresponsible position on local authority and housing association revenue.

I was saying a moment ago that we are dealing with people who cannot obtain a mortgage. I am in favour of people being about to buy their own houses. I see nothing wrong with it. I do so myself. But at least there is consensus between the two sides of the House that a substantial number of people, albeit a minority, are not in that position, especially in London and the south-east where it is virtually impossible to buy any type of accommodation, even the smallest one-bedroom flat, at under £60,000. In the west midlands, prices are increasing, though at a slower rate.

We have to find ways and means of ensuring that people do not sleep in cardboard boxes a quarter of a mile from here. They are not all tramps or irresponsible people. Even now, at a quarter to five in the morning, people are sleeping out just a quarter of a mile from here. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) smiles. He probably has a comfortable home. For all I know, he may have more than one home. If he wishes to intervene, I will give way.

The people who are sleeping in those conditions include individuals who have come to London from areas of high unemployment to seek work, but they cannot find any rented accommodation that they can afford. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that there is proper accommodation for all who require accommodation to rent.

The Minister will no doubt tell us that the purpose of what we are debating is to provide more rented accommodation to ensure that people do not have to sleep in cardboard boxes and that families do not have to spend weeks or months, or sometimes even longer, in squalid bed-and-breakfast hostels. The very point that we are justified in making is that the Bill does not provide a solution for people with limited means.

I believe that part of the reason for the clause that we are debating, and the manner in which housing associations will be forced to charge market rents so that thee will be a surplus for the Secretary of State to claw back, is to ensure that as many tenants as possible are driven into the private rented sector. That is the purpose of it all. On Second Reading the Secretary of State did not shy away from it. He stated that the Bill's main purpose, in so far as it provides for rented accommodation, relates to the private sector. He did not spend much time praising housing associations; I cannot recall him saying anything about them at all on Second Reading on 30 November.

In the past few weeks, we have learnt of many tragic cases, particularly involving pensioners, of housing benefit being substantially reduced. That should make us all the more concerned that housing associations are not forced to apply market rents, particularly in those many cases where housing benefit will be insufficient—where it exists at all—to meet them. Housing benefit has been drastically reduced, and rent officers will have to ensure that tenants do not pay the level of rents that landlords will be demanding and at which housing benefit would be denied.

There is no doubt that the Government's policy is aimed at forcing local authorities to end their role in housing. I put down a parliamentary question asking for an explanation of the Government's role in local authority housing, and the reply was that local authorities are no longer considered to be the necessary providers of rented accommodation. So far as the Government are concerned, the role of local authorities is a diminishing one. Later we shall be challenging the Government's attempt to undermine and diminish the volume of public sector rented accommodation by transferring it to the private sector. What concerns me are the Government's intentions in respect of housing associations. In a few years' time, should the Government remain in office, they may adopt the same attitude towards those associations as they have adopted towards local authorities.

If the purpose of the Bill is to ensure that people who want rented accommodation can obtain it only from the private sector at market rents, why should there be a need for housing associations? Is that not one of the reasons why the Government are insisting that market rents should apply to housing association properties? If the Government wanted to ensure that associations should continue to provide accommodation at reasonable cost, they would not insist on the observance of market rents.

It is necessary to curb the Secretary of State's powers. He has just returned to the Front Bench. I hope that he has had some sleep, although it would not have been the sleep of the innocent. Perhaps the Secretary of State heard me remark that on Second Reading he paid no particular attention to housing associations and did not go out of his way to praise them. We are dealing with a Secretary of State who is as described by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), and we are concerned that he will use his powers irresponsibly. It may be that if the Minister was the Secretary of State, we would feel a little more confident, because there is a distinction to be made between the two—*[Interruption.]* It appears that a number of my hon. Friends, and one in particular, disagree.

Mr. McCartney: I held that view through long periods of the Committee stage and continually gave the Minister the benefit of the doubt in an attempt to obtain concessions that were never forthcoming. However, when it came to the crunch, on all the major issues the Minister always did the Secretary of State's bidding. For years he has been proceeding in such a way as to ensure that tenants' rights have been seriously and dramatically undermined. We must rid ourselves of the belief that we have a benefactor and friend of housing associations and tenants in the Minister. He simply speaks with a smile and grits his teeth. The Secretary of State may be more open, aggressive and arrogant, but the message is the same.

Mr. Winnick: I may have been too generous. I have a weakness in that respect that I must try to curb. I am always most generous to my own colleagues, and I must try to curb any extension of that to Conservative Members.

It could be that the Minister started off reasonably well when he first went to the Department of the Environment, in so far as any Tory can start off reasonably well, but, having worked in close association with the Secretary of State, he reminds one of Lenin's description of Bernard Shaw as a good man fallen among Fabians. The Secretary of State has exerted undue influence on the Minister. I must confess that the Minister has never struck me as someone who would resign over a policy disagreement. He is ambitious. I understand that they both went to the same school, and there may be some old school ties between them.

We should vote on the amendment before us. It is right that we should demonstrate, as we have been doing for the past three hours, our anxiety about the future of housing associations and the dedication of those involved in them—a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). They should know of our concern and the indifference of Conservative Members, who have taken no part in the debate and have not supported the housing associations.

Mr. Corbyn: Has my hon. Friend had a chance to read the National Federation of Housing Association's publication—"Housing associations 1987-88—the breakthrough"? In it he will find a large number of photographs of Conservative Members of Parliament and, indeed, the Minister, who is now sleeping opposite us, showing their great interest in cutting tapes and opening housing association developments. Is he aware that under the Bill many of those developments will end up as privately owned flats let at high rents, not for the benefit of those for whom they were built in the first place?

Mr. Winnick: That is a useful intervention, as always, from my hon. Friend. Conservative Members give the impression in their constituencies that they could not be more keen or enthusiastic about housing associations, but when they are criticised because the Government do not allow local authorities to carry out their basic function, or what should be their basic function, of providing accommodation, something that has been agreed by successive Governments over the past 60 years, their reaction has always been, "We support housing associations. We will open this, do that, or anything you want." All they want is some useful publicity in their local press. But when it comes to the crunch, when it comes to defending housing associations and trying to ensure that their tenants are not forced to pay exorbitant rents, there is silence. There are two or three Conservative Members present and one is fast asleep in the corner, as far away from housing associations as Mars. In the main they show no interest.

Mr. George Howarth: What does my hon. Friend suppose that Ministers and Conservative Back Benchers will say to tenants when the schemes are opened? I understand that as a result of the introduction of private finance, £10,000 less per unit is likely to be spent on the construction of properties. Will they say, "This is an improvement," or will they say, "Goodness me, we did not expect standards to be lowered"?

5 am

Mr. Winnick: Undoubtedly the latter. I have often found that Conservative Members, when approached about some harshness in Government policy—even housing benefit—say, "Oh, really? I did'nt realise that. I shall write to the Secretary of State." They then write to the Secretary of State, knowing full well what the reply will be, and they send the reply on to the person who has complained. We know how Conservative Members behave, especially those with marginal constituencies. Those with safe constituencies may not even bother to make representations in the first place.

One of the good things, as I think my hon. Friends will agree, is that *Hansard* can be sent around, so we can ensure that the manner in which the debate has been conducted is known. The silence—I would not even describe it as an eloquent silence—of Conservative Members will be the answer to the few naive people in housing associations who will not accept our explanation for the indifference of Conservative Members to the housing association movement.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I suggest that my hon. Friend is being somewhat unfair to the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin)? He is not actually asleep; he is acquiring knowledge——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are debating amendments that the Opposition have tabled, not individual personalities in the House.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my friend aware that the long-term effects on housing associations will be catastrophic: very high rents, the encouragement of the right to buy and, ultimately, a change in the type of person who will live in their properties? Is he also aware that many housing associations have a specific, specialist function? People with disabilities, people from divided and broken homes and people who were formerly homeless or in institutional care will end up in the most appalling circumstances—and probably homeless.

Mr. Winnick: I hope that my hon. Friend will not feel aggrieved if I refer to him as my hon. Friend, as he has said "my friend". It simply shows that I am old-fashioned in such courtesies. I know that my hon. Friend means very well, and he may be right at the end of the day.

My hon. Friend has made the most valid point that could be made. Housing associations have indeed gone out of their way—simply because they see it as part of their function—to help people who, especially nowadays, cannot be rehoused by local authorities. Those people with all kinds of difficulties who have come out of institutions can at least be provided with adequate rented accommodation by the associations. But now that the associations will be forced to charge market rents, the position of the people described by my hon. Friend will be made even worse.

Does not the Secretary of State—even a Secretary of State with such rigid, Thatcherite, Right-wing views as the present one—recognise that the people who have been helped by housing associations will be helped much less as a result of the financial pressure imposed on the associations: the clawback of the rent surplus and the fact that they will be forced to charge market rents, with housing benefit being drastically reduced all the time?

I make a distinction. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) was slightly wrong. I believe that the Minister recognises some of the points that have been made, not just because I have made them, but perhaps because others have made them more eloquently. However, the Secretary of State is simply indifferent to those points. It is all the more tragic that the senior Minister in charge of housing has views that reflect the 19th century, or before, rather than the last few years of the 20th century.

Frankly, the Secretary of State is totally and callously indifferent to the plight of those people described by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North. If the Secretary of State were to rise, he would tell us that the explanation is simple—people should pay a market rent and the market place is the only solution. He would claim that people buy bread and food and everything else in the market place so they should buy their houses there, too.

We believe that some people cannot afford market rents. If they could, they would buy. Would people choose to pay market rents in London and the south-east if they could get a mortgage? Common sense dictates that if they could, they would obtain a mortgage and as a result of tax relief, have secure accommodation—their own homes. People who are not in that position need rents set at reasonable levels.

I believe that many people, such as those who have been institutionalised, need help in this regard. Their only chance to leave an institution may be if they can be considered safe and secure and can obtain rented accommodation. If market rents prevail, those people will have little chance of leaving an institution. All Conservative Members, including the Secretary of State and the Minister, who do not support the amendment in the Division Lobby will have on their consciences the fact those people will continue to suffer.

I know that many of my hon. Friends want to participate in the debate, so I will bring my remarks to a close. If there are to be surpluses—and we have argued that in many cases surpluses would not be justified if housing associations charged market or exorbitant rents —instead of being clawed back by the Secretary of State, those surpluses should be retained by the associations to cover deficits, to carry out repairs and other essential work, to cover service costs and to ensure that associations have a balance in their accounts.

If there are to be surpluses, they should be retained by the responsible housing associations. No one has said that they are not responsible. It would be better if that money were retained for major repair work and service costs than that it should be clawed back by the Secretary of State with no guarantee that the money will be used for housing purposes. For those reasons, we believe that the amendment is perfectly justified and should be supported.

Mr. Tony Banks: I want to make only a few points. I listened carefully to the Minister, and in effect he said that we were making a fuss over nothing with regard to the amendment.

I will not repeat ad nauseam what my colleagues have said about the Minister's function, role and attitude to housing associations and rent levels in general. We are not in the business of taking the views, opinions and attitudes of the Minister and then claiming that they are different from the harsher opinions and standards of the Secretary of State. We are in the business of looking critically at

proposed legislation and deciding whether there are sufficient assurances for us to go along with it. In respect of this part of the Bill, we are not convinced by what the Minister has said either in Committee or on Report.

It is clear that the Government have changed the whole role of local authorities in the provision of rented accommodation. They have made no secret of the fact that they want to get local authorities out of the provision of rented accommodation. They are not keen on having any publicly provided rented accommodation. The Government have so changed the role of local authorities in the provision of rented accommodation that it now appears most likely that they also want to change the role of housing associations in the provision of rented accommodation. In other parts, the Bill changes the role of housing associations.

That is not just us being alarmist. It reflects the views and opinions expressed by housing associations. The Minister can tell me if I am completely wrong, but generally housing associations have deplored these provisions as they affect them. If any housing associations have told the Minister how much they welcome the provisions, I shall gladly give way to him so that he can read out their names. We do not know of any. Clearly, the Minister knows that housing associations are deeply suspicious of the proposals. It comes ill from the Minister to suggest that we are making a fuss about nothing when we say that we are equally suspicious of the Government's intentions in respect of housing associations. They have changed the nature of local authority provision of rented accommodation and it is now only one stage further to change the role of housing associations.

Just as the Government have forced local authorities to push up rates and go for surpluses on their housing revenue accounts, so, if the Bill is passed, they will be able to do precisely the same with housing associations. In the past, local authorities have been told that they must dispose of their housing stock through compulsory sales under the right to buy. Again, with greater powers going to the Government in respect of housing associations, it is only one step from directing them to dispose of their properties. Not only does one see dangers in this part of the Bill for rents, but it is a sign of the Government's likely future response and attitude to housing associations generally.

We can see the time coming when the Government will direct housing associations to continue to increase their rents in order to create surpluses which the Government can claw back to use for other areas of expenditure, perhaps not even necessarily connected with the work of housing associations, or for more schemes for housing, or even for other forms of housing provision within the housing association sector.

The Government are making the poorest people pay for their housing and repairs and then pay for other people's housing and repairs, while owner-occupiers receive more and more subsidies from the Government through taxation relief.

We do not believe that the amendment is a fuss over nothing. The Government's record makes us highly suspicious about their future intentions for housing associations. For those reasons alone—they are enough—we shall continue to push for the amendment.

5.15 am

Mr. Barron: I should like to follow on from where my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) left off and discuss the deep suspicions that have been aroused by clause 50 and its consequences for housing associations. When the Minister spoke earlier, I had hoped that he would put minds at rest, but he did not allay those suspicions.

One sure way of removing any suspicions is by supporting amendment No. 85. Although that amendment will retain the Secretary of State's power to make housing associations have a grant redemption fund, it will prevent the Secretary of State from taking money from those associations and using it elsewhere. The Housing Associations Act 1985 set up those redemption funds and I am sure that everyone would agree that only a small amount of money has been raised by their operation. The sum raised is not large enough for the Government to believe that it is not being put to good use. That money has given some security to housing associations, but the total raised by them has not been great.

What would happen if the Secretary of State implemented clause 50 unamended? The Minister said that the money would go to the Housing Corporation and not to the Secretary of State. The trouble is that the Secretary of State's record is not good in relation to money received by organisations that are directly funded by his Department. Is it possible to imagine that the Secretary of State will ignore the bonus that will result from the collection of surplus rent—overcharged rent—and that he will continue to make the same level of provision because of his concern about housing need and the importance of housing associations? The extra money will go to the Housing Corporation. Will the Secretary of State ignore such money when it comes to funding the corporation next year? That takes a lot of believing.

One must consider the right hon. Gentleman's record on local government and that of previous Secretaries of State. In those circumstances, we have every right to be suspicious and to press amendment No. 85. If the Minister does not accept that amendment, we have every right to take it to a vote. In that way we shall have attempted to allay the fears of the housing associations and to keep the Secretary of State's hands off the money. The housing associations should have that money to use in those areas that will be beneficial to housing rather than for the Exchequer to use the money indirectly in areas where it will benefit the high income earners of our society.

We must remember that this is not the only change facing housing associations. The other major change will be the lifting of controls on rents. When the Bill is passed, things will be different. Earlier, we tried and failed to get some form of proper rent ceilings for housing associations, recognising the different problems of incomes among the regions. The Minister did not appear to agree with our desire to give some security to people living in housing association properties—and to homeless people who would like to live in them but whose homes are not yet even on the architect's drawing board, so to speak.

I want the Minister to reconsider his position and say that the Government will not use the housing associations as milch cows, from which the present rent controls can be removed. The Government should not force up rents to the market rents that they keep mentioning. Goodness knows what things would be like in housing if they did

[Mr. Barron]

that. Many Consevative Members feel that that should happen quickly; members of the Government have made statements that are close to it. It would be a charter for Rachmanism, and I would be completely against it. We should at least assure the associations that they will not be used as milch cows—*[Interruption.]*

Even if rents were forced up in some areas—*[Interruption.]* I shall give way to the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) if he wants to intervene. If the hon. Gentleman wants a debate with his committee of hon. Friends, perhaps he should take them out to the Lobby, so that those of us who are concerned about the amendment's effect on housing associations can carry on a proper debate here. If Conservative Members want to intervene, they are welcome to do so; if not, they should leave the debate here to hon. Members who are concerned about housing associations, not about tips for Ascot tomorrow—if tomorrow ever comes.

The housing associations have projects on which to spend the money that is likely to accrue in the grant redemption fund. The Minister knows that the Government consultation paper "Finance for Housing Associations" gave many examples of uses to which the associations might put increased income from higher rents. I am not saying that I am in favour of higher rents—that would be misleading, as I am not—but the paper gave some examples.

Retained surpluses would be needed to fund the proposed progressive phasing out of grant for major repairs and for service deficits. If clause 50 is operated in future and the Government claw back the higher rents into the Housing Corporation—and perhaps then into the Exchequer—how will they fund major repairs or service deficits? They are likely to be funded by the tenants. They will be the only available source. The only other person who could fund the housing associations would be the Secretary of State, who would take the money away.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government want to see surpluses being built up not just because rents will be forced up but because that will ensure that proper investment is not made? Underfunding, not just of the housing associations but of any form of housing body that is not in the private sector, is part and parcel of the Government's strategy. A devastating effect of this is the backlog highlighted by the Audit Commission. The Government have done nothing to tackle the problem and, as my hon. Friend says, for tens of thousands of tenants the surplus that will result from clause 50 will be because of under-investment in their homes and of high rents, both of which the Government have supported.

Mr. Barron: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. In the past six months I have had a classic example of the underfunding of housing associations. An association approached me indirectly through a member of the community in Maltby, which I represent and in which I live, in south Yorkshire. A dramatic change was being brought about in the ownership of houses that had been owned by British Coal. Some of them are still owned by British Coal, but the houses are being sold off to new landlords.

The South Yorkshire housing association, a small association which was formed just a few years ago, was very worried about the matter. We shall later mention the problems with new landlords. That association approached me to see if there was any way at all in which I could get British Coal to reduce the cost of the houses that it wanted to offload on the private market. The price was 50 or 60 per cent. in excess of what could be afforded for homes that would have to be repaired and managed in a reasonable scheme that would have enabled the association to charge a reasonable and affordable rent.

I am glad to say that eventually a deal was struck. I do not know the exact details of the deal, but as a result of it people moved into some houses in Maltby. Others are still on the market. There is still uncertainty about whether the South Yorkshire housing association or another association of the same size will be able to buy the properties. As the Minister knows, if they do not go to a reputable landlord, they will go to auction in the City of London and that will create months or even years of chaos. Housing associations that have bought houses in that way have been able to give some security and are responsible landlords. Without money, the associations would find it difficult to make a bid to a public body that was unloading houses, especially houses that needed repair.

This clause, if unamended, could take the extra funding away. In his consultation paper the Minister accepts that it is not a bad idea for housing associations to have some money. One of the reasons for his belief that they should have some money is that that will enable them to attract money from the private sector and get mixed funding. The consultation paper said that it might not be a bad idea for housing associations to have some money. The Minister is proposing to take money, presumably annually, and give it to the Housing Corporation. How are we to get mixed funding if housing associations will not have money put aside from present need in order to attract private capital into their areas?

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: My hon. Friend makes the telling point that the Government's claims about seeking mixed funding are bogus. Is it not the case that what the Government seek to do is to fatten up the housing associations so that they can be sold off to private landlords rather than encourage some mixed funding that might benefit the tenants and provide real investment? Their real motives are to ensure that the private sector takes over that housing, with the ultimate aim that housing is run not for public need but for private greed.

5.30 am

Mr. Barron: I do not wish to digress too far from what is before us, but I agree with what my hon. Friend said. I mentioned the selling off of the ex-public housing stock of British Coal on to the open markets through auctions, and so on, which the Government have been doing for many years. The only other common thread in the Housing Bill, other than that, is the one to try to deregulate rents in some form, so that the market will be ripe for the spivs and the city slickers to make quick killings. Of course, we have yet to debate the implications of short-term tenancies and the implications of people wanting to buy ex-public housing stock.

Mr. George Howarth: I have to disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) that the Government's intention is to sell off housing stock to private landlords. My hon. Friend the Member for

Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) has made a good point and I hope that he does not repeat it when the Secretary of State resumes his seat, because he might just put the idea into his head.

Mr. Barron: I must say that it will be one of many ideas that go through the Secretary of State's head on a regular basis. Presumably, many thoughts have gone through the Secretary of State's head since Second Reading. I do not have to tell my hon. Friend who sat on the Committee that this creature has grown and grown. Presumably, thoughts may still be coming in, but whether they will end up in front of us while we are considering the Report stage, Third Reading or in another place, we shall have to wait and see. There may be backwoodsmen in the other place who also have thoughts about the Housing Bill.

As I said earlier, I do not want to go into great detail on amendment No. 85, but in closing I echo the request to the Minister for Housing and Planning—who is still sitting with his eyes open most of the time—to give a good reason for not accepting our amendment, which would remove the threat that hangs over the housing associations as a result of subsections (6), (7) and (8). As was mentioned in the consultation document, that would give the Housing Corporation the power to give the housing associations the freedom to stand on their own. I am sure that the Minister will want to clarify the position before we move on to other matters.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): I suppose that there is some merit in our being in the Chamber at 5.30 in the morning discussing housing matters which are important to the people we represent and crucial to the social fabric of the country. It is appropriate that the Minister and the Secretary of State should be here—of course, he has left us—in order to participate in the debate.

It is sad that we are here this morning, because I would have thought that the merits of good housing would commend themselves to the House and the country. It raises the fundamental question why, if we are all interested in good housing for our people, there are so many amendments attempting to find the answer to that question. It is sad that we are debating the amendments on the premise that, through this legislation, the Government have created a great deal of controversy, concern and anxiety within housing associations and local government.

I wish that we were here this morning to commend a Bill that was in the interests of all our people and had the support of all in the House. Clearly, that is not the case, because the legislation represents the doctrinaire attitude of a Government who are not interested in promoting the best housing.

We are suffering from missed opportunities to provide in the Bill the means to respond to the problems in many constituencies. The Minister should have taken the opportunity to resolve some of the problems. He has not done so, because he is under a great deal of doctrinaire pressure to respond to what are allegedly housing issues, but which are in fact the interests of the markets and commodities. The Bill does not face the human need for housing in 1988.

We recently conducted a survey in my constituency to discover the accommodation needs of the elderly and the disabled. The Government say that that should be a function of the housing associations. Our analysis showed 2,500 elderly and disabled people waiting for 50 disabled persons' bungalows. Someone aged 70 would have to wait until he was 120 before being provided with such accommodation. The building programmes and the specialist housing provision simply do not meet the need.

There is a growing need for investment in the unpopular estates with their multi-storey housing and deck access. The Secretary of State should be sufficiently concerned to tackle some of the underlying social problems in the inner cities. The Prime Minister talked about tackling that problem, but where are the resources and commitment in the Bill to begin to approach that problem and the problems of escalating rents and rates? The Government are responsible for inflicting massive rent increases—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) would like to deny that.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: What about the rates?

Mr. Turner: I can justify rate increases in terms of the reduction in rate support grant to my local authority and every authority since 1979. There has been a massive reduction in support for rent and rates, and they have escalated as a consequence.

The missed opportunities in the Bill are there for all to see. It is a vehicle for Rachmanism and landlordism. It does nothing to satisfy the expectations, needs and desires of people for good housing. I liken the Government's obsession with markets and commodities to a new game of monopoly. The Bill deals with picking a landlord and picking a tenant. Instead of making purposeful progress towards good quality housing for all our people, the Bill reflects the short-term gift and profits that the Conservatives want to give to landlords.

I hope that the people of this country will realise that the Bill has nothing to do with good housing, making progress with tenants' associations, or delivering the housing that they want. I hope that, even now, the Government will reconsider their obligations in respect of good housing and make purposeful progress to meeting the legitimate needs of our people, rather than following a doctrinaire housing policy that will put money in the hands of landlords and achieve nothing for those people who are crying out for decent housing.

Mr. McCartney: Clause 50 is part of a family of clauses that we debated in Committee regarding, first, changing the nature of the relationship between local authorities and central Government and the funding arrangements with housing associations; secondly, changing the nature of funding between local authorities and housing associations; and thirdly, in a more general sense, changing the nature of the relationship between housing associations and local authorities. As a member of a local authority and as someone who has been deeply involved with local authority housing and housing associations, I have noticed the changing nature of the relationship between local government and housing associations over the past decade. I want to deal with those changes in detail and the effects of those changes and make it critical for local authorities, such as my own in Wigan, to——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is looking at the same clause as I am. We are dealing with parts of clause 50 which deal with the surplus rental incomes of housing associations. It has nothing to do with local authorities.

Mr. McCartney: The new clause concerns local authorities and, if you will allow me to proceed, I shall show you the direct connection. You know me better than to suggest that I would take advantage of your good nature at this early hour of the morning. If you had been with us in Committee, you would have realised that I keep to the subject under discussion. I am attempting to show what has happened and what continues to happen in the metropolitan borough of Wigan and why the concern of the housing associations is mirrored by that of the local authority associations. It is important that clause 50 is amended and that the Minister takes on board the protestations of my hon. Friends who have already spoken.

5.45 am

Wigan is one of the larger metropolitan boroughs. In 1986, the Audit Commission's report into the housing needs of 400 local authorities in the United Kingdom placed Wigan in the top 10 housing authorities for providing accommodation in a wide area for both special needs and general housing categories. It congratulated Wigan on the way in which it operated its housing policies. It commented on the way in which the local authority and the housing associations worked together on the housing investment programme, and on the way in which the housing grant schemes worked so as best to utilise the resources of the local authority and those of the housing association.

Wigan was congratulated on dovetailing the priorities of the housing associations with those of the local authority to enable the housing needs of the community to be met cost-effectively, while considering the needs of the community as a whole not just by providing the general type of housing that one would expect from a local authority, but by working with housing associations to provide more specific types of accommodation for those with special needs, such as the physically and mentally handicapped; and for dealing, through HAG and the housing associations, with the special programmes that are necessary, for those who are physically abused and for the mentally handicapped, and on its programme of reintroducing into the community those who were formerly, or are still, in institutions because of their mental and physical disabilities.

Therefore, there is a direct correlation between this clause and the continuing relationship between the housing associations and the local authorities because the continuation of that funding link will provide the only real new investment in housing stock, both now and in the foreseeable future in many areas. The reality is that, since 1979, Wigan metropolitan borough council's housing investment programme has been cut from £18·7 million to £5·1 million——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have been listening patiently in the hope that the hon. Gentleman would be able to confirm his earlier statement that he would demonstrate the links between the clause and the other matters to which he has been referring. He has not persuaded me at all. I do not see any link between the matters that he is talking about and the provisions of the clause, which deal with the surplus rental income of housing associations. The hon. Gentleman must either address himself to the amendment before the House, or resume his seat.

Mr. McCartney: I have listened to what you have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but again reiterate that there is a direct correlation between what the local authority previously provided through its housing investment programme and what is now having to be provided through the housing investment programmes of the housing associations, and how that programme is agreed jointly——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Be that as it may, it still has nothing to do with the amendment that we are discussing. It matters little whether the link exists or not, if it does not bear upon the amendment that is before the House. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will address himself to the amendment.

Mr. McCartney: It does have some bearing in relation to what happens to the surpluses; to the way in which they are used; to what this proposal will do to the long-term investment interests of the housing associations; and to how that investment relates to the agreed programme of new investment, linking it with the local authorities' priorities in the community.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is making a point about a technical matter that we debated at some length in the early hours. The difficulty that arises in relation to subsections (6), (7) and (8), which the amendment proposes to remove from clause 50, is that the surplus accruing to the housing associations, which will be redistributed through the Housing Corporation by the Secretary of State, are the sole method of financing the development of the housing associations. Local authority expenditure is being cut, so there will be no new money available for housing associations, except through rent increases.

Inevitably, housing associations will be called upon to deal with the increased demand for money for new house building stock through rent increases. Is that not the consequence which my hon. Friend outlines in a highly technical way? Probably only the technically expert would understand my hon. Friend's comments, but I fully follow them. His points are clearly linked to subsections (6), (7) and (8), which we are trying to remove.

Mr. McCartney: I do not want anyone to infer that the Chair does not follow the technical arguments, but my hon. Friend's analysis is correct.

Mr. Bradley: Will my hon. Friend comment on the relationship with the programmes on community care, which the Government are encouraging? In my constituency, the health authority, as opposed to the local authority, is in negotiation with a housing association to close wards for elderly people, put those people into housing association units and try to get community care to link up. Rents will be charged when the units take over from the hospital wards. Papers to be before the DHSS this Thursday say that housing benefit will fully cover the rents of those elderly people who are to be transferred to the community. As my hon. Friend has made clear, a link with community care has been established. Will he comment on this? I should like the Minister to say that the DHSS will fully fund the new rent levels for elderly people who are transferred to the community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That point is a long way from the amendment. I hope that the debate will be confined to the amendment.

Mr. McCartney: Having been here since the beginning of the debate, I do not want to fall foul of you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and end up being named and having to leave before the debate is finished. As my hon. Friends have said —Mr. Deputy Speaker allowed them to continue—there is a link between the surplus and rents, and we are interested in how the money is invested.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: My hon. Friend is doing a sterling job and is convincing me about the powers that the Secretary of State acquires in subsections (6), (7) and (8) over surpluses. It is obvious that the Bill is fundamentally flawed. Rather than give tenants additional rights, it withdraws them, as my hon. Friend would agree. It is obvious from his examples—I am sure that he has many more, which we should like to hear—that the need to have a surplus which can be handed to the Secretary of State will force up rents and leave a backlog of disrepair, which my hon. Friend may like to illuminate for us.

Mr. McCartney: I should like first to deal with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley). The relationship between housing associations in my area and the funding of special needs projects in the community is critical. There are a number of examples. In my constituency, an elderly persons' home is under construction. It will be not just for those over 65 but for those who are in the mentally confused category. It is critical for the funding of that programme, and for the investment of the Grosvenor housing association, that the Government clarify their intentions under the clause.

The Grosvenor housing association has completed in my constituency in the last 15 months a section for the mentally disabled who are released from hospital by the North-West regional health authority. That is being done with the support of and funding arrangements made by Wigan metropolitan borough council. That project is almost unique in community care in the north-west.

The rent levels in that development are vital, and I hope the Minister will clarify the Government's thinking on that type of project, which is one of a series planned as a joint funding venture between the regional health authority, the local authority and the housing association. It is critical not only in terms of the projects in my area but in terms of the Government's policy of care in the community.

In my constituency we have built refuges for women who have been physically abused. The local authority, together with housing associations, has used inner-area programme resources to cater for the needs of women and children who have been physically abused at home. In Wigan, the Grosvenor housing association and the local authority are investing substantial sums on a programme of new build spread over the coming three years to cater for physically abused women.

The levels of rents and what happens to any surpluses are vital issues in considering the future management and financing of such refuges. Because of the changes in housing benefit, the funding arrangements of some refuges are having to be reconsidered. It is vital for the Minister to clarify what will happen in the sort of special needs circumstances I have outlined.

There are a number of other housing associations in my constituency. In conjunction with the local authority, they operate on a zoned basis. The County Palatine housing association, for example, is building homes for the elderly. The same association is involved in another part of the area rehabilitating properties that were unable to be used by the private sector. They are now being brought back into the public sector for renting. The housing benefit is a critical factor in this investment programme.

A housing association called Church Army specialises in providing housing for the elderly. Let us not forget that since 1979 not one new property has been built in my area specifically for the elderly and elderly disabled. But for investment programmes agreed between local authorities and housing associations, there would be huge gaps in our housing provision. There is a clear link—in practical, day-to-day terms—between the Department of the Environment, the local authorities and the housing associations.

My borough council is not unique in the sort of provision that I have described. Hon. Members in many parts of the country could relate similar stories. The relationship has changed dramatically as the role of the local authority as the major provider of housing has been taken over by housing associations. Indeed, but for the action of those associations, virtually no new build would be occurring for the physically disabled, the mentally disabled, the physically abused, the elderly disabled, the elderly confused and the young homeless. Almost all those aspects of housing policy are funded through the National Federation of Housing Associations. Therefore, it is critical that we understand the effects of the clause on the long-term investment strategy of housing associations.

6 am

Just as important is the relationship between housing benefit and the level of rents. Those most at risk from changes in housing benefit and in rents are the poorest and the most vulnerable. It would be ironic if local authorities, having reached financial arrangements with housing associations after assessing the needs of the community and planning their investment programme, and having a strategy agreed with the Housing Corporation or the Department of the Environment, found that the viability of the projects was undermined and that the people could not be helped.

We did not deal in detail with that aspect of the Bill in previous debates. I debated it in Committee with the Minister and with the Under-Secretary of State, who is not with us at this early hour. I hope that she will be with us during the debates after breakfast. The Minister smiles. I have an ongoing relationship with the Under-Secretary of State in the sense that at least she listens sometimes to the arguments which we put forward. She sticks to her brief and does not make false promises. If there is no promise in the brief, no promise is offered. The Minister of State does not always stick to his brief; occasionally he offers us sympathy and suggests that he may be able to assist us. Unfortunately, in most cases he has not been forthcoming with the assistance.

That was the case in the debate in Committee on the general aspect of investment under this clause. I do not want to run foul of you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I will not go into detail on the debate, apart from asking hon. Members to read columns 687 and 688 of *Hansard* of the

[Mr. McCartney]

Committee proceedings. There the Minister and I debated the allocation of scarce resources in stress areas and how that had been exacerbated by the changes——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now going into matters with which he said that he would not deal. He should return to the amendment about the surplus rental income of housing associations.

Mr. McCartney: I said that I would not go into detail, but surely, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am allowed to allude to the debate which took place in Committee, if only to give hon. Members at least an inkling of the discussion which I had with the Minister. *[Interruption.]* It is all very well for the hooray Henrys on the Conservative Benches who have been at Annabel's all night to make rude remarks from a sedentary position about a subject which crucially affects hundreds of thousands of people who are relying on something good coming from the Bill.

Some of us spent over 180 hours during three months in a genuine attempt to ensure that the Bill would benefit people who require houses. It ill behoves hon. Members who are prepared to debate the Bill to make rude remarks from a sedentary position. If they want to make valid contributions, I am prepared to give way to them at any time, singly or collectively. The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) was a member of the Committee, but he rarely availed himself of the opportunity to speak. He usually withdrew his amendments so that he would not have to explain his position. So it is important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you allow me at least to paraphrase a little of *Hansard's* official record of the debate in Committee.

Since that debate on 4 February, the situation has advanced in terms of Wigan borough council. In Committee, I told the Minister that his Department, together with the local authority, the private sector and the housing association, was considering a major development plan for the Worsley Mesnes estate in my constituency. It was originally built in the 1960s and comprised mainly maisonettes, decked flats, and system-built properties of the type from which all of us suffer because of the nature of such developments.

The Department of the Environment, in discussion with the local authority, examined ways of refurbishing the estate and also of introducing private and other sources of capital, ensuring not only that houses could be refurbished but also that the derelict land available could be utilised for new homes and other environmental purposes. If a deal is to be struck between the local authority and the Department, it is necessary to secure housing association investment along with that from private developers. Despite the local authority's reservations, that has been achieved.

Since February, the authority has met housing associations and private sector developers and has made a submission to the Department of the Environment involving the Grosvenor housing association and Beazer Homes. That programme involves not only demolition and the construction of new units to meet special housing needs but the refurbishment of existing maisonettes and decked flats.

The management of those new units will be the responsiblity of the housing associations and not the local authority. Its involvement will be limited to introducing potential tenants to the housing associations from its own waiting list. Critical to the investment will be rent levels and the rate of return to the housing association. I refer to a development costing not just tens of thousands but millions of pounds, in an area that desperately needs refurbishment of its housing stock and general environment.

I want the Minister to give me an assurance not only that that scheme will proceed along the lines of the submissions made to his Department but also that there will be guarantees about the funding of the housing associations and about rent levels. It is essential to the people on our waiting list and to others, including the young, that they should be able to afford the rents of those units. It is not the intention of Wigan local authority, and certainly not of the associations, to provide a refurbished estate only for those who can afford high rents or to purchase. We want it to provide housing for the indigenous community across a wide spectrum of tenancies. This clause is critical to all of that.

It is critical for this reason. I want to quote from a document from the National Federation of Housing Associations which highlights the particular problems involved in investing in such estates. It says:

> "Another important factor is that associations who take part in schemes funded partly by private borrowing and partly by public grant will be expected to bear major risks as the grant is likely to be determined at the beginning of a scheme and will not be increased to take account of unforeseen increased costs."

On the estate to which I have referred, unforeseen costs could occur in a number of areas, both in terms of the possibility of mining subsidence and construction problems. For example, the large-scale use of asbestos in the heating pipes serving the deck flats requires additional work even before the refurbishment work commences.

The document goes on to say:

> "To expect associations to bear this risk and to also take away their only prospect of building up some form of surplus is inequitable."

That is the view of the housing associations, the very people the Minister is saying he wants to encourage to diversify and become involved in areas of investment and in projects in which they would not usually be involved.

Therefore, I am again seeking an assurance from the Minister about that aspect of funding and the level of rent, what will happen to the surplus and how they will be reworked into the system. The Minister said in an earlier intervention that the surpluses would come back to meet housing needs. I hope that he will elucidate precisely what he meant by that and say precisely where the surpluses will be used. It is ironic that in areas of housing stress, where housing surpluses begin to accrue, they are then reinvested in other areas with lower housing stress or where the priorities are different. The only equitable answer is that, where surpluses arise, they should be reinvested in the community where the housing stress was first established and where the schemes to get rid of it were initiated.

Without that assurance, all the Minister is saying is that once again the Government are using housing stress as a basis to increase rent levels and to decrease the Exchequer's commitment to housing benefit. In the end, those most in need are those most likely to pay the most in terms of financial penalties. I hope that for once in his

life the Minister will give a real assurance that the worries expressed by the National Federation of Housing Associations and my hon. Friends will be met.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friends have debated the amendment in detail and I welcome that. They have made a number of serious and important points.

Clause 50 is entitled "Surplus rental income". It gives the Minister power to take away the so-called surplus rental income. That is a mandate for daylight robbery. It facilitates robbery mainly from the tenants. In the end, the money comes from the tenants through higher rents. As I said earlier, many of those tenants already pay a high rent in proportion to their earnings. It will be done via the housing associations. The clause gives the Secretary of State amazing powers. He will decide on the method of constituting the rent surplus fund, when it must be paid and any other matters connected with housing activities. He will decide the interest that can be paid, and when it should be paid. He is given immense powers.

The House should not give such widespread and unaccountable powers to the Secretary of State, allowing him to do what he wants to housing associations once the powers are enshrined in law. That is wrong, especially from a Government who were elected on the basis of speeches about their opposition to a centralised state interfering with private individuals, companies and associations. Here we have a centralised state gone rampant, with a Secretary of State able to intervene wholesale.

Housing associations should work privately, without undue dictatorial influence being exerted on them by the Secretary of State. As we have seen from examples in other spheres, such influence could be used by an unscrupulous Secretary of State to wipe out a small housing association that does not fit the bill, or because a private speculator with Conservative party interests has his eye on the association's property. Given the powers in the Bill, the Secretary of State could step in, charge huge rates of interest and say that the association must charge high rents. He could force the association out of the work that it was trying to do and ensure that its properties fell prey to the private speculator. Those powers are grounds for potential corruption, and we should oppose them.

This is an appalling clause. As I have said, it facilitates daylight robbery. I support the amendment, which is designed to stop such an abuse of power.

Mr. Battle: I thought that the Minister, after his brief intervention, might have responded to some of the points that have been raised. Before we pass legislation to take away surplus rental income from housing associations, it is important to ask—as many of my hon. Friends have asked—where that income would come from. It is inevitable that the issue should be included in the complex equation of housing associations' financial arrangements, because the Bill will mean tenants paying increased rents.

I tried to intervene to ask the Minister a question. We have not received answers to our questions all night. In particular, I asked the Minister to give us a guarantee that 100 per cent. housing association grant funding will still be available to small housing association schemes. I will give way to the Minister now if he will give us that assurance.

Mr. Waldegrave: I will intervene if the hon. Gentleman promises not to go on for another six hours.

Mr. Battle: I will not go on for another six hours on this amendment.

Mr. Waldegrave: I would not ask for more than that modicum of fairness.

There will be 100 per cent. funding for schemes—which may not always involve small schemes—which cannot obtain finance from the market to meet their objectives. Some of the smaller schemes may be able to borrow money and some of the larger schemes doing special things may not. I do not want to attach the funding specifically to small schemes, but there will be a continuation of 100 per cent. funding if that is the only way to meet the necessary objectives.

Mr. Battle: We are grateful for the Minister's contribution, because it will mean that some of the schemes outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) will have a chance of survival and will not be squeezed out or jeopardised.

The Opposition have mounted a spirited defence of housing associations tonight. Housing associations will still be pressing for the grant redemption fund to be abolished. As that cannot be achieved, because the proposal was turned down in Committee, our only option is to support the amendment that will delete the clauses that enable the Housing Corporation to make use of the GRF. In other words, we will neuter the import of clause 50.

I remind the Minister and his Back-Bench colleagues of a sentence in yesterday's debate:

"It is important not to create an atmosphere in which small housing associations are unable to continue their work in that small area in which they want to work."—[*Official Report*, 13 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 82-3.]

We have argued all night that we would create an atmosphere if clause 50 were to be passed in its present form. I acknowledge that the words I have quoted come from the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope).

If the Minister will not heed our calls on this point, I urge him to heed the calls from his own Back Benchers. This may be the last-ditch stand for some small housing associations and co-ops, and it will be clear from tonight's debate who in the Chamber are the real defenders of housing associations. Conservative Members claim to support the housing association movement, but they will be judged by the way in which they vote in the context of this Bill which will introduce legislation that will damage the housing associations.

I urge all hon. Members to support the amendments and to neuter clause 50 by preventing the clawback of the rental surplus.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 35, Noes 121.

Division No. 354] **[6.23 am**

AYES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Dixon, Don
Barron, Kevin	Flynn, Paul
Battle, John	Foster, Derek
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Bradley, Keith	Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Clay, Bob	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Cohen, Harry	Illsley, Eric
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*	McCartney, Ian
Corbyn, Jeremy	Meale, Alan
Cryer, Bob	Michael, Alun

Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Turner, Dennis
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allan McKay and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Arbuthnot, James
Batiste, Spencer
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Heat, rather than light, usually characterises our debates. During the course of the night, however, it has been light, but not hot. Some hon. Members have complained about the low temperature in the Chamber and I wonder whether anything can be done about it—or perhaps we should huddle together.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No doubt the hon. Gentleman's comments about the temperature will have been heard.

Clause 52

MEANING OF "HOUSING ACTIVITIES" IN 1985 ACT

Amendment made: No. 248, in page 39, line 9, leave out clause 52.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 54

CONSTRUCTION OF PART II

Amendment made: No. 249, in page 40, line 15, leave out clause 54.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 56

CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I beg to move amendment No. 308, in page 41, line 18, leave out subsection (3).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 87, in page 41, line 20, at end insert—

'(4) If, as a result of consultation under this section, it appears to the Secretary of State that a majority of persons consulted under subsection (2) above are opposed to the designation of the proposed designated area, he shall not make an order under section 55 above designating the said area.'.

Mr. Spearing: This debate marks the entry of the House into part III of the Bill, which deals with housing action trusts. A more circumspect Government would have introduced a Bill for them alone. They are an innovation of such novelty that that would have been justified.

Clause 56 has to do with "consultation and publicity". Subsection (3), which my amendment would delete, is extraordinary. It states:

"Consultation undertaken or steps taken before the passing of this Act shall constitute as effective compliance with subsection (1) or subsection (2) above as if taken after that passing."

Subsection (1) states:

"the Secretary of State shall consult every local housing authority any part of whose district is to be included in the proposed designated area."

Subsection (2) states:

"Before making a designation order, the Secretary of State shall take such steps as appear to him best designed to secure that the proposal to designate the area in question is brought to the notice of persons appearing to him to be likely to be affected by the proposal."

Subsection (3), which I seek to delete, effectively talks about steps taken by the Secretary of State at any time before Royal Assent. I take that to mean that steps that he may have taken even before this debate—there is no retrospective time limit here—shall count as if they had been taken after Royal Assent in compliance with clause 56, which might become section 56 of the new Housing Act. To that extent it is retrospective. Here we have a novelty, in that the Bill has a retrospective aspect. However, I would call it a prospective consultation legitimised by a retrospective power. I am glad to welcome

the Secretary of State to answer the debate. No doubt he will tell us whether any consultations have already taken place that could be legitimised by subsection (3).

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is proposing to ask the Secretary of State some questions. Perhaps he should remind him of the view that he held on the retrospective aspect of the Housing Finance (Special Provisions) Act 1975. It would retrospectively have given relief to 11 Clay Cross councillors, but was opposed on the basis that, in general, retrospective legislation is wrong. It was opposed on that basis by the then Conservative Opposition, which included, I suspect, the present Secretary of State. It would be well to raise the distinction between that stance in 1975 and the Bill, in which the right hon. Gentleman makes not only lavish use of retrospection, but extremely unusual use of it, as my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Spearing: The Secretary of State is present in the Chamber and can answer that question. If there has been a lack of courtesy on my part on other occasions, the debate will show that I shall try to put legal matters in a de minimis fashion. The Secretary of State should tell us the justification for the combined prospective and retrospective quality of clause 56.

My hon. Friend properly reminds us of a matter of principle. The Opposition are quite rightly highly sensitive to any element of retroactivity. The Secretary of State is a parliamentarian and will agree with that. I am sure that in the past when he was in opposition he objected to any such proposal by the Government of the day. There must be a justification for such legislation. If there is not, the Opposition have a proper case.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) referred to the Clay Cross councillors. For various reasons I supported that case, and the Secretary of State, in his winding-up speech, or now if he wishes to do so, must tell us what has forced him into introducing retrospective legislation. Such legislation can be justified, and my hon. Friend gave examples of how Governments might be driven into it by sheer necessity. I can find no reason for this provision in the Bill—the Secretary of State can correct me if I am wrong—other than economy of time. Without this provision, the consultations required by the Act, as it will be, could start only after Royal Assent.

All Governments undertake certain preliminaries. For example, feelers are put out, names are looked at and the constitution of the proposed quango is considered. The House should realise that we are talking about a quango, despite the fact that in an earlier phase of its activities the Conservative party tended to hunt down and destroy quangos. I do not think that anyone is opposed to the procedure that I have outlined, but the Bill specifically legalises it. The Secretary of State might wish to tell us the criteria that he adopted in deciding on this course of action.

6.45 am

The only reason that I can see for this provision is that it will get things moving more quickly. The Secretary of State will be able to start the consultations before Royal Assent. The procedure will be legitimised, and in that respect it is a double retroactivity, which the House should deplore in principle. That covers the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South. If the Secretary of State wishes to intervene before any of my hon. Friends do so, I shall gladly give way.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): No, later.

Mr. Cryer: The point that I was making to my hon. Friend was that, as he rightly said, there are instances when retrospective legislation is justified. However, that was not the argument that was used in 1975 by the then Conservative Opposition, when they wheeled out the shadow Attorney-General to say that retrospective legislation was not justified on any occasion. They said that by passing retrospective legislation the House was on the edge of the slippery slope to Fascism. The wheel has turned full circle. They have abandoned the stance that they adopted on retrospective legislation in 1975 in order to persecute 11 councillors and are using it not only in the Bill, but lavishly elsewhere.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because the remarks of the then shadow Attorney-General, to which he referred, reinforce our demand to be told the criteria that have been used in this instance. If the proper criteria for retrospective legislation do not exist, to introduce such legislation is to set out on the slippery slope to Fascism. We shall wait with interest to hear the Secretary of State's criteria. I was not a member of the Committee, but I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was hauled over the coals for using the word "Fascism", but here we have a possible justification for its use, based on the comments of a former Attorney-General. We shall be interested to hear the Secretary of State's justification in principle for introducing retrospective legislation.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Is this not just another example of double standards on the part of the Secretary of State, bearing in mind what happened in the 1970s? It is typical of the right hon. Gentleman's double standards, because he advises people to allow the green belt to be developed, provided that the development is not in his back yard.

Mr. Spearing: That is a separate topic, but I do not know whether the Secretary of State has considered retroactivity in legislation, although retroactivity in respect of the green belt is being canvassed. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out yet another anomaly, and we look forward to the Secretary of State's justification for this in principle.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Does my hon. Friend agree that the significant difference between the proposed action in 1975 and what is proposed here is that the action of the Labour Government was intended to give relief to citizens, whereas this action is intended to ensure that the Government can grab power prematurely?

Mr. Spearing: We can expect this Government's legislation to be the opposite of the purposes and objectives of the Labour party. In this case, it is retrospective application to public property. I am sure the Secretary of State agrees that public property is not the property of any one political party. We may disagree about the extent of public property and the degree to which it is advisable to have such property, but I think we all take the view that public property as such is a trust to be handled or disposed of with due regard to the benefit of the nation as a whole, and especially those who may be affected by any disposals.

[Mr. Spearing]

I want to make a little progress on the whole question of consultation. Earlier subsections refer to the area designated for a housing action trust. We cannot talk about an area without saying what will happen in it. The area of a housing action trust—if there is one—will be designated in a statutory instrument, and it will depend on what it is intended to do inside the area.

It is important to the scope of the debate to understand that consultation is not just about geographical areas, but is also about what happens inside them. The Government are taking legal powers in this clause and in clause 55 that will make a great difference, and there must be consultation about that. It is not just a matter of going to local people—the Secretary of State will correct me if I am wrong—and saying, "We want to draw the boundary here."

The Government will have to consult about how the HAT will be formed, what it will do, and what plans and provisions it will execute. After all, a housing action trust sounds like a good idea. We are all in favour of housing, we are all in favour of action to obtain better housing and we are all in favour of trusteeship. Therefore, the HATs might, on first hearing, appeal to those in need of housing or living in conditions that need improvement. I think that we have something in common with the Secretary of State. We want improved housing, and this provision is his way to achieve that. He will consult not only about the boundary, but about what goes on inside it.

Amendment No. 87 goes further and takes in the proposed designated area, and says that the Secretary of State

"shall not make an order under section 55 above."

Clause 55 sets out the scope of and the way in which a housing action trust will be established and the factors that the Secretary of State must take into account when he is determining its area. It would be impossible to ignore the purposes of the HAT.

We are talking about consultation and I have established that that is not only about the area but is also about the purpose and the activity. It is also about the manner in which it is to be conducted. I draw the attention of the House to what happened during the first meeting of the Committee when the Minister, who has been on duty all night and is now taking a well-earned rest, said——

Mr. Bradley: It is not a well-earned rest.

Mr. Spearing: Perhaps it is not a well-earned rest, as the Minister is producing obnoxious legislation, although he personally may not be obnoxious.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): My hon. Friend is too nice.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend says that I am too nice. I find that politeness usually pays, except on rare occasions. If I lose my temper, I find that it does not pay, and I do all that I can not to lose my temper in this House.

In Committee, the Minister said:

"For the first time, central Government are asking, as an experiment, whether there is a role for them, taking the responsibility through Parliament for the way in which the money is spent, while trying to help reverse some of the worst dereliction." [*Official Report, Standing Committee G*; 9 February 1988; c. 767.]

Of course we want to reverse the worst dereliction. The Minister used the word "asking", but, in the terms of the clause, it is not just a question of asking the House, but of consulting the people concerned.

I want to emphasise the phrase "as an experiment". The question whether the housing action trust is an experiment came up quite frequently in Committee.

Ms. Primarolo *indicated assent.*

Mr. Spearing: I see my hon. Friend nodding. I recall the Minister saying, "Let's try that and if it works, we'll extend it," but I do not see anything in the Bill about an experiment. The Minister may claim that it is an experiment and it may be presented as an experiment to the first people who will be consulted, but there is nothing in the Bill that states that it will be limited to six areas, the figure quoted in Committee. That is an idea for an amendment in another place. The Report stage of a Bill is all about scrutiny and asking questions. Unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately—I was not on the Committee, but the Report stage enables us to consider what Ministers have said and what the law states.

My first question to the Secretary of State is therefore a retrospective one about the principle of the matter. My second question is simply whether it is an experiment. Whether it is an experiment determines the management of the consultation and the responses that people will give. People in a particular area may already have been approached, as may a council in a particular area or prospective members of a housing action trust. The list of the good and the great is perhaps being consulted to try to find appropriate persons to exercise those functions. Those people will want to know whether it is an experiment.

If one starts off with a range of proposals for areas A, B, C, D, E, F and G and they work, the Government will come back for more. There is nothing in the Bill that says that they cannot do that, although perhaps there should be, if it is an experiment. One cannot reverse the consultation when it has taken place. If the housing action trust transfers property from a borough council to private ownership—that is the purpose of this part of the Bill—and it does not work, is there a provision in the Bill for the position to be reversed? I understood that an experiment was measurable scientifically and, if it did not work, one could adjust the circumstances and start again from scratch. I do not believe, therefore, that this is an experiment.

My third question to the Minister is whether we can be assured that, when such consultation is carried out about housing action trusts, it will not be put across to prospective tenants or councils as an experiment. Will it be clear that it could be a permanent arrangement for that area? If that is so, the legislation would be irreversible. I hope that the Secretary of State can give us that assurance and tell us that what the Minister said in Committee about asking for an experiment is not correct.

Ms. Primarolo: On his point about experiments, does my hon. Friend agree, first, that it is dangerous to experiment with people's homes when, as he began to point out, the experiment is not based on any fair assessment or consultation, and secondly that, if the Government want experiments in relation to housing, they should run a control group, such as a local authority, which would be funded to the same extent as the housing action trust and which would cover the same type of

housing and they same number of housing units. Then, at the end of the HAT's life, which we understand will be about six years, the Government should compare how well the local authority has performed compared to the Government's experiment. That would go some way to meet my hon. Friend's point.

7 am

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point, because such things could well take place in Bristol or, indeed, anywhere else, and I shall come to that in my next point. It could be an experiment such as my hon. Friend has outlined. It could be a direct comparison of methods. The Government are saying that they wish to improve housing stock in areas where many repairs and much social reconstruction is needed and there should be more than one way of doing that. If the Government were really interested in experiments, they would do just what my hon. Friend has said.

I want to get on to my next point——

Mr. Cohen: Will my hon. Friend give way before he gets to his next point?

Mr. Spearing: Yes.

Mr. Cohen: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I return to his point about the Secretary of State bringing in the great and the good to run some housing action trusts. As my hon. Friend knows, the great and the good do not come cheap. Such people have been appointed by Secretaries of State on other occasions—and, indeed, by this Secretary of State—and the bill has been expensive for the public purse. I cannot see any mention in the Bill of how that cost will be met or whether the House will have to consider a separate money order to pay for it. Would my hon. Friend like to comment on that point?

Mr. Spearing: It is important that there is consultation with the prospective members of such organisations and, no doubt, the question of remuneration will arise. However, I have a feeling that the Secretary of State has tabled an amendment——

Mr. Ridley *indicated assent*——

Mr. Spearing: I see that the Secretary of State is nodding. His amendment to, I believe, one of the schedules, deals with the conditions with which members of housing action trusts have to comply. It is an important provision, as it excludes any secondary income which might be gained from the fact that people are members of the housing trust. If I looked at the selection sheet I could tell my hon. Friend when the amendment arises, but I shall not do so at the moment. However, it is in another group of amendments and I hope that he will raise the matter at that point because it is an important point of principle.

The question that I now want to turn to in relation to consultation is, where is the consultation to take place? We are being asked to authorise retrospective consultation but we do not know where it will take place. I refer to column 768 of the Committee proceedings, when the Minister was asked where the experimental estates would operate. We were still talking about experiments at that stage. Hon. Members asked, "'Where?'", and my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) asked, "When?". The Minister replied:

"The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) is in cheerful form this morning, but I must not refer to him, because that stops him from being sedentary. From a sedentary position he asks "When?" The answer is, before the Bill leaves Parliament. While it is before Parliament we shall bring forward our proposals. There will then be a prolonged opportunity to debate them in both Houses."

In Committee the Minister was constantly asked where these housing action trusts—the notional six or more—were to be, and he declined to tell the Committee. I have quoted a typical exchange.

The Secretary of State may already have in mind the location for the consultations. Unless my amendment is accepted, the House will give retrospective authenticity to the consultations, although we do not know the location. The Minister's response to my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South was:

"The answer is, before the Bill leaves Parliament."

That is all right—there is just the Third Reading in the other place and then we discuss the amendments, if any, from the other place, which is some time in the future. Therefore, that point is covered. Not covered is the Minister's last sentence:

"There will then be a prolonged opportunity to debate them in both Houses."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 9 February 1988; c. 768.]

"Them" clearly refers to housing action trust areas which have been nominated by the Secretary of State. I do not know what "prolonged opportunity" there will be to discuss the proposed areas where consultation is taking place, unless the Secretary of State announces the location. Unless he does that, we will not know where consultation is taking place now or where we are retrospectively authorising it by law.

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend may be interested to know that one of the areas which we have heard will possibly be designated as a housing action trust affects his constituency and some estates in Canning Town. The *Newham Recorder* says that discussions appear to have been taking place between the local prospective Conservative candidate James Fairie, who

"met Patrick Rock, private secretary to Government housing minister William Waldegrave, to start discussing a Housing Action Trust."

My hon. Friend should realise that consultation might be occurring in his constituency without him as the Member of Parliament being informed, not to mention the local council.

Mr. Spearing: I take my own practice and say that I do not always believe what I read in the newspapers. That is the most charitable interpretation I can make of that report, which I recall reading. My recollection is that there was some publicity and that there had been a request from some people. I recall that later—my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West may confirm this—some people wrote to that newspaper to say that they had been taken to a meeting and it turned out to be not what they were told it was.

I hope to refer later to an area in my constituency which might be a prime candidate for a housing action trust, because there are eight tower blocks, all empty. I am being "invited"—the term often used in these instances—to legitimise consultation about which I, the borough council and some of the people affected know nothing.

I put this to the Secretary of State as one of the dangers: if we pass the legislation as drafted, he will be given the legal right to consult some people but not necessarily all

[Mr. Spearing]

who are affected. The House is asked at the behest of the Secretary of State to legitimise consultation with persons unknown at the choice of the Secretary of State—we are not even told now who they are—and then is asked to make such partial consultation legal.

Does the Secretary of State consider that to be a proper use of power in a parliamentary democracy? It may be right for the House to give power for consultation after Royal Assent, and then the Secretary of State can choose whom to consult and the order of consultation, later to announce whom he has seen and what their responses have been. But as the Bill is drafted, we are giving the right hon. Gentleman a different power, a power which reflects somewhat the atmosphere mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South. I suggest to the Secretary of State that it goes beyond the line of which he as a parliamentarian would approve.

What applies in my area might apply in any other constituency; there are housing problems in Bristol, in the north of England, in Yorkshire and in Sheffield. We hear about consultations relating to urban development corporations. There could be all sorts of consultations all over the place, and we are being asked to give them retrospective legitimacy.

I come to the effects that such a housing action trust might have, for those effects will vary greatly according to the type of area that is designated. In the London docklands area, which my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West and I know well, the differential between the existing value of an empty property and a similar occupied one is extremely wide; I am told that it is a ratio of three or four.

Thus, the disposal increment which a housing action trust could get by disposing of a void—if somebody dies, moves away from housing which they inherit, or buys or gets from the local authority—is great. If it then puts it on the open market, which the Bill suggests it should, the people coming in will be confined to a relatively narrow income group.

But in other parts of the country—I shall quote an example from Liverpool when we debate a later amendment—where such an effort has been tried, the differential between the existing value and empty value has been much less. So the impact of a housing action trust will vary greatly from one place to another. That is why, during the consultations, we must know the different effects in different areas, because they will vary greatly throughout the country.

We are aware of the overheating effect of south-east England. The Secretary of State will be well aware of that because of discussions that are taking place on various fronts. He must concede that the effects in Newham, Hackney, Southwark, Greenwich or anywhere east of the City will be vastly different from what will happen in, say, the outskirts of Liverpool or Newcastle. So the consultation exercise must be different—because the effects will be different—and the Minister must say how the consultation will be varied in accordance with those changes.

My next point on consultation deals with the purpose of the housing action trust. I will not go too deeply into this because it will arise when we debate later amendments to this part of the Bill.

7.15 am

When people are to be consulted about this, the purpose of the housing action trust will be very much to the fore and they will want to know exactly what will happen. Of course, the purpose of the trust is multiple. I emphasise one part of it which is covered by clause 58(3):

"For the purpose of achieving its objects and exercising the powers conferred on it by subsection (2) above, a housing action trust may—

(a) acquire, hold, manage, reclaim and dispose of land and other property;

(b) carry out building and other operations;

(c) seek to ensure the provision of water, electricity, gas, sewerage and other services; and

(d) carry on any business or undertaking".

We will come to the merits of that later. If I were to deal with them now, I should properly be ruled out of order.

I am concerned about the degree to which the intentions of any one housing action trust will be part of the consultation. It is no good saying to a housing action trust, "We will repair this and give you a certain amount of security," if all the houses are to be sold when they become vacant, or if a factory is to be built, or if the housing action trust, which will be a planning authority, has in mind various plans for designating a change of use. I do not know how the Secretary of State intends to tackle this. Will he go along with a blank sheet and say, "This will be possible."? The Secretary of State will have powers of direction. Will he give the housing action trust a complete blueprint so that it knows exactly what he has in mind? Unless he does that, how can people respond?

All the good things which are to happen might be presented, but the other things might not be done if we had a less liberal, less civic-minded, less public-spirited Secretary of State. I will not concentrate on how far those admirable qualities are embodied in the Secretary of State. It is a matter of relativity, but suppose we had a Secretary of State who exercised his powers too liberally or in too Right-wing a way, what would the poor consultees say? They might say, "We were told that we would get this, this and this, but not that we would get that, that and that later because so-and-so is now Secretary of State".

The Secretary of State cannot prevent that. He is not legislating for the Government or for himself alone; he is legislating for posterity. These powers are enormous. He cannot give assurances about what will happen. He is asking us to say that the housing action trust can do anything it likes, so long as it is not stopped by him. Similarly, he can tell the housing action trust to do just what he wants. The more one thinks about this, the more one's mind boggles at the possibilities.

How far can consultation be of use? The powers are so wide that we must ask whether any form of consultation, even if the Minister provides the details that he has in mind, can be consultation in the best sense of the word.

Unless the Bill's scope is drastically altered, the consultation will be worthless, because nothing is known about what might happen afterwards. Later, I shall give the example of a similar organisation which was introduced with high ideals, and which was sold to the public as having marvellous objectives. Even the Chairman of the Select Committee was taken in. It turned out to be something very different, as I shall prove. If that can happen with an analogous body, it can happen with an action trust.

This matter goes to the heart of citizenship, the powers of the House and the quality of life in an environment of

which the Secretary of State himself is very conscious and wishes to enhance. It can be enhanced through the planning mechanism, which was achieved in the post-war period and is something of which we can be proud. All quarters of the House agree on that. We may differ about what is good or bad planning and about what ought to be done in the future and the degree to which there is public or private development, but all that falls within some kind of plan. The Bill introduces a major change into the country's planning mechanism, and consultation must take that into account. In any event, I do not imagine that there will be a housing trust in Croydon.

There could be a change of Government, and it occurs to me that this work is mutatis mutandis. A housing trust could be found in any constituency, for trusts need not be confined to urban areas. There could be dereliction and poverty elsewhere. The Secretary of State is from Gloucestershire and he knows that prosperity is not to be found everywhere.

Those trusts will have planning powers. I have not described those powers in detail, but it must be remembered that they will be transferred from the local authority. There may be only 5,000 inhabitants involved in a small area, but they should know that they will no longer be able to complain about planning matters to their local councillors, that no local committee will have any power in that respect and that planning matters will in future be the responsibility of men and women appointed by the Secretary of State, who can ask him to do anything.

Will the Secretary of State, in the course of consultation, say that the Bill allows him to dictate land use changes from Whitehall? Unless I am mistaken in my reading of the Bill, that could happen. The Secretary of State is a busy man who cannot be expected to deal with everything. Will he, during the course of consultation, say that a change of land use of a small garden the size of the Floor of the House, a public allotment or park, or a private dwelling will rest in the hands of the Secretary of State, and that from his office in Whitehall he will determine such changes of use in Liverpool, Gainsborough, Newcastle or Gloucester? That is what the Bill says.

So massive is the change that I am not sure whether the Government or the Secretary of State have understood its implications. The change of use of a house or a plot the size of the Chamber could be substantial, or it could mean an advertisement sign or a change in the design of a building's fascia. I know that people get upset about the minutiae of planning applications. Those of us who have served on planning committees know that the erection of a third storey on a house and its design are important, because such a change affects the amenities of an area. Indeed, one of the purposes of the housing action trust is to make an area more amenable in that respect.

Will the Secretary of State tell people that such matters can be determined by an official in Whitehall? I can imagine what fun the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) would have had from the Opposition Benches if a Labour Government had introduced such legislation. In his inimitable way, he would have had a field day teasing my right hon. and hon. Friends about taking powers to determine such matters from Whitehall. But that is what the Secretary of State is doing, and he must tell us why.

The right hon. Gentleman must also tell us whether he will consult people locally. It is not only the people who will be subject to this provision who will be concerned, but those who will lose the planning powers. Developments in any area that has an housing action trust will be taken away from the control of the local council. Coherent planning will not be in the hands of the local community, and what happens inside the housing action trust could upset the balance of the strategic plan of the local community. It could change housing values.

We have seen what has happened on a massive scale at Canary wharf. That is a similar situation, and it is affecting land prices throughout the south-east of England. The Secretary of State, or his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), could have stopped that enterprise zone, but he did not. That is an example of centralised power. What we are authorising here is the same as the enterprise zone set up by the London Docklands development corporation.

Will the Secretary of State, in consultation, tell the people inside and the planning authority what will happen? It could happen with another Secretary of State, even if he does not. Will he consult on such a matter, which is within the scope of clause 56?

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend has referred to the position of the Secretary of State for the Environment, but more than one Secretary of State is involved in the Bill. The Secretary of State for Wales may be regarded as a sort of time shift of the Secretary of State for the Environment in regard to this provision. He has said that the sort of difficulties to which he has referred could apply to any hon. Member's constituency, but will they apply to the constituencies of Welsh Members? There does not seem to be a Welsh Office interest in the debate. No Welsh Office Minister is present. Therefore, perhaps this provision will not apply in Wales, or perhaps the Government do not intend to use it in Wales, although theoretically it could do so. It would be useful to have some clarification. We would then know whether to share the clear worries that have been outlined by my hon. Friend in his recent remarks. Is the Secretary of State to whom he is referring one or a twin?

Mr. Spearing: I understood that the Government were a seamless robe, and that one Secretary of State equalled another. I do not know whether the Secretary of State for Wales would feel very happy about being bracketed with the Secretary of State for the Environment, or, indeed, the Secretary of State for Scotland—but I am told that the Bill does not apply to Scotland.

The Welsh Office in Cardiff has its own views on planning and the coherence of local communities, which might not be shared by the office in Whitehall. Where are the Government, and what is the criterion that the Government as a whole will take? My hon. Friend is absolutely right: we should have some kind of regional response, because the Government say that they believe in some kind of regional government.

7.30 am

Mr. Michael: May I underline that by making a point which I am sure will be of great concern to you as well, Mr. Speaker? One of the documents referred to in the Bill has been published for England, but not for Wales. I have just checked the Vote Office, and, although last week it was promised within a few days, the document has still not been published. It is supposed to refer to a later part of the

[Mr. Michael]

Bill, so perhaps it will arrive in time for us to debate it, but I wonder about that, because we have been told by the Welsh Office that it will be radically different from the document produced for England. Perhaps my question about whether the housing action trust will be brought in in Wales is answered in the Welsh document. But if it has not been published, even at this late stage of our debate on the Bill, will its advice be available in time for any of our debates on transfers of housing from local authorities to new bodies?

Mr. Spearing: The Welsh document is on my list. My hon. Friend's opportune remarks underline what I said earlier about differential consultation. It is now clear that there will be a different approach to different parts of the country, and that there will therefore be consultation about different sorts of plan. The Secretary of State ought at least to tell us what is in his mind; otherwise, we cannot pass the legislation as it is.

That leads me to my last major point in this introductory debate—for we are not yet talking about the real meat of housing action trusts; we are only talking about the kind of consultation that might take place. That major point is that legislation is not completed. We will not and cannot know the scope and degree of option—which at present is as wide as one's HAT, or as wide as one likes—until Royal Assent. Anything can happen between now and that time.

The Secretary of State may think it unlikely that he would lose a vote in this place, but this is not the only place where legislation is made. I put this to him as a procedural question. How can he consult before Royal Assent, when only after Royal Assent can the full possible scope of housing action trusts be properly known? Is he not presuming on the privilege of both the House and the other place in relation to what powers will be available to HATs? How can he consult while the final shape and potential are still undecided by Parliament? I put it to him that such a presumption is itself questionable in a parliamentary democracy.

Of course there must be informal soundings, but these are not informal procedures. We are being asked to authorise in restrospect statutory consultative procedures. That is a very different matter, because it presumes that the legislation will end up as it is drafted.

Let me now raise a point about which the Secretary of State may know. If he does not, he should have been advised about it, because many Opposition Members—particularly London Members—are aware of it. I refer to hybridity. One has only to mention hybridity to Government Whips or in places like the legal department at the Department of the Environment and I am told—I have never been in such places—that people shift and shudder. They do that for a very good reason, because an element of hybridity brings in major procedural complications in this House. We should all know why hybridity is important. If an element of hybridity can be proved, it shows that the collective general power of a Bill is being used against people unfairly and it must be open to them to complain and petition this House to grant them protection against what lawyers call injurious affection.

Looking around the Chamber, I can see that many hon. Members here have been members of Committees on private Members' Bills where we have had to judge the degree of injurious affection that individuals might suffer as a result of a privately promoted Bill or a publicly promoted Bill which has the effect of a private Member's Bill. I am sure that the Secretary of State will remember the tricks about oil rigs that his hon. Friends got up to. I do not deny them the legitimacy of their actions in terms of procedure. Although you were not Mr. Speaker at the time, Sir, you will recall that it was a very difficult time for the Clerks Department and for Mr. Speaker in determining those matters. A great deal hung on the decisions.

It is right that the individual and liberty should be protected by the hybrid procedure. I am sure that the Secretary of State would be the first to agree that the liberty of the individual, which hon. Members on both sides of the House talk about very frequently nowadays, must be maintained. Therefore, any scintilla of hybridity in any legislation must have its respective reflection.

I can tell the Secretary of State and the House why I believe that this part of the Bill may well raise the issue of hybridity. This may come as a major surprise to some of my hon. Friends. I do not remember hearing hybridity mentioned in Committee. I can well understand that the housing action trust part of the Bill appears to be entirely free of any hybrid element. However, I have news for my hon. Friends who served on the Committee and conceivably for the Secretary of State and those who accompany him—who, although visible, are silent and unable to respond.

Perhaps I am wrong. If I am, I hope that the Secretary of State will correct me before I go very far to save the time of the House—we all want to save time. I would not want to advance a thesis which the Secretary of State may have investigated and reached a conclusion contrary to mine. Even if his conclusion happens to be contrary to mine, it would be quite wrong to let this important matter of public consultation go by. Even if the Secretary of State can give me an assurance, I will still develop the point because I think that I still might be right and he might be wrong, even if he has considered this. If he has not considered this point, he should tell us, because this part of the Bill mirrors almost exactly a certain section in the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

That Act was not produced by the present Secretary of State for the Environment. He was a Minister then either at the Ministry of Transport, in the Treasury or at the Foreign Office. *[Interruption.]* Oh yes, he was at the Foreign Office. He was well out of it. However, his right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was Secretary of State for the Environment at the time and he introduced that Bill with great relish and great complications for matters related to rates.

One part of that Bill related to things called urban development corporations. We had a single provision under which the Secretary of State could establish an urban development corporation in any area he wished and appoint members to it to do all sorts of things. It had powers on planning, the disposal of land, and getting Government money. One objective was to improve the environment to make it better for people to live in. In other words, the powers of regeneration were central to the concept of the corporations.

We now know that these are, in the City phrase, "up and running". There are two big ones, in London and on Merseyside, and others are coming along. There has been a bit of a slowdown recently, and a few days ago a

questionable procedure motion was tabled to pass six at one go. That was a thoroughly retrograde procedure which any Leader of the House should have stopped, but I shall not go into that because it concerns the House, not this amendment. Urban development corporations exist through a single statutory instrument. I remember the one relating to my borough. I was not allowed to speak. It lasted an hour and a half.

The London Docklands development corporation, half my constituency in area, was taken from the borough for planning and other purposes. The constituency Member could not speak because others had a greater right and I would not complain about their right. An urban development corporation statutory instrument was constricted to an hour and a half after 10 o'clock.

That was not the procedure in another place. The function of the order setting out urban development corporations had to be designated and passed as a statutory instrument on an affirmative resolution by both Houses of Parliament. Unless I am mistaken, the same must happen for housing action trusts, and that is right.

But the statutory instrument does not pass through the other House on the same procedure. The good book "Erskine May", which is underrated, states on page 620 under "Hybrid instruments":

"The House of Lords Private Business SO 216 provides that, where in the opinion of the Chairman of Committees, an affirmative instrument, as defined by Lords Public Business SO No. 68, is such that, apart from the provisions of the Act authorising it to be made, it would require to be enacted by a private or hybrid bill, he shall report his opinion to the House and to the Minister or other person responsible for it. An instrument upon which such a report has been made is known as a hybrid instrument[2] and is subject to petitioning procedure."

I shall explain what that technicality means. Whereas, in this House, a statutory instrument is passed on an hour and a half's debate, if in the other place the Chairman of Committees determines that the same statutory instrument has elements of hybridity, it must go through the Statutory Instrument Committee procedure, which is directly analogous to the procedure for a private Bill in the other place.

When the order to set up the LDDC was passed by this House, it went to the other House where it was petitioned and the Chairman of Committees properly certified it as being a hybrid statutory instrument. As a result, 30 or 40 days were spent hearing petitions against it, as if it were a private Bill.

I do not know whether in another life, Mr. Speaker, you sat on a private Bill Committee or whether the Secretary of State ever sat on such a Committee. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware of the thoroughness and length of the scrutiny and the number of hoops through which a Bill must pass. A statutory instrument and all the implications of that instrument, including potential development powers and all the rest of it, must go through a similar procedure, provided it is certified.

7.45 am

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Those procedures should be welcomed instead of being talked out.

Mr. Spearing: I am not sure that I understand the hon. Gentleman's remark. I do not believe that there has been any element of tedious repetition in my remarks. In view of the importance of the matters to which I am referring I think that I may have gone over them too quickly. I must not do that in respect of the procedures in the other place, because the Standing Orders of the other place are fairly explicit about what should happen.

I do not believe that I am debarred from quoting those Standing Orders here. Standing Order No. 69 of the other place says:

"No Motion for a resolution of the House to approve an Affirmative Instrument shall be moved until:—

(a) except in the case of any Order in Council . . .

(b) in the case of a Hybrid Instrument, the proceedings under Private Business Standing Order 216 or 216A have been terminated."

Assuming that such an instrument is certified as hybrid, it is not possible for it to go through the other place without the private business Standing Order having been complied with.

I will not read all of Standing Order No. 216 of the other place in respect of private legislation. Some extracts will suffice. Standing Order No. 216 is entitled "Hybrid Instuments" and states:

"A Petition to the House not to affirm a Hybrid Instrument shall be signed by the Petitioner or his Agent and be deposited or sent so as to be received in the office of the Clerk of the Parliaments within the 14 days following the day on which the Chairman's Report under paragraph (1) above is laid before the House."

It goes on to describe the procedure in another place.

Why do I believe that an order to set up a housing action trust might well be certified by the Chairman of Committees in the other place as a hybrid instrument? It is based upon the analogy of urban development corporations. We need look no further than the speeches of the Secretary of State, the Minister and others to see that affinity. I gather that in public announcements and in Committee—my hon. Friends who were on the Committee will correct me if I am wrong—the constitutional relationship between a UDC and a housing action trust was consistently made. I have said enough in the debate to demonstrate how similar they are.

The Secretary of State may wish to intervene to say that I have gone up a blind alley, but I do not believe that I have. The chances of an affirmative instrument to set up a housing action trust being certified hybrid by the Chairman of Committees in the other place and being subject to what is, in effect, a private Bill procedure, are extremely high—it is a more than distinct possibility.

In conclusion—the House will be relieved to hear that —[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] Well, I have worked through a series of logical points. Any Secretary of State worth his salt will be aware of the arguments. I am sure that he is aware of all this. If he has not been told, I am certain that somebody's head will roll.

My point about consultation is that, when such an instrument appears, as it did in the case of the London Docklands development corporation order, it is then up to the Committee of the other place to get some undertakings from the promoters—the Government. It can give its approval to go ahead, but make that approval subject to many restrictions to protect the individual, corporation, borough council, firm or outside area that might be injuriously affected. And they can be affected, as I have shown. The other place might give the go-ahead for a housing action trust, as long as certain undertakings were observed.

The Government representative at such a hearing is like the promoter of a private Member's Bill. So the other place

[Mr. Spearing]

will let through an affirmative instrument only provided that certain conditions for a housing action trust in a particular area are met.

If this is a strong possibility—I have every reason to believe that it is—how can the Secretary of State consult, when the constraints of the other place are as yet unknown? How can he go to a prospective location for a housing action trust and consult the people there, or the borough council, the housing associations or landlords, without knowing what constraints will be placed on his freedom of action?

I do not deny that the Bill, bad though it is, gives the Secretary of State enormous scope, but the other place may. The right hon. Gentleman knows more about the activities of the other place than I do: he is well connected. The other place is jealous of the rights of the individual. Perhaps the Secretary of State does not know how the procedure is arrived at. Why is the other place more jealous of individual rights and equipped with better procedure to deal with them than we are?

Some years ago, when a Government of my political complexion were in power, they were afraid that a general power would be used by a nationalised industry to plant pylons, dig up the land or build roads—activities that would be injurious to the rights of landowners. They decided that if there was an element of hybridity in the statutory instrument, they would protect landowners, the countryside and people who might be injuriously affected, and they introduced this procedure. If that can be done —quite properly—to protect the rights of landowners, it can and should be done for my homeless constituents.

Consultation cannot take place, because the Secretary of State cannot yet be aware of the degree to which a housing action trust may operate within the law that this Act would create.

Mr. Bradley: We have sat through 13½ hours of fascinating debate on this important Bill, examining its precise details. As a new Member, I may say that this is the first Report stage in which I have been involved, and I have been surprised that Conservative Members who served on the Standing Committee have failed to turn up and make contributions to the debate. It would appear that they are unable to justify the Bill's provisions. However, we are pleased that the Secretary of State is here to look at this important part of the Bill.

Over the past 13½ hours we have looked at the Government's proposals to deregulate the private rented sector, removing security of tenure and succession and pushing up rents to a market level without making a commitment on housing benefit to pay for those rents. In part II of the Bill we looked at the ultimate collapse of the traditional voluntary housing movement and the move towards a free market. I know from experience in Manchester that many of the people who voluntarily serve on small housing associations are looking carefully at their position. They went into the housing movement not to raise money on the finance market or to be responsible for high finance or high rents, but to try to provide for the housing needs of local people.

The Government say that the philosophy of the Bill is tenants' choice. They believe that they are freeing and enabling tenants to choose the type of housing that they want. We have reached this part of the Bill at five minutes to eight in the morning and we see exposed the myth of tenants' choice. The chickens come home to roost when we start to talk about housing action trusts. They certainly have nothing to do with tenants having a choice about future housing in the designated areas.

Amendment No. 87 would provide:

"If, as a result of consultation under this section, it appears to the Secretary of State that a majority of persons consulted under subsection (2) above are opposed to the designation of the proposed designated area, he shall not make an order under section 55 above designating the said area.'."

The amendment is an attempt to help the Government to fulfil their philosophy by giving tenants a choice, a right and a say in their areas.

It is worth looking at the Government's reason for bringing forward the experiment in housing action trusts. They would not need to carry out such an experiment if they had properly funded local authorities so that they could provide decent housing for people throughout the years that the Government have been in power.

I should like to mention the success of experiments in which I have been involved and in which consultation did or did not take place. I shall outline our experience of community development projects and research work that we carried out in Manchester, using Department of the Environment tips about how to consult tenants on the development of their area. First, I shall deal with my contention that the only reason why we are talking about having to consult people about the awful conditions in which they live is the absolute lack of investment, public expenditure and commitment to housing. It is because of those things that the Government say they now have to consider an alternative approach.

Figures in an authoritative document, published by the well respected Association of Metropolitan Authorities, support the view that we would not need to discuss housing action trusts in consultation with tenants if there had been proper investment.

I am sure that the Secretary of State is familiar with the figures in section 8. I will read the commentary to start with, which is

"Section 8 Capital Investment in Housing"

The section says:

"The trend shown in this section from 1978/79 has been of a general decline in real terms in the resources available for housing investment.

Gross capital expenditure by local authorities on housing in England fell in real terms by 36 per cent. between 1978/79"—

when this Government were first elected—

"and 1985/86."

Those were the last available figures.

8 am

It continues:

"It is clear that the bulk of expenditure has been switched to the renovation of local authority stock and renovation grants for private sector dwellings, at the expense of new housebuilding."

If cities such as Manchester had had the opportunity of tackling the problems of homelessness and long waiting lists by having the chance to build decent new housing, we would not be discussing housing action trusts and the need to consult those tenants whom we wish to help to have decent housing.

The amendment clearly shows that we are consulting people about the poor condition of their houses caused by the lack of investment. The figures set out in the document show that for the housing investment programme

allocations for the periods 1978-79 to 1986-87, the outturn prices at 1986-87 levels declined from £4,849 million in 1978-79 to £4,248 million in 1979-80. They fell from £3,097 million in 1980-81 to £2,286 million in 1981-82.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman is going rather wide. I remind him and the House that we are dealing with consultation and publicity. We are dealing with the procedures involved. The hon. Gentleman is now beginning to widen the debate, but I am sure that he will come back to the amendment.

Mr. Bradley: I am grateful for your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I think it is essential for hon. Members who were not on the Committee to appreciate fully why we tabled this amendment in consultation with the very people who have lacked the investment that I have talked about. To comply with your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be brief.

The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) was not present at the Report stage last Thursday and he is not here today. I hope that there are no family problems or illness. There must be a good explanation for his absence. The hon. Gentleman actually came with a graph to explain the housing process in this country. I would have shown him a similar graph, but I feel that this one makes sense, while his clearly did not. As was said earlier, the white coats were out for that hon. Member after the graph was shown. I am sure that the Secretary of State has seen the graph, which shows a massive decline in resources that the Government wish to reinject through the housing action trusts and a desire to consult tenants about the decline in expenditure.

Table 8.5 shows the international comparison of investment in residential construction as a percentage of gross domestic product. The table shows the countries involved in this kind of investment. At the top of the table is West Germany, with 6·1 per cent., and right at the bottom is the United Kingdom, with a paltry 2·1 per cent. of gross national product spent on housing investment.

I now come to my second point, which is that consultation with tenants has been tried in the past and we have experience that we can bring to bear through the amendment to help the Government tackle the problem of the housing action trusts in part III of the Bill.

My first experience was when I was a researcher at university and worked on a community development project. I was the researcher for the project in Oldham, Greater Manchester, where we carried out a study on a large investment programme for upgrading what in those days was called a slum estate. It was probably similar to the kind of areas that we will be looking at when we finally come to designate the housing action trusts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) clearly, concisely and eloquently explained the problems involved in this part of the Bill. As he said, the Committee would have been in a better position to discuss the implications of the scheme and the real consultations with tenants if it had known where the areas would be. On Second Reading and in Committee we were given assurances about the announcement of the areas. We understood the Minister to say that they would be known by Report stage. I shall happily give way to the Secretary of State if he will announce the six areas on which he will be consulting tenants. Unfortunately, he does not seem to want to give us that information, which makes this debate rather theoretical. We are in somewhat of a vacuum in trying to discuss the realities of the scheme.

Mr. Spearing: Perhaps one reason why the Secretary of State cannot announce the areas is that that would trip the hybridity procedure in the other place. Having conceived the idea, perhaps—as with the city technology colleges—it may be hard to execute it.

Mr. Bradley: That is certainly a possible reason for the Secretary of State's deafening silence. Later, I shall refer to other difficulties that he may be experiencing in announcing the areas.

Our first experience in Oldham was designating an area and then imposing the way in which those properties should be renovated and upgraded, with the assumption that that would lead to better housing. Our research on the Abbeyhills estate clearly showed that the tenants had to be committed to the project and to the idea of better housing—and, for HATs, not only to housing but to every possible aspect of life in those areas. It is interesting to note the powers that the Secretary of State will take unto himself in the designated areas, as opposed to the surrounding areas that will be democratically controlled by local authorities.

We said in Committee—and the Minister accepted our point—that under public health legislation it would be difficult for the Secretary of State to direct vermin—for example, rats—how to operate within the HATs. They might stop at the boundary because they would not want to leave the Secretary of State and go to the local authority. On the other hand, they might prefer to be in a local authority area rather than in a HAT. That is the absurdity of the matter, and it is why we have great difficulty reconciling the undemocratic nature of HATs with the democratic local authority areas that will surround them.

The project in Abbeyhills failed miserably because there was not full consultation with the tenants, full commitment to the project and full understanding of the variety of housing needs and other factors that affect people's lives. I am sure that the Secretary of State would like to accompany me to that estate some time. We can see there what can happen if we do not obtain commitment and encourage the tenants to work with us on a project. I am sure that the Secretary of State would learn a salutary lesson by visiting that estate and seeing the consequences of designating an area.

We can see a more positive aspect of the issue if we consider another designated area of Manchester. Public expenditure was allocated to a particular project in Manchester in which I was involved when I worked in the housing department. That involved the use of a Department of the Environment mechanism. I am surprised to find myself saying that the Department produced a mechanism that proved valuable in consulting tenants in that part of Manchester. I do not wish to introduce another name that may be abused later, but the mechanism was called a housing action kit. I am sure that the Secretary of State, or his advisers, will remember it, although I am not sure whether it is still in operation.

That experimental mechanism allowed local authorities to go into specific areas and visit a specific number of properties to find out what people wanted. That is similar to the consultation in respect of the housing action trusts. The aim was to find out what sort of houses and

[Mr. Bradley]

environmental and recreational facilities people required to improve an area at a time when money was allocated to such projects.

In Manchester, over the years, there has been a massive cut in those resources. We cannot now carry out such consultation using the Department of the Environment mechanism, and central Government must now intervene and impose a housing action trust on the local authority. That is a waste of effort and resources, and there is no longer a democratic way in which we can find out locally what people want.

I do not know whether the Secretary of State has visited the Miles Platting area of Manchester, but, if he has, he will be aware of a successful project, based on provisions similar to those in the amendment, which ensures that local people are properly consulted and do not have their lives changed by imposition rather than by democratic discussion and consultation. Unless the Secretary of State accepts our amendment, the impositions in the Bill may lead to complete failure in the allocation of resources to a particular area. However, if we follow proper consultation procedures and involve tenants, the projects can be an immense success.

One of the greatest problems in fulfilling those processes is due to the massive reduction in resources in the housing investment programme which, presumably, will be reallocated from central Government through the housing action trusts. We must try to amend the clause to introduce some democratic processes into the procedure. We cannot use such processes in Manchester, as is the case in many other parts of the country, as no doubt my hon. Friends will point out later.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) was chairman of the housing committee in Manchester in the late 1970s, there was a housing investment programme of about £67 million. Last year, Manchester bid for about the same amount of money in real terms—£122 million—but we ended up with little more than £20 million to fulfil Manchester's housing needs. What will the Government do about that? We know that a feasibility study is being carried out in one part of the city.

Mr. Spearing: If that is so, does my hon. Friend agree that that feasibility study, about which he may like to give us details, is now, unless my amendment is accepted, being given legal authenticity?

8.15 am

Mr. Bradley: That was certainly my interpretation of what has been going on. We pressed for clarification on that in Committee. Many residents from the area in which the feasibility study was taking place co-operated because they wanted to know what would happen to their homes and their lives.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend has brought us some startling news this morning. It seems possible that the Secretary of State is acting beyond his powers because, as I understand it, we are debating the Report stage of the Bill, which therefore has no legal standing. If local authorities start acting without legal powers, councillors are liable to be surcharged. We need to know how much money is being spent, and by whom, and on whose authority this feasibility study is being carried out for something that is not legal. I realise that the Secretary of State has legal immunity in the sense that he cannot be surcharged for his own decisions. If he could, he would have been bankrupted many years ago. How much money is being spent on the operation that my hon. Friend has experienced?

Mr. Bradley: Unfortunately, I do not have that information, although I am sure that the Secretary of State would clarify the status of the feasibility studies that are taking place in cities such as Manchester, and their relationship to the possible designation of housing action trusts. I should like to know that, because I should not like in any way to construe or even suggest that there is any possibility that the Secretary of State is acting outside his terms of reference. I am sure that he would like to clarify the exact purpose of the feasibility study. If that clarification is not forthcoming, I must continue in this vein and give my interpretation, because that might clarify the matter. The Secretary of State might be able to help me to know exactly what is happening in Manchester and the likely future developments there.

However, first I should like to identify the area where, from my understanding the feasibility study is still continuing—the Hulme area of Manchester. I believe that the feasibility study is linked to the housing action trust. We had a massive lobby of the Committee by tenants from Hulme. I asked the Minister whether he was prepared to meet them to discuss the study, about which they were anxious.

At that stage, the Minister thought that the lobby was a publicity stunt, which I thought a rude response to people who had taken time, trouble and effort to travel to London from Manchester to discuss their housing needs with the Minister. Although their request was rudely rejected, not long afterwards the Minister scuttled off to Manchester to have those discussions with the tenants. I use the word "scuttle" because, as a Member of Parliament representing a Manchester constituency, I was not informed that the Minister was visiting Manchester.

Although the area of the housing action trust is not in my constituency, we have already heard, in the eloquent speeches made by my hon. Friends, about the effect that the designation of a housing action trust can have on local housing plans. The area that I represent in Withington has the greatest demand for the housing that is available in the city of Manchester. My fears relate to those people who may be displaced because of the designation of the housing action trust. Because of the way in which the housing action trust will be set up, there will be no responsibility for homeless people in the housing action trust area and that will put greater pressures on my constituency and other Manchester constituencies bordering the area of the housing action trust.

It would have been reasonable for the Minister to inform local Members of his meeting so that we could express, on our constituents' behalf, our fears about such a designation. I can only assume from the Minister's visit and discussions—I shall happily give way if this view is not sustainable—that there is a link, although perhaps tenuous, with a housing action trust.

Mr. Corbyn: Did the Secretary of State inform anyone in Manchester at any stage that he was considering having a housing action trust in that part of the city, or did he

treat the Manchester people with the same contempt with which he treats the House most of the time, not telling people what he is doing?

Mr. Bradley: It is rather the other way round. The tenants assume that a housing action trust will be imposed on them. They want to talk about that imposition. What is to happen will be much clearer if there are open and wide-ranging discussions with tenants, local authorities and Members of Parliament. It would be much easier on Report, when we table amendments, to have a statement on the areas to be designated and on whether Manchester will be chosen to "benefit" from designation.

Given the opportunity, Manchester would have carried out renovation, rebuilding and modernisation work within what we can only assume is the designated area. It is adjacent to the recently designated urban development corporation. The small urban motorway running east-west just south of the city centre is the Mancunian way. To its south is the housing area, which is in poor condition and requires a great deal of repair, renovation and new build to give decent housing to the people who want to live in Hulme and Moss Side. The urban development corporation is the strip of land between the Mancunian way and the city centre. Part of the UDC's brief is to inject yuppie housing into Manchester.

People who live south of the Mancunian way do not want the urban development area concept to be extended into their area, forcing them out when yuppies take over properties sold to the private sector against the wishes of local people. That is why they want to be consulted early, not to be told what will happen to them.

The achievements and consultation that have taken place in Manchester are a model for our proposal.

Mr. Corbyn: There seems to be a problem about the political control of areas where housing action trusts may be imposed by the Secretary of State. Does my hon. Friend have any evidence that, before this operation with the tenants, the Secretary of State had been in close consultation with what remains of the Conservative party in Manchester?

Mr. Bradley: It would be difficult for the Minister to be in close consultation with the Conservative party in Manchester, because it is a dying species.

Mr. Corbyn: I said, "with what remains".

Mr. Bradley: What remains is becoming increasingly remote. Conservative Central Office has established a new action team in Manchester.

Mr. Corbyn: Did they consult the local Conservatives?

Mr. Bradley: The new head of that action team has been appointed from the leafy suburbs of Surrey. His task is to revitalise the local Tories.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I appreciate that the hon. Member has been tempted off the straight and narrow by his hon. Friend, but he must now address his remarks to the amendment.

Mr. Bradley: The new head of the action team has not chosen to live in a property in Manchester or in one that will be within the housing action trust area. He is hunting around the foothills of Saddleworth for a property from which to try to revitalise central Manchester.

Manchester has done a lot by way of consultation over the years, and we are now informing tenants of what can be done. I hold in my hand a leaflet headed "Co-operation works." In this pamphlet we talked about co-operation between local people. It explained to people in the Hulme area, which could be within the designated consultation area, the type of proposals that existed when the pamphlet was printed. It referred to local launderettes, the need to consider the environment, the problem of dogs and litter, cleaning estates and the work of renovation. There was also reference to local policing—a vital matter for communities.

That leaflet was issued in 1973. Over 15 years ago we were talking to the tenants about the needs of an area that may be designated as a housing action trust. It represented a model for consultation. The housing research section in Manchester does an invaluable job in providing information. The city council, in a survey among the residents of Hulme, dealt with the whole range of activities and the needs of local people. If the Government followed that model, this amendment—which is designed to correct the Secretary of State's ideas of what consultation is about—would not be necessary.

Some eminent bodies have considered the sort of proposals that we are debating. For example, Shelter, in its submission on housing action trusts, said:

"Housing action trusts do not even make a pretence at being democratic. It is government choice, not tenants' choice. Transferred council tenants and local people will have little confidence in future housing opportunity, for power will not only be out of their hands, either as individuals or as local electors—it will be concentrated in the hands of nominee board members meeting to decide policy in camera . . . the Secretary of State will be accountable to Parliament only through the ineffective channels of statutory instrument scrutiny."

When we discussed this area of consultation in Committee, we tabled many amendments in an effort to persuade the Government to see the wisdom of getting tenants involved in the process to ensure that changes in policy became effective. We suggested, for example, a ballot of residents after the designation of an area. We thought that Conservative Members, who say they believe in democracy, would agree to such a step.

Secondly, we suggested full consultation for residents on the structure of the housing action trust, which is what we are talking about. Thirdly, we suggested a veto for the local authority over the designation of the HAT, which it could use if, for the area to be designated, it had a programme about which it had consulted fully. Finally, we suggested a ballot of tenants on transfer to the housing action trust. All those mechanisms would make consultation and accountability more effective.

8.30 am

One of the best features of the consideration of the Bill was the number of tenants' groups which came to the Committee from all over the country. They came to discuss with the members of the Committee what was going on and to find out how they would be consulted, what their rights would be and what would happen to their homes. The lack of information from the Government was making them anxious. We must remember that it is their homes we are talking about. We cannot impose a Government diktat on them.

There was every opportunity for the Government and for Conservative Members to talk to the tenants. Although we won the argument in Committee overwhelmingly, we

[Mr. Bradley]

lost the amendments because of the Government's majority. Probably the Secretary of State will accept the amendment now, because it is sensible to have full consultation. If tenants do not want it, the housing action trust will not succeed.

The Conservative election manifesto encapsulated what the Government claim to be their position on the housing action trust and on consultation with tenants. The manifesto said:

"The next Conservative Government will . . . give people greater choice and responsibility over their own lives . . . Our goal is a capital-owning democracy of people and families who exercise power over their own lives . . . They would take the important decisions—as tenants . . .—rather than having them taken for them . . . But what this Conservative Government has done is to make it easier for people to . . . decide such things for themselves."

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Bradley: I will happily give way to the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) if he wishes to make an intervention. The hon. Member was nodding vigorously in support of that quotation. I should like him to explain to me, because clearly the Secretary of State will not, exactly how the Government proposal for housing action trusts fits in. Would the hon. Member like to comment on that? No.

We have been on our feet for about 14 hours. There have been numerous sedentary interventions of the sort that the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire made, but not one word will appear in *Hansard.* Is not that a travesty of the Government trying to defend their position? The hon. Member was not in Committee on the Bill. He was not interested in housing and probably knows very little about it. Apart from the Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles), there is not another Conservative Member here who was on the Housing Bill Committee to make a contribution on this important matter.

It is worth reflecting on the ministerial statements that have been made on this subject. The Minister has said that he would not impose HATs if tenants objected. That cannot have been a mistake, because he said so at least twice. The first occasion was a meeting of the Housing Consultative Council for England in the autumn of 1987. The second was the one-day conference organised by the Institute of Housing in March of this year. On both occasions he said that housing action trusts should not be imposed. I shall be happy to allow messages to come down from the Box at this stage, if the Minister wishes to make a correction. I am not sure that the hod carrier is ready for the run. Yet again, there is no correction being made, but I am sure that one is on its way. Meanwhile, I shall have to rely on those statements.

I shall be even more relieved to have the Minister's confirmation that it is still his view, but he is not in the Chamber. Unfortunately, I do not have faith in the Secretary of State to make the same statement. That typifies the problems that we have had throughout the proceedings on the Bill—the conflict between the Secretary of State and the Minister of State on those matters. We see also how the iron hand is now in control. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the Secretary of State is present to answer this debate and that his hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning has taken to his bed.

I am extremely flattered that the Prime Minister has joined us, and presumably we may now have an answer to the question of housing action trust designation. I am sure that the Prime Minister has come here specifically to relieve the anxiety that is felt in Manchester, and to tell the House from the Dispatch Box which trusts are to be designated. I would feel privileged to give way to the Prime Minister on that particular point, if she would like to comment. Obviously she has come to make some statement about the Bill, which we must all be anxious to hear.

Tenants want uncertainty to be removed and to know what are the Government's intentions vis-a-vis consultation and imposition. They do not want democratic control by local authorities removed, to be replaced by the imposition of an undemocratic body without consultation. The amendment will ensure that tenants are properly consulted in the way described in the Conservative party election manifesto. I am sure that it is to reaffirm the contents of that manifesto that the Prime Minister has come to the House this morning.

In considering the question of tenants' choices and rights, and the right of local poeple to be consulted about their lives and their future——

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: In cases where tenants have been consulted—by, for example, the Conservative and alliance coalition at Milton Keynes—and where there were plans to offer consultation in Peterborough, Telford and Shropshire last summer, have not the Government—fearful of tenants making a choice to go with their local councils rather than with housing action trusts or similar bodies—repudiated those democratic methods and preferred to endorse autocratic methods?

Mr. Bradley: That is right. I can cite a similar example of a survey that was undertaken successfully in Wythenshawe by the research unit of Manchester's housing department. Wythenshawe, of course, could be a candidate for a housing action trust. That survey showed, as has just been pointed out, that 76 per cent. of respondents on the council estate, irrespective of their current tenure, considered the housing legislation to be bad, and 77 per cent. wanted to stay with the council, their first choice of landlord. That result is significant because it is reflected throughout the country. Where tenants are properly consulted, they overwhelmingly reject an alternative landlord and say that they want to stay with the local authority.

A housing action trust should not be imposed upon people against their will. We are talking about people's homes, lives and families. The amendment goes only some way to providing some sort of consultation, but it is better than nothing. It is a step in the right direction to give power to individual tenants, as identified in the Conservative party's manifesto, to make their choice. If the Government wish to uphold their manifesto commitment, they will support the amendment.

Mr. Tony Banks: First, let me welcome the Prime Minister to the debate this morning.

Mr. Forth: Where is the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Banks: Perhaps he is fielding a few more early-morning telephone calls—I do not know.

The Prime Minister is an expert on houses, because she has so many of them. If she would like to join in the

debate, I for one would be delighted to hear her speech and ask a few questions that I have been dying to ask her from the Dispatch Box. I understand that she has not made a speech from the Dispatch Box since the Westland disaster and I can only conclude that her presence here this morning is to announce some other catastrophe that is about to strike the nation.

I was hoping that the Secretary of State might break his Trappist silence and say something in answer to many of the questions that have been directed to him so far. Two questions to which the Secretary of State knows that we should like answers—we are prepared to go on for a lot longer in order to get them—are how many housing action trusts will there be, and where will they be?

It seems reasonable at the very least for the Secretary of State to give us an answer to those questions after 115 hours of debate in Committee. We are considering housing action trusts, and the Secretary of State has still not revealed where they will be. I cannot believe that there has not been some considerable consideration as to where those HATs will be located. We have heard a number of pieces of circumstantial evidence to suggest that consultations are already taking place, although with whom we do not know. Perhaps when the Secretary of State comes round to speaking, he will tell me whether there is any truth in that at all.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman should sit down then.

Mr. Banks: I am happy to sit down when I have read this list out to the right hon. Gentleman.

Will the right hon. Gentlman confirm or deny that the following states in the following areas have been pinpointed as being housing action trusts—in Southwark, the north Peckham and Gloucester grove estates; in Tower Hamlets, Solander gardens and Shadwell gardens, and the Berner, Ocean, Boundary and Holland blocks; and in Lambeth, the Loughborough and Angeli town estates? I happen to know that last estate well because I used to live on it and I should be interested to know whether my old home—which unfortunately does not yet have a blue GLC plaque on it—will be becoming part of a housing action trust.

I mentioned the various estates in Canning Town to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). We know that a would-be Conservative Member of Parliament in Newham has been having discussions with the Minister's political adviser about whether Newham can have a housing action trust. I say "would-be" because, as the Secretary of State will know, Newham is very much a Tory-free zone, and we intend to keep it that way.

8.45 am

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Perhaps the Secretary of State will confirm that his principle on where housing action trusts are to be located will be the same as his principle on where green belt can be built on—namely, that they will not be located at the foot of his garden.

Mr. Banks: If the Secretary of State were to give an answer, he would say, "Not in my back yard, sonny." That seems to be his general approach. It can happen in everyone else's back yard, but not in his own. That is another example of his double standards.

Let me continue with the list of estates pinpointed as housing action trusts. In Leeds, they are Halton Moor, Seacroft and Gipton; in Sunderland, Downhill, Town End and Hylton Castle; in Sandhill and Wolverhampton, Windmill Lane, Whiteheath and Heathstone. If the Secretary of State knows that any of those is likely to be designated, he owes it to the House to say so. I shall not invite him to stand up and do it now, as he has declined every invitation so far, but I hope that when he replies to some of the debate—as I assume he must eventually do—he will give us the information.

We should like to ask more questions about the HATs. How many properties will each of them have, and what other land will be attached to them? What will be the proposed financial terms of each transfer? How will local authorities continue to manage the debts attributable to property that they no longer own? Those are basic questions; without the answers, we are not really in a position to move on from this part of the Bill. If the Secretary of State wants in any way to be constructive today—that would be breaking the habits of a lifetime, but I am being optimistic—he must direct his attention to them.

The questions are particularly pertinent to amendment No. 308. Clause 55 sets out the powers of the Secretary of State to designate a housing action trust. Amendment No. 308 relates to clause 56, which sets out his obligations to consult over the designation. That does not mean much, because he does not have to consult a great deal. For example, the Bill does not oblige him to consult the tenants whom he will be transferring from the familiar control of the local authority to the hands of the HAT. He is merely obliged by clause 56(1) to consult the local authority or authorities in whose area the HAT will be situated, and by clause 56(2) to bring the proposal to the notice of persons likely to be affected by it. I should very much like to know—as, I am sure, would many people on the estates that I have mentioned—whether he will be consulting them.

Clause 56(2) merely states:

"Before making a designation order, the Secretary of State shall take such steps as appear to him best designed to secure that the proposal to designate the area in question is brought to the notice of persons appearing to him to be likely to be affected by the proposal."

That is a fairly permissive piece of proposed legislation, which enables the Secretary of State to do a great deal, or nothing whatever. Knowing the present Secretary of State, I would expect him, in his rather laidback and indolent fashion, to choose the latter course.

Mr. Spearing: It might be opportune to repeat a question in the presence of the Prime Minister because she has some legal background, which may not be the case with the Secretary of State for the Environment. Is it not the case that we are being invited to validate in law consultation which may be taking place about which we know nothing and which may be partial and incomplete? Is it not a matter of legal irregularity for there to be retrospective legislation of this kind without proper reasons being given? So far we have been given no reasons for this. *[Interruption.]* I would have given way to the Secretary of State earlier. However, the Prime Minister should be aware that we are considering retrospective legislation of a most questionable type. We are doing that in the presence of the Prime Minister, who is a lawyer, and she should have known better because her name is on the Bill.

Mr. Banks: I said earlier that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South is just too nice for politics. If he really thought that he would receive a reply from the Prime Minister, he surprises me. Having done a dry run as Leader of the Opposition, I am quite prepared to nip round the other side of the Chamber and try a dry run as Prime Minister and perhaps attempt an answer to that question.

I am going to milk this situation for everything I can because this opportunity is most unlikely to come my way again. As I explained, I resigned as Whip, which is catching in the Labour party. However, I found myself back as an agency Whip—a kind of privatised Whip—to carry through the remainder of the Bill. I think that we are doing a fairly good job at the moment. *[Interruption.]* I am glad to see that word has got around that the Prime Minister is here and that a number of previously unfamiliar faces during the night have appeared.

Clause 56(2) states what the Secretary of State plans to do to notify people who will be affected by having their area designated as a housing action trust. What sort of notice is he going to post? No matter what anyone says, if the Bill is enacted, it will affect many people. We believe that it will affect them to their detriment, and the Government believe that it will affect them to their advantage. We will have to wait and see. However, we can join hands on the idea that it will affect a large number of people.

When I looked at the newspapers on Tuesday to see what the Government and Opposition press had reported, I noticed that in *The Times*, *The Independent* and *The Guardian*, very few of whose readers it might be argued will be affected by the Bill, there were large sections reporting the proposals. In newspapers like the *Daily Mirror* and *The Sun*—the majority of whose readers will be affected by the proposals—there was no word about the Bill.

If the Secretary of State wants to give notice of the proposals, he should do so in *The Sun* or the *Daily Mirror* and not in *The Times* or *The Independent*. A very good argument for televising the House can be made when we deal with proposals like the Bill which will affect millions of people but which are not reported in the press. There should be extensive coverage not because of our speeches from the Back Benches or from the Dispatch Box but so that people can receive information that will affect their lives in future.

When the Secretary of State decides how he will notify people, I hope that he will bear in mind that it is not good enough to put an announcement in the *London Gazette*. He needs to ensure that everyone involved is contacted through the medium with which they are most happy.

Mr. Corbyn: Would my hon. Friend care to reflect that the Government seem able and willing to spend large sums on advertising the armed forces and Britain opening for business in 1992, but that a serious attack on the lives and future of tenants in council estates throughout the country appears to be a state secret? Tenants are not allowed to know that they are about to be thrown to the wolves of property speculators and have their homes taken from them.

Mr. Banks: I agree with my hon. Friend that this Government are good at spending vast quantities of taxpayers' money, dressing up their campaigns and trying to put the best gloss on them. They achieve that by having the glossiest of glossy pamphlets. We have seen many examples of that, usually with the Prime Minister in soft focus on Department of Trade and Industry pamphlets. When one has a lousy product it is best to dress it up in the glossiest form of packaging so that people are deceived. It is a well-known marketing technique.

What amuses me is the way that the Government attack local authorities for their attempts through newspapers and other means of communication to inform people of the evil impact of Government policies on them. Local authorities are prevented from doing that, while the Government use vast quantities of taxpayers' money to put over party political policies which do great damage to those same individuals. The Government know all about how to squander taxpayers' money.

Mr. Spearing: The Prime Minister says that she is a great enthusiast of morality. Does my hon. Friend recall that the Government paid £5 million of taxpayers' money to tell taxpayers, or Sid in particular, that they should buy what they already owned? Is there not a moral duty on the Government to spend a modicum of that sum on *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* to inform the public that the Government intend to take from people in various places what they own at a low price and without saying what they will do with it?

Mr. Banks: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Conservative party is extraordinarily good at that, and I congratulate the Prime Minister on the way she manages to deceive large numbers of people for a large part of the time. That is because the Conservative party has had a lot of practice at it. The day the people wake up to the way they are being exploited by the Government will be the day when the Government will be thrown aside and a Socialist Government elected. Despite the brave smiles on Conservative faces, that day is not far off; I assure them of that.

Amendment No. 308 refers to clause 56(3). My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South in a cerebral speech which he sat up half the night writing, states that consultations will take place before the Bill becomes law and will be sufficient to satisfy clause 56(1) and (2). This is retrospective legislation and yet another example of the way the Government, who are so arrogant that they are prepared to dismiss any objections and opposition—*[Interruption.]* The Prime Minister should be allowed to make a dignified departure. I hope that she has heard something which even at this late stage might help her know that she has made a complete mess of this Bill. It will not win the Conseratives any support.

Like political fund ballots, the Bill has had a perverse effect. I have attended many meetings about the Bill, especially about housing action trusts and the pick-a-tenant provisions—or the pick-a-landlord provisions as the Government prefer to describe them. The Bill has alerted a large number of tenants to the dangers that they may face should the Bill become law. The Bill has politicised many tenants in the same way as the issue of political fund ballots politicised many trade unionists.

9 am

The Government have tried to get away with it all by passing the Bill through the House as quietly as they can. Because of the extreme nature of the proposals in the Bill, however, we have been able to alert a large number of tenants to what will happen. When we come to discuss the

proposals for pick-a-tenant, I believe that the Government's objectives will be thwarted time and time again, as they already have been in regard to a number of the new town development corporations.

Amendment No. 87 relates to clause 56, which sets out the consultation required by the Secretary of State before a housing action trust is set up. Clause 56(2) states that the Secretary of State is obliged to take steps to bring such a proposal to the notice of persons likely to be affected by it. The amendment would prevent the Secretary of State from setting up a housing action trust in an area where the majority of persons likely to be affected are opposed to it.

We find it difficult to square the removal of homes from local authority control where the tenants, in common with other local residents, have the opportunity to elect their landlord every four years to a non-elected body, where all the members of the controlling board are appointed by the Secretary of State with the Government's stated aim of increasing tenants' choice.

In the Government's earlier manifestos, they spoke about increasing tenants' choice, but one cannot square that with the proposals in clause 56. I have ceased trying to square the irreconcilables that are contained in the Bill —we merely content ourselves with pointing them out.

Despite what was said in Committee, it is clear that HATs can be imposed on a local authority whether it likes it or not. That is undemocratic and hard to bear, but those tenants whose homes are removed from local authority control do not even get a look in. They will not be consulted as a result of clause 56(2); they will only be notified of the proposal. For that reason, we are promoting amendment No. 87, which ensures that, where tenants and residents are opposed to the proposal it should not go ahead.

The two amendments show that the Secretary of State wants to load all the dice in his favour. He wants to be able to ride roughshod over the objections of the local authorities and to ignore the wishes of the tenant. Indeed, it is possible that he will not even have to bother to consult the people who will be affected. We are not surprised that that is profoundly undemocratic—we are always angry, but we are not surprised.

Unless the Secretary of State comes to the Dispatch Box and gives us some positive answers to straightforward questions, which he knows deserve answer, frankly he cannot expect us to do anything but press the amendments to a Division.

Mr. Ridley: It might be helpful if I give such information as I can in response to the questions asked by the hon. Members for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley).

First, like every other hon. Member who has spoken, they asked when the list of housing action trusts will finally be produced and what will be on it. No final decisions have been taken. None of the places mentioned by the hon. Members for Newham, South, for Withington or for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has been decided upon. They are the subject of possibilities and rumours. The lovely idea of the key importance of one of my political advisers having met a Tory candidate is absolutely wrong.

I can put hon. Members' minds at rest. No secret or final decisions or unannounced consultations have taken place. When the Government have finally made up their mind they will announce the list, during the time when the Bill is in Parliament.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ridley: I have listened to several long speeches, and I want to reply to them and make progress.

The consultation process consists of three stages. This is the answer to the point raised by the hon. Member for Newham, South and his hon. Friends. In the first stage, we declare a certain area to be a prospective housing action trust. So far, the trust has not been set up. Next, I consult local people and the local authority about my proposals for setting up the HAT. We have drafted a "Dear Occupier" letter, about which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West inquired. Its information will appear not in the newspapers, but in the letter box, which is a much better way of ensuring that people get it. On the basis of that test of opinion I shall decide finally whether to put an order before the House to designate a particular HAT.

Mr. Boateng: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning was right to say that we hope to set up housing action trusts with the consent and agreement of the tenants, but the decision will be mine, and I shall decide according to what I believe to be right. We are talking here only about the principle of making an area a HAT, whose transfer will be from one public sector body to another.

Mr. Boateng: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Ridley: Now I come to the point raised by the hon. Member for Newham, South about retrospection. His amendment seeks not to make these consultations legal until after Royal Assent. He claims that it is retrospective that I have the power to hold these consultations with local people before the Bill becomes law. There have been no such consultations yet, because no HATs have been declared. The consultations will take place only after they have been declared. We cannot consult people when the people concerned have not been told who they are.

This is not retrospective: by including it in the Bill, everybody knows what the law is. Everybody now knows what the draft clause which the House may approve will be. Everybody knows that retrospection means a change in the law after someone has done something in the belief that it was within the law. The law being changed after such an act is committed is the form of retrospection that we all eschew.

Opposition Members who seemed to be a little worried about that may remember that, on 9 March, I made a statement in the House saying that at midnight that night there would be certain changes to the capital control rules for local authorities. I said that those would later be enacted and they have been, although there is a further stage to come. That is exactly the same process as the one that is being carried out here, except that that was a more important matter because it was the finite definition of the law in relation to financial transactions. No Opposition Member claimed that that was retrospective, because it was not. Everybody knew what the law was when he came to do whatever it was he was about to do.

[Mr. Ridley]

The second matter is the order of procedure. I do not wish in any way to usurp the functions of the House or of its advisers and Clerks. My suspicion is that the definition of a procedural point by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and the question about hybrid instruments was right. It is not for me to give a verdict, but I think that I agree with his view. That procedure has been followed with urban development corporation orders that have been petitioned against. If it is a hybrid procedure for the order—it is not for me to give a verdict on that—then that is accepted.

The next phase is the true consultation. One does not have a HAT until one has an order, and it is only then that one can consult. I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Withington said on that point. All those matters and many others, including the precise terms of the tenancies, the way in which they will be treated and the arrangements for the tenants' forum so that they can have close contact with the board, will be for the housing action trust. What the trust will do will be a matter for major consultation.

The hon. Member for Newham, South spoke about planning. That will be a matter for the housing action trust and not for me. The hon. Gentleman seemed to think that I would direct the HAT about planning, but that is not the case. I shall be the appellate and the court of appeal. That is my function in relation to any planning authority, and such authorities make decisions about planning permission, although they will be required to conform to a local structure plan—if there is one for the area. In that sense, the position is the same as with any other planning authority.

The hon. Member for Withington made great play about some secret plot. I did not gather the full import of what he was saying. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning visited Manchester last month and the visit received full publicity. He went to Hulme and had talks with Professor Valerie Karn. There is some lively discussion going on there about whether the right thing to do for the Hulme estate is to set up the feasibility study that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, the predecessor of my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning, more or less promised in 1985 as a way of studying the problems of that estate. That is still on the table.

Another option discussed in Hulme was that it might be better to make it a HAT, but no decision has been taken. Until a decision has been taken as between those two options—which are completely alternate and not complementary—that gives the hon. Gentleman the answer that he wants and shows how mistaken one can be to believe in the conspiracy theory when trying to keep the House amused at 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning. *[Interruption.]* When the hon. Gentleman spoke, it was 8 o'clock.

9.15 am

The hon. Gentleman also seemed to believe that in some way this was a dreadful imposition upon people to make their areas—*[Interruption.]* The Opposition confirm it. It is astonishing that the Government have offered £125 million over the next few years solely to improve the houses—I have been sitting here on and off during the night—yet hon. Member after hon. Member has complained about the condition of the housing stock in their area—how run down and badly managed it is. The Government have said that they will visit the worst areas and then we shall liberate those people from the misrule of the councils.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members resume their seats? The Secretary of State plainly is not giving way.

Mr. Ridley: We have the recently published National Consumer Council's Gallup poll of council tenants showing that, even before the Bill has been passed, as many as 21 per cent. of tenants would like to have a social landlord, such as a building society, a housing association or a co-operative. Another 27 per cent. would like more information before reaching a decision. Let them have what they want. Opposition Members are not prepared to do that.

Neither amendment is right or necessary, and I invite the House to reject them.

Mr. Michael Welsh: Basically, I should like to speak about clause 56, dealing with consultation. I noted the Secretary of State's reply on consultation. The point is that he has said that he will consult after designating an area. Amendment No. 87 seeks to provide that consultation shall take place before designation, and that is for a special reason.

I am opposed to housing action trusts. I believe that local authorities, given the necessary resources, can perform as well as any of the proposed ideas. However, if housing action trusts are introduced—it appears that the Minister will insist on that—the test will be whether they work. That must be the only test for any legislation. The best way to make the trusts work is to have full consultation before an area is designated. We ask for that in amendment No. 87, and that is not asking for a lot. It is important that in those areas—some of them will be experimental—there should be consultation with everyone involved to ensure that housing action trusts are a success. I am against them, but, if they are to be introduced, I hope that they will be a success for the people who live in those areas.

Obviously, some matters are laid down about how the consultations should take place. The Secretary of State will, for example, take into consideration the balance of local authority and private housing. That must involve local authorities and tenants, and there is nothing wrong with that process. Another aspect is the physical condition and design of the housing; and whether the tenant is in the private or the public sector is but a minor detail. It is no use simply saying that a design is no good. It might be that, as with Airey houses, tenants cannot obtain mortgages because the exteriors of the houses are not good enough, although the insides are perfect. All that they need are new exteriors and then the tenants can obtain mortgages and really go to town. That must be part of the process of consultation.

There is nothing wrong with studying how local authority housing is managed. Housing associations might pick up some good ideas from local authorities. I am proud of the local authority housing in Doncaster, and I should be happy for anyone to look at that.

There must be consultation about the living and social conditions and the general environment of the area. It is no good designating a small geographical area as a HAT if the surrounding area is no good. It might be necessary to consult on a broader basis than just the HAT, and there is nothing wrong with that. The important point is that consultation takes place. I cannot accept the Government's argument that there should be no consultation until they have decided on the areas. That is not playing the game. Consultation is necessary to ensure success and to carry the people along with the scheme.

Another important factor is the repair and improvement of homes. It might be that near to a HAT is a badly rundown private housing area. Perhaps, with the right consultation, the Government could take over the whole area and give the environment a lift. That sort of consultation can bring good results.

The Secretary of State must surely agree that housing must be managed properly and effectively. Everyone who has a home would subscribe to that. There must be consultation with those who help to make the decisions. It is also a fact of life that HATs will involve, for example, health services. If it is terribly rundown, it is no use building it up and occupying the houses if there are no health services. The health services must be consulted, as must the community care services, because a number of the homes may be occupied by the elderly.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am puzzled as to why the hon. Gentleman is spending so long questioning what he describes as an absence of consultation. Clause 56 lays down that the Secretary of State must consult every local authority included in the proposed designated area, and that he

"shall take steps to ensure that the proposal to designate the area in question is brought to the notice of persons appearing to him to be likely to be affected by the proposal."

What more can one say?

Mr. Welsh: The Minister has said that he will decide whether consultation goes ahead, but, in real consultation, one has to come to an agreement. It is all very well holding consultations and saying, "I am the Minister. It does not matter whether you have no community care or health centres. The scheme will still go ahead because I am the Minister and I say so." I am referring to meaningful consultation, which is vastly different from the Minister's idea of consultation.

We are dealing with important undertakings. The Minister will make the housing action trusts responsible for the maintenance of private roads that fall within their scope, all at public expense. But where will the public expenditure come from? It will come from the local authority. On many estates, the roads are not kept up to the correct standards, and that will cost the highway authorities a great deal of money later. The Minister says that the highway authorities will have responsibility for those roads, but the local authorities will have to maintain them at their own expense, so they may not be up to standard. We are talking about other people's money. We are always told to be careful with taxpayers' money, so we must ensure a good system of consultation through the housing action trust schemes.

An important factor in getting things up to modern standards is the police, who form part of the local authority. If we do not consult the police authorities, they may not cater for a scheme in their forward plans and may not have sufficient money to ensure that an area is properly policed so that everyone can live the good life.

We are asking for common sense in consultation, but we do not seem to be able to get through to the Minister. Perhaps he distrusts local authorities, although I do not. If he distrusts them, he should take another look at them and see the good work that over 90 per cent. of them carry out.

Local authority education provision is excellent. Education is one of the largest parts of local authorities' budgets. The local authorities may agree with all the points about consultation, but say, "Can you wait a few months before you start so that, by the time the kiddies are living in those new houses, the new school will be built?" There is nothing wrong with that—that is meaningful consultation—but the Minister wants to take that out of people's hands. He appears to be implying that there will be no local authority representatives on the housing action trusts, so there will be no umbrella coverage. Nice new houses will be built, but there will be no community to serve them. That would be a disaster of the first order. However, if there is proper consultation, the scheme can be made to work effectively.

We cannot say, "Here is a geographical area on which we will spend money." That area may need to play a different role. It may need more local government money spent on it, which might not be available at that time. Is it not common sense to negotiate with the local authorities through consultation and then to make the decision? That is the simple and right thing to do.

I do not want to go over the brief about consultation, but another important aspect of consultation involves the people who will have to live in the homes and whether they can afford the rents. It is possible that the decisions that are made may prove impossible for the people who have to live with them and whom one would like to serve—for example, the poorer sections of the community—because the prices may be suitable for middle-class people only. If that is the case, the middle classes will move in and the people whom we all want to help will be unable to live in those properties.

9.30 am

I am trying to suggest the best ways in which I think we can approach this issue. I hope that when these matters are considered, through consultation, the Minister will give some thought to private estates in northern mining areas. They may be attached to public sector land. Perhaps, through good consultation, people could be approached and the standards of those houses improved. There is nothing wrong with that.

I am sticking to the substance of the amendment and saying, "Let us have good consultation." If a man is worth his salt, he can consult. If a man is worthy of a public position he can carry the people with him. If the Secretary of State has any faith in himself, he will accept the amendment because he will take up the challenge, knowing that the people with whom he will deal will want to do their best for local people. I suggest that on this occasion the Secretary of State should agree to support our worthy amendment.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Secretary of State is welcome. By my calculation he made his premiere 14¼ hours after the beginning of this section of our debates, and was encouraged——

Mr. Ridley: I sought to intervene early, in the debate on the fifth group of amendments. I do not think that I can be blamed if that comes rather later than it might have done.

Mr. Hughes: The Secretary of State is perfectly entitled to make that point. I suppose one could say that when, out of the 250 amendments, 119 are Government amendments we are making relatively solid progress when, by my calculations, we have gone through 46 groups of amendments on Mr. Speaker's selection, with the remaining 114 still to discuss. I do not know when we calculate that at this rate we shall be going home to bed or to breakfast. It may not be for some time yet.

The Secretary of State was being encouraged to open the box. He did not, but he stirred the House into some sort of life. I suppose that he and the Prime Minister together at 8.30 in the morning are enough to stir anybody into life after a long night. It certainly sounded as if we were having a hornet's nest opened, even if it was not the box.

The Secretary of State made some illuminating if not altogether consistent revelations, as far as one can judge from any normal use of the English language. First, he said what the procedure would be—I think that we are all grateful to him for clarifying that. He said that he would decide on prospective housing action trusts, consult on the proposals and then an order would be made.

I have taken a different view from that expressed so far by Opposition Members. I think that it is better to discuss the principle without knowing the specific sites, otherwise one gets bogged down in discussions of those sites. It is sensible to discuss the idea and its general application first.

I had hoped that the Secretary of State would clarify whether relatively small, concentrated areas are to be grouped together—for example, one area for one place, such as one side of the river in the development corporation in London, or whether he still envisages a series of small islands that would come under one housing action trust and be spread over a wider area.

I hope that the Secretary of State will reconsider amendment No. 87. I smiled somewhat at the second of the three phases described by the Secretary of State—the consultation on proposals, or "Dear Occupier" letter. It sounded like *Reader's Digest*: "You have been singled out. You are the lucky recipient of our unique, once and for all offer. You, dear reader, are one of the people who will now qualify to fill in the form for the prospects of a jackpot." The reader will be given the golden key to a rather uncertain door. I am glad to know that the letters have been drafted and the word processors have been at work. No doubt some lucky people will soon receive the letters. I do not object. If the Secretary of State thinks that people in part of my borough, Liverpool, Manchester or elsewhere should be the beneficiaries of Government funding, I would not resist.

The Secretary of State said, rightly, that one should not resist the idea of the Government coming to the rescue of some of our worst estates. I resist, however, the idea of it being a uniquely Government operation and a complete takeover, if the Secretary of State wishes. The right hon. Gentleman resists amendment No. 87, which refers to a majority of persons consulted opposing their area being designated, even though he said a few minutes ago that the orders would be made "with the consent" of the tenants and said, even more tellingly, "Let them have what they want." If the principle of the Bill is revealed between 9 and 10 o'clock on the third day of the Report stage as being, "Let the tenants have what they want," there must be substantial redrafting. For example, we must accept this amendment and amend part IV and have a voting system that conforms with normal procedures, whereby majorities mean majorities, minorities mean minorities and property cannot be transferred from the public sector to another sector by a vote of none in favour and less than half against.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): And a vote from the dead.

Mr. Hughes: "And the dead," as my hon. Friend chimes in from a position which, compared to where I am, looks like the grave.

I accept that the tenants should be given a fair choice and allowed to consider the options. I am not against the Government coming in with additional money to bail out some of the worst estates. It is imperative that that is done in co-operation with local authorities and local people. In an interview reported in the *Local Government Chronicle* in December, the Minister for Housing and Planning said:

"It has to be done with local understanding."

Ms. Primarolo: In Committee, when replying to questions on the attitude of tenants who were forcibly transferred to housing action trusts, the Minister said that housing action trusts could not work effectively if either the local authority or the tenants disagreed to the trust being set up—a very unambiguous answer. The Secretary of State, giving us his brief definition of consultation, said that he "hoped" to get the tenants' agreement, not that it was necessary to do so. The right hon. Gentleman has confirmed that tenants will be compulsorily transferred, so the consultation is a sham, whether or not there is an individual letter.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Lady is right to point to the validity of amendment No. 87, which I support, because it says clearly that if after consultation the majority of the persons consulted are opposed, it should not go ahead. Like the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who opened the debate, I speak with relative authority because I represent part of a development corporation area imposed on a substantial number of my constituents without their consent, which proceeded, under orders put forward by the Secretary of State and approved by the House, to take land from the local authority. Then planning decisions were taken by non-elected members of, originally, a secret although subsequently an open committee that was in no way accountable to the local community. The Secretary of State may be the court of appeal, but he is also involved in the court of first instance, because he appoints everybody who sits on it and he can remove the members when he wishes. So it is an appeal to the same person with a different face.

Mr. Spearing: I hope that the Secretary of State will intervene if I get this wrong. Does the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) agree that in respect of the LDDC the right hon. Gentleman is more than a court of appeal? In March 1987, prior to any formal planning application, he made a great statement about what the planning arrangements for the royal docks should be. He did that as an initiator giving directions to the LDDC. He now finds himself in the formal statutory

position of being possibly an adjudicator on a formal planning application. Of course, he can say that it is in accordance with Government policy which he made for that area over a year ago.

Mr. Hughes: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is ironic that our debates were graced by the Prime Minister for half an hour just when we were debating for the first time on Report the creation of more quangos. This is the very Prime Minister who said on coming to office in 1979 that she wanted fewer quangos and less direct Government involvement on the backs of the people. The reality is that more and more quangos have been set up, with all the members appointed by Ministers or Secretaries of State, and at the end of the day they have to do as the Secretaries of State tell them.

The structure, electoral systems and so on of local government might need to be amended. Local government is not perfect, but at least it is a separate, autonomous and independently accountable tier which can represent people without always having to bow to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Alton: Although I agree strongly with what my hon. Friend has just said about the need for accountability and the need for local government to ensure that local residents and tenants have the chance to make as many decisions as they can about the running of their estates, does he agree that sometimes tyranny is exercised by local government? To take the city of Liverpool as an example, the wishes of tenants have often been ignored when the local authorities have wanted to establish something like a housing co-operative. Surely the key is the need for greater local accountability, with more resources. If tenants are to take over in a place like Liverpool, where there are 6,000 empty properties owned by the local authority, it is pointless unless resources are given to the council to enable it to take over the properties and improve them as the tenants would wish.

Mr. Hughes: Not only is my hon. Friend right, but he speaks with the authority of someone who has chaired one of the largest housing authorities in the country. During his time in office in Liverpool one of the keynotes of the administration was that tenants were given much more choice.

If it were true, as the Secretary of State asserts, that the principle of the Bill is to let tenants have what they want, whether they be under the control of local authorities, housing associations or private sector landlords, I would not object to the substantive part of the Bill. The tragedy is that often it will not be a case of letting them have what they want in a free and democratic way, but "Let them have what I arrange that they will have unless they violently and cleverly manage to object."

There was an extraordinary postscript to the debate in the other substantive comment of the Secretary of State. He gave us a new definition of the word "retrospection" and the concept "retrospective". Clause 56(3) provides:

"Consultation undertaken or steps taken before the passing of this Act shall constitute as effective compliance with subsection (1) or subsection (2) above as if taken after that passing."

The Secretary of State defined that as being not retrospective. The reality is that any legislation stating that action taken before it became law will count as though it was lawful is by any definition retrospective—and I am sure would be adjudicated as such by any court of law.

The Secretary of State may use his authority and that of his Government to change most things, provided that he has Parliament's approval—but he does not yet have the power to change the definition of words, however hard he might try to persuade the House otherwise. Subsection (3) clearly intends that consultation undertaken before the enactment of the Bill will count as if it had occurred after the Bill became law.

I do not necessarily say that the Government could not as a matter of policy rather than legislation decide that their interpretation would apply. However, the Secretary of State should be honest enough to tell the House that the provisions of the Bill, as in so much legislation these days —probably more than in the past—are retrospective, and seek to enforce retrospectively that which only ought to be done after the day the Bill receives the Royal Assent.

A little more light has been thrown on the subject of housing action trusts, but we still do not know when they are to be, where they are to be, or quite what they are to be. The hope of those speaking in support of the amendments is that action groups will not be imposed on those who do not want them, but that instead one should, to quote the Minister of State,

"Let them have what they want."

9.45 am

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): For most of the time that the Bill has been debated on the Floor of the House and in Committee I have been engaged in work on other Bills and have not had an opportunity to intervene. Therefore, I welcome this opportunity to participate in the debate, albeit at an unusual hour.

In my area the Bill has caused fear, confusion and anger. The Secretary of State, in a remarkable intervention, spoke of giving people what they want. He went on to make it clear that it is a case, not of giving the people in the houses what they want, but of giving the Secretary of State what he wants and thinks is good for them.

Before I entered the House I was the first secretary of the Banks of the Wear co-operative housing association, which is now of great standing in the north-east. It is the first-step association for a very large number of subsidiary housing co-operatives. During my work for that association—which was some time ago—I learnt the hard way what consultation and involving people in real choice about their housing needs is all about.

At that stage the housing association was working in the Sunderland area, but it now operates throughout the region. Banks of the Wear is committed to letting people have just what the Government have talked about—quality housing at a price that they can afford, and over the quality of which they have some control.

I was dismayed when I read clause 56, because it appears that the Government have learnt nothing from the lessons taught by organisations such as the Banks of the Wear, as well as by local authorities, about the manner in which consultation should be undertaken and choice expanded.

I should not have been surprised, because the other Bill with which I have been involved is the Education Reform Bill. In that measure, too, the Government talked about choice, but when we examined it in detail we recognised that it would remove and restrict choice. That will be precisely the effect of clause 56.

[Ms. Hilary Armstrong]

The amendment begins to spell out ways in which tenants may have some minor reassurance that proper consultation will take place. However, consultation is a poor substitute for democracy. Consultation is a poor second best to giving people some control and proper choice through the ballot box. I am horrified that the Government, despite all their fine words, reject that opportunity.

The Government could have taken the opportunity to recognise that in the past eight years they have so starved the public and private rented sectors of resources that things really are in a sorry state. Because of that starving of resources we now have to inject a lot of money. No Opposition Member would disagree with that. What we would disagree with is the cavalier way in which the Government seek to do that. Far from consulting and involving people in any real choice, the Secretary of State has made it clear to us that he has no intention of properly consulting and involving people, and I am dismayed by that.

I was the secretary of a housing association, but I was also involved in community work, so my professional activity was to enable people to have choice and to teach them how to consult properly. Had the Secretary of State joined the course that I taught and presented his case as an argument for consulting people about their future, I am afraid that he would have had little chance. If he had not learnt quicky, he would have failed the course.

Consultation is important. The Secretary of State cannot dictate the full terms of that consultation, because that would negate the meaning of the word. Consultation is no less a relationship than other relationships, and both sides must have a real involvement in it. The Secretary of State has not given us any flavour of the nature of his involvement, nor has he allowed the tenants, and those with whom he seeks to consult, much control over their involvement.

I ask the Government to reconsider. I do not believe that this matter is less important than the financial arrangements in previous Bills about which the Minister talked. To some people their house is their main form of security. It is the main way in which they can believe that they have a place in the world. It is important to them. To dismiss those important feelings in a cavalier way is not worthy of the Government.

I ask the Secretary of State to have another look at the amendments, which are only minor. They could have gone much further, but they should at least ensure that tenants feel that their wishes, aspirations and concerns are listened to. Whatever the Secretary of State may say, I have heard from tenants' groups and housing associations throughout the country who simply do not believe that what they think matters an iota to the Government.

If there is to be consultation, people must believe that it will mean something. What the Government are saying enables us to give housing associations, local councils and tenants little reassurance that the Government are serious about taking their views into consideration. What will the Government do to ensure that the groups with whom they intend to work will trust them? The evidence to date is that they would be very silly to do so.

However we may feel about how local housing ought to be managed, we know that the Government will not agree. But people will have to continue living in those houses, getting on with their neighbours and developing relationships with their landlords, whoever they may be. They deserve no less than that the Government take them seriously, listen to them and develop a system in which they and we can have confidence. I hope that the Government will begin to listen.

Mr. Corbyn: Both amendments are important. Although I personally wish that the housing action trust proposal were not included at all, I feel that the least that we can do is support the amendments, which at least guarantee some form of consulation and some real say for those who will be affected.

The Secretary of State's peculiar intervention, apparently prompted by a visit by the Prime Minister to make him get up and say something, demonstrated enormous contempt not just for the House but for council tenants up and down the country. The right hon. Gentleman has announced that he will liberate them from the difficulties in which they find themselves. This is the same Secretary of State, in the same Government, who over the past nine years has taken millions of pounds away from local government, penalised authorities that have attempted to improve council estates, threatened them with surcharges when they have spent money on those estates and disfranchised Liverpool and Lambeth councillors for doing precisely what he claims to want to do himself, such as, namely, improve conditions on estates. It is arrogance and contempt of the first order for him to announce that he is to let loose the property boom in the south-east on a number of estates that he has encouraged local authorities to allow to run down.

Council estates are often badly designed because of a cost yardstick imposed by the Department of the very same Secretary of State, which encourages over-dense estates, with a lack of open space, gardens, play facilities, nurseries, creche and shopping facilities and community halls. The Department then has the arrogance to blame local authorities for the estates being badly designed.

I do not entirely exempt all local authorities, architects, planners and councillors for the problems on council estates. I well understand those problems, having been a councillor for many years in the borough of Haringey. But I know perfectly well that our biggest problem with building estates were the arguments with the Department of the Environment about the amount that it would allow us to borrow to build them. The arrogance with which the Government treat those who try to solve the problems is quite breathtaking.

The Government are not proposing to consult tenants about how the estates can be improved. If they wanted to do that they would follow the advice of my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) about proper consultation. If they were serious they would ensure that the tenants had a real and genuine voice in how the estates would be run. Instead, there is a proposal from the Secretary of State, who sits in the splendour of his office in Marsham street, which I understand he visits occasionally between his long holidays and his visits to his country home in his constituency of Cirencester and Tewkesbury.

10 am

Mr. Morgan: My hon. Friend should not mention that.

Mr. Corbyn: I beg my hon. Friend's pardon. I understand that the Secretary of State has several country homes, so he must find it even more difficult to get to his office.

The Secretary of State will decide where the housing action trusts will be set up and what function they will have. Once they have been established, what will they do? What information will be given to tenants already on the housing estates about the work of these quangos? I am sure that the House would be more than happy for the Secretary of State to speak again if he has more information to give us on these points. Will he tell us who will serve on the HATs? The rumours going round at the moment are that all the estates earmarked for HATs happen to be in areas where there is a Labour majority on the local authority and where there is unlikely ever to be anything other than a Labour majority on the authority. We see that as an attempt to remove people's rights to elect a local authority that can do something for them.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The Minister said that it was likely that the areas where HATs would be declared would be known before the Second Reading of the Bill, but we had not heard where they were to be by the time the Bill entered Committee. The Minister then told us that there would be six HATs initially, but he would not say which areas the Government and the Department of the Environment were considering. He then implied—he did not promise and I do not want to put words into his mouth—that we would know which areas were under consideration before the Bill left this place. I wonder whether the Secretary of State will tell the House, the country and the tenants affected exactly where the Government are looking and where the HATs will be. The Secretary of State pretends to believe in consultation. Will he have the courtesy to give us that information?

Mr. Corbyn: Earlier valiant efforts were made by my hon. Friends the Members for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) to entice that information from the Minister. We understand that the Department of the Environment is spending money, but is failing to consult tenants in Manchester on the possibility of a Hulme estate becoming a housing action trust. That is like a colonial governor arriving at an estate telling the tenants that they may have a new landlord soon, although he is not sure who, how he will behave or what he will do. With all the arrogance of a colonial governor, the DOE is duly consulting those tenants and telling them what is happening. The Secretary of State failed to answer our questions earlier, and presumably he will fail to answer them now. That is not good enough.

We are entitled to know who and what kind of person is likely to be appointed to a HAT and what salary that person is likely to receive. The Government are perpetrating a growing trend of demonstrating their contempt for local democracy by setting up urban development corporations or, in the case of London, the LDDC, by paying a property speculator a salary that most people could only dream of if they won the pools twice over, to destroy the power of elected local government and so bring a property bonanza into that area. Are we to see Tory party entrepreneurs promoted to chairs of local HATs to take over estates, to dispose of such property as they think fit, doubtless with the permanent and ongoing agreement of the Secretary of State?

Mr. Cummings: My hon. Friend referred to urban development corporations. I understand that the profits will go back to the Treasury. We have experience of this both with development corporations looking after housing assets in new towns and with the disposal of industrial assets, where moneys have gone back to the Treasury. None of that money has been directed towards dealing with housing defects in the new towns, nor was the Treasury prepared to release funds for extra finance to further industrial development through the provision of extra factory units. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a disgrace and that once again the Treasury—Mr. Money Bags—will gain at the expense of tenants?

Mr. Corbyn: I agree with my hon. Friend, who is right to point to what is in effect a new form of double taxation. It is a remarkable invention of the Tory Government. A local authority retains the debt charges on the transferred estates, which are paid to the City—and they are considerable, running into millions of pounds—the housing action trust is established with a right to dispose of and sell such assets as it sees fit, and once it has subtracted the considerable salaries of the HAT members money will be transferred back to the Government. Local people, from a declining rate base, because of the abolition of domestic rates and the imposition of the poll tax, and on a declining income base, are expected to pay the debt charges of an estate that they have built, which is handed over to a HAT, which can sell it on to a bunch of property speculators, who can winkle out poorer tenants to create a paradise for the upwardly mobile so beloved of the Tory party.

If anyone doubts that that process can happen, I advise him to visit council house blocks in Wandsworth, which were built by the London county council before the war in a determined effort to solve London's housing crisis. They have now become city homes for part-time dwellers who mess about on the stock exchange during the week. That is not what those houses were built for or what public money was spent for, yet that is what they are now used for. There is a direct correlation between that process of creating double housing for the wealthy and people sleeping in cardboard boxes under Charing Cross and Waterloo stations every night. That is the sort of society that the Secretary of State loves to live in. He loves to drive in his chauffeur-driven car past those people sleeping on the streets because they cannot afford anywhere to live in his meritocratic Britain. That should be treated with contempt.

To add to that arrogance, the Government do not even propose properly to consult people on the transfer of their area to a HAT. The Secretary of State will impose a HAT on an area, he will listen to the local authority view, proceed to ignore it, as in the case of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham when the LDDC was established, and proceed wih the HAT.

Despite the best efforts of the popular newspapers to deny people information about the Bill and the dangers of HATs, a whole new network of information has developed

[Mr. Corbyn]

of people in tenants associations, housing organisations, and campaigns to inform other council estates of just how dangerous this legislation is for them.

After Second Reading I wrote to every tenants association in my constituency explaining the Bill, what I considered to be the dangerous points of it, and offering to meet them to discuss it. Anyone who has been involved in work with tenants associations will know that normally a meeting is not a high point in life. Often only a small number attend, unless there is a particular problem on the estate. There have been massive meetings on every estate. They were not clamouring for an alternative landlord or for a property company to run their estate. They were asking what they could do to keep them out and prevent a HAT, what form of consultation was open to them and how they could influence the Secretary of State. I have to explain that we shall do everything that we can to demonstrate our total opposition to the imposition of HATs, but that the legislation is so established that a quango will be set up with the approval of the Secretary of State. My constituency has experience of such quangos and it has no public representatives in any elected position other than those from the Labour party. The Conservative party, however, has managed to contrive a sympathetic majority on the health authority by bringing in people from outside. That is the model that the Government will seek to copy if they are allowed to establish HATs.

A local development company wants to undertake some work around Finsbury Park, to adapt the Rainbow theatre for other things and to develop a shopping and industrial complex nearby. When the company, CIL Ltd., put forward its proposals it decided that it would also like to take over the Six Acres and Harvist estates. They were to be used partly to provide car parking for those using the local shopping facilities. That company's plans represent a precursor of my idea of a HAT and who it intended to serve. It was interesting that there was a massive turnout of the residents of the estates at public meetings. They told the developer that they did not want him to run their estates. Although the residents had many complaints and problems with the local authority's management of the estates, they understood that when an elected local authority was running the estate they could get at councillors and at the local authority. They had some influence.

Many of the residents had previously lived in private rented accommodation and they knew full well that once the management of an estate was transferred from a local authority to a trust and then on to a property company they would have no influence. They were determined to stay with the local authority, despite the contemptible way in which that authority has been treated by the Government, who have continually cut resources for housing repairs, improvements and developments.

Three blocks are in the process of being rehabilitated on the Six Acres estate, but the Secretary of State has now refused to sanction the order to rehabilitate the fourth block. That has created an apartheid system because the residents of the three blocks will enjoy reasonable housing but that will be denied to the residents of the fourth block.

Mrs. Wise: Has my hon. Friend noticed that clause 68 provides for the Secretary of State to be able to dissolve a HAT if he feels that it is expedient to do so? In the unlikely event of a HAT proving responsive to tenants' wishes, no doubt the Government would dissolve it and transfer its functions to yet another quango that could be kept sufficiently tame.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend is correct. The same practice is adopted for health authorities, which are quangos, apart from the local authority representatives sitting on such authorities.

I remember when the health authority in Brent said that it was not prepared to close the Neasden hospital to please the Secretary of State. A great tussle took place and the members of that authority were thrown out of office, even though they had been appointed by the Secretary of State. The same practice will operate in relation to a HAT to ensure that, just in case, by some miracle, a quango from whatever source, decided to be responsive to the needs of local people and not sell off estates and make the place fit for the property companies to move in, the Secretary of State can remove that quango from office. That is the system of government that will be introduced by the Bill.

Our amendments would at least ensure that local authorities were able to express a definitive point of view regarding the establishment of HATs. I cannot imagine any circumstances in which a local authority, unless it was mad, would support the establishment of a HAT, because it would be stuck with the debt charges for buildings that already exist and might lose particular estates.

Although the Bill refers to housing action trusts playing a part in solving the problems of homelessness and overcrowding, unless I have missed something in it—hon. Members who served on the Standing Committee will correct me if I am wrong—the trusts would not have the same statutory responsibilities as local authorities to house people under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. This is a generosity of spirit approach. I imagine that a housing action trust that gets an estate ready to sell off will not want to become too involved in bringing to the estate a lot of homeless families who want to buy the houses they are being put into. That represents yet another diminution of opportunities for the homeless.

10.15 am

If this process goes on, before this Parliament is out the same Secretary of State will arrive at the Dispatch Box to propose the suspension or repeal of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act. Many authorities are already in breach of their statutory undertakings because they do not have the homes into which to put people. Our amendments are basic and central to what we are trying to achieve which is to give tenants the right at least to have a say in what goes on in their own estates.

I shall quote briefly from the Conservative manifesto on which the Tories fought the last election. It says that the Conservative Government

"will give people greater choice and responsibility over their own lives",

and continues:

"Our goal is a capital owning democracy of people and families who exercise power over their own lives . . . They would take the important decisions as tenants . . . rather than having them taken for them . . . People want to decide such things for themselves . . . This Government has made it easier for people to decide such things for themselves."

What contemptible hogwash. The Tories say that in an election campaign, under the spurious cloak of freedom for those with money and enslavement for those without it, and propose now to direct that certain estates be taken

away from local authorities and handed over to housing action trusts, and the one group of people who are to have no say in the matter are the tenants who live on the estates. That is the pass to which the Bill has brought us.

The establishment of housing action trusts, the powers that they would have and the need for people to be consulted are important issues. The schedules to the Bill deal with the way in which the trusts will operate but are extremely vague about their constitutions, for example. They seem to give all the powers to the Secretary of State. The schedules are vague about remuneration, too. Will people on salaries of £50,000 a year, or more, take over big estates?

The schedules also mention staff, but say nothing about the conditions in which they will work. If staff are taken over from local authorities by housing action trusts, will they be employed on local authority conditions? I am sponsored by the National Union of Public Employees, which includes a large number of members who work on housing estates—cleaners, caretakers, porters, lift repairers and all the maintenance workers that are necessary on estates. Are we to assume that behind the Bill lies an attempt to privatise many of the estates' services, to remove local authority conditions and the rights of trade unions to negotiate conditions for their members, and to replace them by new sorts of negotiations or imposed working practices? This is a Trojan horse that will destroy the living conditions of a large number of local authority staff who are already low-paid.

Mr. McCartney: I ask my hon. Friend not to read too much into what appears on the face of the Bill. I remind him of the publication by the Government on Thursday morning of the proposals for the selling of council property, albeit in the first instance with the tacit support of the local authority. In the context of that White Paper, there is a clear indication that it would be ultra vires for the local authority and whoever buys the property to make arrangements for the transfer of the staff or for the contracts to be continued by staff of the local authority. That is even worse than what is on the face of the Bill. There is a taking away of any right to continue the work or even to tender for the work.

Mr. Corbyn: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to that. I was much involved in the transfer of former GLC housing estates to London boroughs. I was a negotiator on behalf of my union, and at that time there was never any suggestion, even from the Tory-controlled GLC, that there would be anything other than continuity of employment and recognition of past employment practices and of the contract of employment and all the working conditions that went with it. Those rights would be protected for individual employees who went to their new employer. There was no question about that.

Then we had the abolition of the GLC and the transfer of staff. For the most part, the paving Bill and the legislation and negotiations that followed recognised continuity of employment and the protection of the employment practices that people had enjoyed while working for the GLC.

Under the Bill an estate could be taken away from a local authority, and apparently the staff on that estate will be given no protection whatever. Once they lose their continuity of employment, they lose the right to go to an industrial tribunal. That is important if people are being winkled out of their jobs by the new housing action trusts to make way for a private maintenance company to come in and run the estate. These are serious matters, but not one word is said about consulting the staff who work on the estates. Tenants will at least get an inkling, but the people who work on the estates are not even mentioned in this matter of the transfer.

The Bill is vague on the question of meetings and procedures. It merely says:

> "The quorum of the trust and the arrangements relating to its meetings shall, subject to any directions given by the Secretary of State, be such as the trust may determine."

Apparently the trusts can do as they like. The Bill also says:

> "The validity of any proceedings of the trust shall not be affected by any vacancy among its members or by any defect in the appointment of any of its members."

Presumably that is a protection against the Secretary of State, who is the most notorious law-breaker in the Government. It does not say anything about the applicability of the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960, which would guarantee that the proceedings were held in public. From my reading of this, for all we know the meetings could be held in secret, and proceedings might not be published or made available to tenants who live on an estate that the housing trust has taken over.

There is much more that is dangerous and bad about this proposal and the lack of consultation that goes with it. If we allow the Bill to go through without making at least this small amendment, which would give tenants a real say about the transfer of their estate, we will allow legal robbery to take place. The trust will be able to take an estate away from a local authority, from the people who built and paid for it. Such estates were paid for, not by the Government, but by local authorities, which borrowed the money with the agreement of the Government. That estate will be given to the housing action trust, which will repatriate the profits to the Secretary of State, and the local authority will be stuck with the historic debt charges for the estate. That is the opposite of choice and consultation and the opposite of democracy. I hope that the House will support the amendments.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The Secretary of State is to be invested with massive powers under part III of the Bill. Clause 56 paves the way for those powers. This is consistent with the policy that the Government, and particularly the Secretary of State, are adopting in legislation such as this Bill and the poll tax measures. They give massive authority to the Secretary of State. When I described the Secretary of State in that context as a municipal Mussolini, he thought that it was a term of endearment and did not understand the criticism.

I feel that the powers that are to be exercised over council housing estates and the pushing of them into housing action trusts is a disgrace when the history, achievement and democratic arrangements that surround the operation of council housing are taken into account.

Without the agreement of their elected representatives, or tenants taking part in a ballot, the council housing estates are to be moved into housing action trusts. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) drew an analogy between the provisions and the practices of *Reader's Digest* in consulting people on whether they wish to become readers of that magazine. That analogy was apt, in that sometimes when one has

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

consultations with *Reader's Digest* and one sends the "No" answer back, one still receives the magazine. In this case, the housing action trusts will still be thrown upon residents.

A minimum form of consultation is required in clause 56 before a designation order can be issued by the Secretary of State. However, subsection (3), which amendment No. 308 rightly seeks to delete, allows consultation to take place prior to the Bill becoming an Act. That displays the arrogance of the Secretary of State and the Government, in that retrospective legislation is plainly intended. In fact, the provisions are worse than those that would be found in retrospective legislation, because they deal with matters affecting the present and then operate them only in the future. That assumes that the measure before us will be accepted in total. However, it is possible that legislation dealt with within a parliamentary system will be adjusted, amended or rejected. If that occurred, what would happen under this measure is that the current situation would be affected by legislation, or pieces of legislation, that will never come to fruition. That is not quite the same as retrospective legislation, but is an interference with the current situation by threatening something that will come along in the future. That is not the rule of law under democratic processes, but is something that might better be described as the "rule of Ridley".

Amendment No. 87 seeks a veto for the majority of tenants in an area where they do not want a housing action trust. That is the least that could be expected.

Council housing should be given the proper perspective when we consider this measure. At the time of the first world war working-class people lived entirely in private, rented accommodation—in insanitary hovels. It was because of the desire for housing that the Labour party got off the ground. It was not just because of trade union involvement. There was community involvement to gain decent and improved conditions for many people.

In areas such as Glasgow, the Labour party involved itself in rent strikes in 1916, and the one great success of the 1924 minority Labour Government was the Wheatly Housing Act, which enabled municipal authorities, which were increasingly moving towards Labour—for example, the Sheffield municipal authority—to embark upon council housing provision with the full support of working people, because it was to their benefit and they involved themselves in achieving an improved community. In fact, the gradual pull out of the depression in the 1930s was associated with improvements in housing—and nowhere was that improvement greater than in council house development.

10.30 am

Under the 1945 Labour Government, the insistence on public provision of decent housing within the local government sector was a key element in maintaining standards and the gradual development towards improving provision in society. Labour district councils have a proud housing record, even though they have been hamstrung by excessive interest rates for building council housing, so that money has to be borrowed over 60 years, and by the cuts imposed by the Government. There have also been periodic attacks on council housing through anti-social legislation such as this Bill and the Housing Finance Act 1972. That Act was courageously fought by many people in my constituency, which I am proud to represent. It was also fought by the Clay Cross councillors, supported by their population, by 3,000 tenants in the Chesterfield rural district area and by 25 per cent. of tenants in what was then the urban district of Dronfield. The Bill seeks to crack that heritage. It is part of a fight against the Labour party in local government.

Mr. Cummings: My hon. Friend is well known in my constituency—indeed, he was born there. Will he comment on the plight of the Peterlee council home purchasers association? People bought council properties in good faith, which subsequently were found to be defective. Those people are now being denied funding from financial institutions to renovate their properties and they are finding it difficult to sell them because the same financial institution will not provide mortgage facilities.

The Minister does not want to know. I wonder whether there is any provision within HATs to give some succour to those who, in good faith, entered into——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the Housing Defects Act 1984, which has nothing to do with the legislation before us.

Mr. Cummings: The HATs appear to be directed towards properties that can maximise profit. I want to know how the HATs will deal with home purchasers in their areas. Will it be flesh for one and fish for another?

Mr. Barnes: My hon. Friend has made a fruitful contribution and I hope that the Secretary of State will respond to it. I was especially pleased to give way to my hon. Friend because many of my relatives are his constituents and I know that there is great resentment in his constituency towards this legislation.

The idea lying behind much of the Government's local government legislation—such as the poll tax, the various cuts, the grant and rate capping, the proposed poll tax capping and this Bill—is a political attempt to smash Labour's base. It is a similar tactic to that used in the Ridley plan to take on the trade unions. It is an abuse of parliamentary procedures by a Government who are deliberately changing legislation in an attempt to hammer one element of the political nation for their own political advantage. They do not pursue their views, values and interests and try to capture the support of the people and hit the Opposition in that secondary manner. Instead, they are directly developing plans to perpetuate themselves in office and undermine a significant element of the political nation. The idea of going forward in that way will seriously misfire, because the Government will push housing back to the pre-1914 situation that I have described, with all its hideous effects. As a result, working people will need Socialist-type housing, and that can be provided only by the Labour party. Instead of housing action trusts, we need more local authority housing, cuts in local authority interest rate burdens, restored rate support grants and tenants co-operatives and housing associations set on a decent footing, not as provided for in the Bill.

I am reluctant to mention council housing problems in north-east Derbyshire in case the Secretary of State decides to stick one of his HATs on the area out of pique, against the point that we are making, but there are many

problems. There is a good district council in north-east Derbyshire. It is not an extravagant council, and it looks after the population well and links in well with it. However, it still faces difficulties, one of which is the need for a massive central heating programme.

Some properties have had Parkray fires installed as the first stage of a central heating programme, but the money has not been available later to extend the programme. A nonsensical situation then develops in the winter, with Parkray fires and no central heating. People have to stoke up their fires, open the glass doors and huddle round the fire to keep warm. The water then boils up to such an extent that it has to be run off through the tap rather than going round the central heating system that should have been provided, yet what do we get? We get legislation to introduce water meters and privatisation of the water industry. Mayhem develops and there are cuts and great pressures in those areas, to such an extent that the nonsensical provisions in this measure begin to have a superficial attraction. However, they will not have that superficial attraction in an area such as north-east Derbyshire, where people are aware of the problems that the council faces and see the council as being associated with their interests and the local councillors as being close to the problems.

I hope that the Secretary of State will decide to remove HATs from this measure, give the councils the funds and authority to carry out their duties and help provide secure warm homes for our people at prices that they can afford. I doubt whether that situation will come about, so I can only ask hon. Members to support the amendment.

Ms. Primarolo: These amendments deal particularly with the question of consultation. Two Labour Members have quoted from the Conservative party manifesto for the last general election. That brought groans from the three members of the Government who were in the Chamber at that time. However, it is crucial to this part of the Bill, and we are referring to it because it demonstrates the illusion that the Government are attempting to perpetrate on the British people by trying to persuade them that they are being given a choice and are being consulted, when they are not.

In the announcements that the Government made in the run-up to the introduction of the Bill they talked about tenants being alienated from the landlords, and about accommodation and resource problems. Their solution to all those problems was to give the tenant, whether private, council or housing association, the right to choose and the right to have responsibility.

In a speech in Bristol the Minister for Housing and Planning made several assertions that go directly to the heart of these amendments. He said:

"Until recently, no-one seems to have stopped to ask: houses owned by whom? Built where? According to what ideas about how people like to live?"

I hate to disabuse the Minister, but we have a long housing history, through the Addison Acts, the Wheatley Acts and through the work of the Ministry of Reconstruction, which looked at exactly those questions. Indeed, local authorities have a long history of examining the way in which they run their council housing stock. We have never said that everything in the local authorities is hunky-dory. We know that it is not and that there are severe problems with design, location and, at times, the management of the housing stock. Local authorities are attempting to change their management and design practices to overcome those problems.

One way of overcoming the problems is through the key idea of consultation, partnership and involvement. To be consulted, one needs to have information to be able to make judgments about whether one wants to be in a housing action trust. Much earlier this morning the Minister of State said that the consultation would be split into two areas. The first would be consultation with the local authorities and the tenants involved on whether the housing action trust would be set up.

The Minister gave three phases. First, a prospective area would be declared unilaterally by him. Secondly, there would be consultation which, according to the example that he gave, would be in the form of a "Dear Occupier" letter. The Minister did not tell us whether that letter would have a tear-off slip, or whether the tenants would be asked to respond on what they thought about the housing action trust—just that the tenants would be informed and that there would be a draft letter. *[Interruption.]* I am prompted to say that the Minister did not tell us the number of languages in which the letter might be written to help to ensure that people understand what their rights are if their mother tongue is not English. That point would deal with specific queries that were raised last night about ways of dealing with the Race Relations Act 1976. Then the Secretary of State will decide.

In response to some of the points raised by Opposition Members, the Minister said that the consultation about the ways in which the housing action trusts would function would involve their aims and the ways in which they would negotiate with their tenants once they were running. He said that those questions would be for the housing action trust to decide and consult on after it had been set up. Clearly, before tenants decide whether they want to be in a housing action trust, they need to know exactly what it will do.

10.45 am

The Opposition have referred a great deal to consultation. I looked up the definition in the dictionary, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) had assured us that even the Secretary of State could not rewrite definitions. "Consult" means:

"ask, question, interrogate, canvass, confer, discuss, deliberate, refer to, turn to, seek advice from. consider, regard, respect"—

and, most important—

"take into account."

The three-point explanation from the Secretary of State did not deal with that definition. It appears that the Government's definition of consultation is, "Your choice is what we tell you. Your responsibility is what we as a Government decide is best for you." The Minister for Housing and Planning has made great play in many speeches—including the speech in Bristol and his comments in Committee—of the idea that there had been cataclysmic mistakes in housing and planning policy throughout this century and that the Department of the Environment and local authorities should take their share of the responsibility, so we are to have housing action trusts as the experiment.

The legislation learns nothing from the errors of expenditure and of excluding tenants from actively participating in the management, design and maintenance

[Ms. Primarolo]

of their homes. It does exactly what the Minister claims this "great piece" of legislation will not do—it dictates another formula to be followed through in housing. This is to be done in secrecy and with the minimum of publicity.

I remember, although I do not know why, a prominent member of the Government who made her maiden speech on 5 February 1960, the subject being the access of tenants and members of the public to information, publicity and council meetings. I am sure that every hon. Member endorses the practice of giving the public access. I shall not read the speech to the House, although I am sure that the right hon. Lady would be flattered if I did. The main points of the speech were that people needed information to make decisions. To exercise choice and responsibility, people needed information. To control those who made decisions on their behalf, they needed information and to be consulted and to participate. The right hon. Lady concluded her maiden speech with a sentence with which I entirely agree:

"the paramount function of this distinguished House is to safeguard civil liberties rather than to think that administrative convenience should take first place in law." —[*Official Report*, 5 February 1960; Vol. 616, c. 1357.]

That was the concluding sentence of the Prime Minister's maiden speech.

One aspect of civil liberties is the right of people to say what will happen to their homes, especially when they are being conned by the Government into believing that they have a choice and will be able to exercise responsibility, when they will not be able to do so.

Mr. Bradley: An excellent survey undertaken by Manchester's housing research section revealed that 93 per cent. of council tenants in a HAT area expressed a preference to remain with the council rather than be transferred to a HAT. Eighty-nine per cent. of those responding thought that HATs were a bad idea and wished to remain as local authority tenants, come what may.

Ms. Primarolo: I have seen that survey and am pleased with its findings. It confirms what was said earlier by the Secretary of State when he mentioned a survey into the choice that tenants would make. The Secretary of State said that 21 per cent. of tenants would choose some form of social landlord. Presumably the term "social landlord" itself was not used, but interviewees would have named building societies, and so on. The Secretary of State said also that 21 per cent. of those interviewed required more information. He did not say what information that was. Presumably he did not know because he had not asked.

However, that leaves 52 per cent. of interviewees. The Secretary of State did not provide the House with any further figures, so presumably those 52 per cent. are the people who would vote against the transfer. That shows that the Government have no intention of learning from their mistakes, of making any adjustments, or of implementing an open government system as they claim they wish to do. What the Government are about is asset-stripping local authority housing stocks through the creation of housing action trusts and passing on as much of the burden as possible to——

Mrs. Wise: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it customary for Government Members, including the Minister, to take no notice whatsoever of an hon. Member's speech, but to conduct a conversation with much hilarity?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Common courtesy should be extended to whomsoever is addressing the House at the time.

Ms. Primarolo: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I can only assume that Government Members are experiencing extreme alienation.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for both the Under-Secretary of State and the Secretary of State to carry on behaving oafishly, as they have done for most of the morning, when an hon. Lady is addressing the House on this very important Bill?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is a matter of common courtesy that hon. Members should have the tolerance to listen to all views, whether they be popular or unpopular, and irrespective of the speaker's sex.

Ms. Primarolo: Thank you again, Madam Deputy Speaker. I certainly agree with your sentiments. Such a courtesy should be extended to any hon. Member, and not just on the basis of sex. Perhaps that behaviour indicates what a very long night some hon. Members have had—including you, Madam Deputy Speaker—whereas other hon. Members have arrived fresh, having not participated, simply to cause problems in the debate. I refer, of course, to Government Members.

Under the guise of bestowing rights, and by trying to persuade tenants that they would be better off, the Government are establishing a formula for asset-stripping local authority housing and potentially putting at risk the remaining tenants, who could be faced with rent increases because of the unsatisfactory relationship between the methods of payment for those houses. I shall not discuss that now, because other amendments deal with the subject.

Ministers do not understand the definition of consultation. They are prepared to mislead and deceive the electorate with their "newspeak", saying that householders will have choices, whereas they will not. They claim to be introducing radical legislation that has learnt from all the mistakes of the past, but it has not. They make speeches without understanding properly the history of housing in this century. Within about five or six hours, albeit in the early hours of this morning, the Secretary of State and the Minister for Housing and Planning gave conflicting answers to the House. One minute the Government were trying to imply that tenants would not be forced against their will into housing action trusts, and the next minute they were saying, "But we hope that we can get agreement." There was no mention of whether the local authority should agree with it, or of the workers in that authority. There was no mention of proper democratic rights so that, at the end of the process, people would be able to control and participate in the management of their homes.

The only way in which this sham can be partly improved—unfortunately, it cannot be defeated completely—is to accept the Opposition amendments. If they are not accepted, it will be clear that the Government are trying to experiment with people's homes and their security, misleading them as to their rights and to what they may have in the future, simply to prove an

unaccountable doctrinal point. We do not want the Government to perform such experiments on the British people.

I hope that this group of amendments will be accepted and that we shall make the subsequent amendments to the housing action trusts to ensure that they are not a con or a form of asset-stripping. Most important, we must ensure that housing action trusts do not steal the money and assets that working people have invested in their council houses and give them to individuals for private profit.

Mr. McCartney: In Committee I dealt with this issue at length and discussed the principle behind the Government's concept of freedom and housing action trusts and how that tied up with urban development councils and what happened in previous legislation.

When discussing amendment No. 87, we should start with the White Paper published at 9 o'clock last Thursday morning entitled "Large Scale Voluntary Transfers of Local Authority Housing to Private Bodies." Paragraph 8 deals with protecting the interests of existing tenants and consultation with tenants. This is the commitment given by the Secretary of State:

> "Under Section 6 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986, existing secure tenants of the local authority must be consulted before consent is given; and the disposal must not go ahead if a majority of the tenants affected oppose it. This Section does not apply to disposals to registered housing associations (although the current Housing Bill will change this) but the Secretary of State will normally expect the same rules to be followed even in these cases. The Dept of the Environment and the Welsh Office have issued a circular (6/88) which explains how Section 6 procedures should be operated."

Less than a week ago, at the beginning of the Report stage, the Government—without consultation, except with local authorities—issued a document about the large-scale transfer of local authority housing to bodies other than housing action trusts. They have given a commitment identical to that demanded by my hon. Friends for the past four hours in respect of HATs.

11 am

If the Government are not yet again to be faced with a complete dichotomy of view, we must depend on the measures that they decide to take to divest local authorities of housing stock. Local authority tenants may be consulted, and there may be a ballot to prevent them from being transferred to landlords not of their choice. Unfortunately, HAT tenants will be transferred without any real consultation or any consideration being given to their rights and wishes.

The north-west has seen the abolition of Greater Manchester and Merseyside metropolitan authorities. There is a link between what is happening in the metropolitan districts and the imposition of UDCs. Without any major abolition Bills being brought before the House, the Government are slowly but surely abolishing local government from large parts of the north-west, Tyne and Wear and other metropolitan areas. Without having presented the electorate at the general election with another proposal to abolish metropolitan district councils, the Government are now using such measures as UDCs and HATs to denude the local electorate—and through the electorate the elected members of local authorities—of many local government services currently provided through democratic accountability.

The Government fail to understand what is happening in local authorities. HATs are not unique. The Government are prepared in other circumstances to abolish the role of local government in the provision of services. What they do not say is that there are other means of providing far more democratic accountability.

Let me tell the Minister how tenants' consultations are dealt with in my local authority and relate that to what is happening in a London authority, with the Government's assistance. I should also like to discuss what is happening, in my constituency and others, to mining communities, with the connivance of the Government and British Coal.

I do not argue that everything is rosy in Wigan metropolitan borough council, that a mistake has never been made in its housing policies or that it does not wish to amend parts of its housing policy. But the borough has a sophisticated means of genuine consultation with residents and tenants, involving day-to-day housing management, the repairs programme, the allocation of resources in the community, the environmental strategies and the delivery of support services on priority estates and in designated housing action areas. That applies not just to council housing but to the concept of consultation with residents outwith the council housing stock. The arguments about HATs are not just about transferring local authority assets to the trust. In some larger trusts, houses in the private sector may also be included within the trust's boundaries. It is important to argue for the right of all tenants in the community, not just council tenants, to have a say in the development of support services for housing.

Wigan metropolitan borough council has designated 17 areas of major social and environmental deprivation on council housing estates. In addition, we have a rolling programme of housing action areas in our mining villages and townships where, because of its decay, the private sector has failed to pick up and improve the environment and housing conditions. The local authority has a long-term investment policy for upgrading, through housing action areas and the grant system, to improve the whole aspect of housing in the private sector.

That involvement has been achieved with the consent of the residents. I want to highlight the nature of that consultation and show how we developed an idea about a policy change through to the inception of the policy and how that policy is carried out with the consent and involvement of residents. In identifying the housing needs of the community—in this instance local authority estates—the first action is taken at a meeting of local authority tenants' representatives, local authority officers in the main departments involved and the local elected councillors to establish the priorities for that estate. Following the establishment of the principles of the priorities for the estate, an initiative group is made up of elected members and representatives of the local authority departments, tenants' organisations and outside agencies such as the Health Service, community nursing, the police and other community groups, including the probation service. It is the job of that initiative group to agree a programme of consultation, and a time scale for that consultation, with the residents on the estate. It must produce a draft report to highlight the issues that must be considered with the residents. It must decide what is to be achieved at the end of the consultation and the basic priority report to be presented to the next session of the residents' meetings. Following the work of the initiative

[Mr. McCartney]

group, a preparatory report is prepared for tenants' and residents' meetings. Those meetings are held on the estate or in a designated housing action area.

The housing action area on the estate is broken down into zones so that consultation may take place in a meaningful sense with groups of residents in a block of flats or a street of flats, and there are no huge meetings involving 200 or 300 people. Instead, people are consulted individually.

The appointment of the chair of the consultation meetings is independent of the local authority, and the decisions of the meeting form the basis of the provisional reports submitted to the local authority. The provisional report will also include provisional plans drawn up by the residents in consultation with the community and landscape architects employed by the local authority.

All the proposals put forward by the residents at the consultation meetings are included in the report submitted by the tenants for the consideration of elected members. The report includes initiatives for the use of land resources on the estate, the use of open spaces for leisure or play facilities, the bringing of derelict land into community use, the fabric of the buildings and the refurbishment of buildings inside and out and the delivery and quality of services provided by the housing department and all other support services working on or around the estate or in the designated housing action area.

Once that preparatory plan has been approved, further tenants' and residents' consultation meetings take place to enable them to give a final view of the provisional report and plans. The local authority then holds a formal meeting with tenants in the residents' association, following which every resident receives a provisional newsletter and an individual letter seeking final views on the proposals to be put to the local authority, the Department of the Environment, the Manpower Services Commission or any other funding agency involved in the refurbishment programme.

That is a detail summation of the way in which Wigan metropolitan borough council deals with its residents and tenants, whether in a local authority housing estate or in the private sector of a designated housing action area. Once the report and scheme have been approved and submitted for financial resources, provisional starting dates are agreed between the residents and the local authority. Dates for reporting back on the progress of the scheme are also approved.

During the scheme a further report is approved for the continuation of consultation with residents about the delivery of services after the completion of any refurbishment scheme. That is vital. Consultations are not just about the scheme during the scheme, but are part and parcel of the delivery of services after the refurbishment programme. Throughout the whole programme a genuine close working relationship grows up between the local authority, its agencies and services with the residents in the community.

It is essential that when the Minister replies to the debate he gives a clear sign whether his Department believes that the type of consultation procedures that Wigan operates is the type that he wishes to see operated by the HATs. I do not say that flippantly. The Department of the Environment is greatly interested in Wigan metropolitan borough council. It has already used two of our estates for training programmes for officers of its Department and for officers of other local authorities. The authority has participated in the production of a Department of the Environment video on consultation procedures and good working practices by local authorities with residents, both in council housing estates and in designated housing action areas. Therefore, the Minister cannot say that he is ignorant of what is going on. The DOE approached the authority of its own volition, asking to study its best practices in order to enlighten Department officers and local authorities about the work done there.

What are the positive results of involving tenants and residents in that process? My constituency probably has the greatest difficulties in the type, age and availability of its housing stock. We have seen a transformation of the private sector over the past six years. In villages such as Spring View we have seen a resurgence of the community and almost 90 per cent. take-up through the housing action area, an elected local representatives' committee with equal representation elected by residents and the local authority, an uptake of grants, environmental improvements, the establishment of a community centre and other developments, and the reintroduction of retail outlets, such as small village shops, doctors and other services. In the past year we have seen on the housing estates of Miller's Lane and, in the Wigan constituency, Norley Hall a transformation in the delivery of services and the involvement of tenants and residents. We have seen the growth of strong, vibrant local residents' and tenants' associations working with the local authority. Even now on the Norley Hall estate we have almost reached the stage where tenants are sitting down annually to work out the budget for the estate and to determine housing and services that are crucial to the development and improvement of the estate's environment. Those are positive results. A true sense of democracy has been introduced. The residents not only have a say in the development of the services and the refurbishment of their estates, but, in the long run, are involved in the day-to-day running of it and the delivery of such services.

11.15 am

As a result of such developments, the community is reinvigorated. People feel part of it and want to live on the estates. There is a dramatic fall in the number of lets on council house estates, as well as a dramatic fall in the number of vacant properties in the private sector. Such advances have been achieved by local authorities, and we must extend them to other local authorities and allow Wigan borough council to extend such achievements to other parts of the borough. The diminution of the resources available for the housing investment programme is not the answer. The HIP allocations to local authorities should be expanded and the Government should adopt a positive approach, give priority to the estate programme developments and encourage positive action by local authorities in conjunction with tenant and resident associations.

In Committee I discussed these matters with the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. I am afraid that, once again, the hon. Lady has absented herself from the Chamber. I do not know whether the hon. Lady has gone back to Finland or whether her absence is a temporary one. Unfortunately, on every occasion when I

seek to grapple with the hon. Lady—if I may use such a word—she seems to disappear. I am aware that in the past three months her fellow Under-Secretary of State for the Environment has been following this debate. I know that he has already met representatives from Wigan borough council and that he intends to visit the area in the summer. I am sure that he is clued up about Wigan and will be able to answer my questions.

In Committee I discussed the problems of sham consultations in respect of HATs. I had got into some difficulty with the Chairman about that. I said:

"I was trying to outline the problems that may arise from sham consultations. Will the Minister consider one practical possibility? A housing action trust may cover more than one estate or area, either within a single borough or across two boroughs. After consultations, the residents of one estate may decide that they would like the HAT to have a neighbourhood office in their area, instead of centralised, bureaucratic control some distance away. If, at that stage in the consultation procedure, the HAT refused that request, would the Secretary of State take action to ensure that a neighbourhood office could be provided to work directly with the tenants or residents?"—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 16 February 1988; c. 881.]

Such action would be essential to ensure consultation and the breadth of services provided by HATs.

In Committee it became clear that the Minister could introduce at a later stage—perhaps not with the six initial HATs—HATs that not only crossed metropolitan and other council boundaries but could be set up within the boroughs so that part of the housing stock could be joined in a housing action trust with the housing stock of another part of the borough.

What happens in a HAT area where there is no current tenant or resident organisation? If the Government are to introduce common sense to their consultation proposals, it is essential that there is a fall-back position. In Wigan, where no current tenants organisation exists the authority, at the outset of the consultation procedure, has, as a matter of principle, assisted in establishing tenants and residents organisations. That ensures that there is a body independent of the authority which can represent the interests and views of the residents so that the consultation procedure is meaningful. In that way a body of opinion exists that represents the residents and if necessary it can negotiate and put across the views of those residents on proposals, not only about the property, but about the environment in which that property is situated.

The Minister should add a little more flesh to the views expressed by the Secretary of State. As well as having examined what happens in Wigan and other local authorities, we should consider, as a forerunner of housing action trusts, the example of Thamesmead. The Government have said on various occasions that, although Thamesmead is not a housing action trust in the terms of the Bill, it is certainly one of the organisations that they would look to as a mirror image of what should happen in a well-run HAT. So it is important to try to outline what has happened so far in Thamesmead and to relate that to what will happen in HATS if there is no real consultation procedure and no meaningful involvement of the residents. They should have a genuine say in what happens on the estate and in the development of policies for the estate —in the management of the housing stock, the development of land resources and the refurbishment of the environment.

The document "Thamesmead in Private Hands" says:

"Thamesmead Town Limited just is not unpopular. The figures from the MORI poll conducted in 1988 show clearly that for the residents of Thamesmead as a whole, not even one fifth of them want their present landlord and show that it was the votes of the owner occupiers in the 1985 ballot who swung the vote against the local authority joint community trust option. The vast bulk of tenants would prefer some form of public ownership."

In January-February 1986, Clive Thornton, the chairman of the board of Thamesmead, promised in an article in a magazine called "Roof":

"I intend to ensure that there is a process of referenda and regular communication even covering such basic issues as rent."

Four months after Thamesmead acquired the estate, it made 5,500 applications to the rent officer for the registration of fair rents. There was no consultation, referendum or regular communication. It was clear from the number of those applications that the action was planned by the company months in advance. So much for the promises of a continuing relationship with the residents and tenants, and so much for the myth of accountability.

The Secretary of State seemed to hint earlier in the debate this morning that HATs could have associations of tenants and residents, but he was not prepared precisely to outline the nature of such bodies. At the back of his mind he may have been thinking about the arrangements in Thamesmead. In the article I referred to earlier, Mr. Thornton also said that he wanted "direct democracy" on Thamesmead. Exactly what that means can be seen from the way in which the operations of the nine community directors are restricted. None of them is an executive director. The company has all the real power, and it consists of Clive Thornton, the chairman, Phillip Glascoe, the chief executive, and a finance director, who is seconded from the National Westminster bank. The nine directors cannot be deselected or reselected for three years. They may not disclose any material relating to confidential items. Although board meetings are public, any item of interest to tenants, such as rents and repairs, is treated as confidential. The community directors may not disclose how they voted on any item, but must uphold the majority decision in public. In practice, that means that there is no way of knowing how or whether they represent their constituencies. The board has control over the election rules, and anyone who leaves it for any reason, such as resignation, cannot run again for election for three years. That prevents any kind of principled opposition being expressed through the ballot box.

That is the type of community forum that will be placed on housing action trusts and on tenants. Through the local government election process tenants have a genuine say in the development and role of their estates and a say in who manages them and represents the tenants. The Bill is not just sham democracy; it is the taking away of democracy and can be likened to what happens in Chile and in other countries where referendums are conducted and then held up as some form of parliamentary democracy. It is a myth to call that accountability. It is in no way acceptable to local authority tenants who have enjoyed the privileges of electing councillors to provide the services.

The Minister must address himself to the crisis in the coalfields in Nottingham and in Lancashire. At the behest of the Government there have been large-scale sales of British Coal property without consultation with the residents. That has left whole communities in a desperate plight. Given the Government's attitude towards housing

[Mr. McCartney]

action trusts, how do they see British Coal's action in terms of consultation? Communities have been disrupted to the point where hundreds of families are living in abject misery. They have no real contact with the new landlord and no say about the repairs policy or about what happens on the estates.

Because of their policies towards British Coal the Government have allowed that situation to fester and there has been disinvestment by British Coal in its housing stock. The British coalfields require an answer to these problems. If what is happening there is indicative of the Government's attitude towards housing action trusts, no wonder tenants in my area are not only worried about the Government's proposals, but fear that they will take away their democratic rights of involvement in the community. They fear that they will lose their real say in what happens in the houses in which they live and in the environment in which the housing stock is placed. It is the development of front-line services that makes a community a living, breathing place for people and not an area for property speculators.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): My constituents do not want to see implemented the policy of selling off their council estates. They want a choice between homes to rent at reasonable rent levels and homes to buy at reasonable prices. They want proper modernisation and security and an end to house price inflation, which is currently being imported into the Nottinghamshire area by speculators. That reduces the chances of local people becoming owner-occupiers. All that they are offered by the Bill, the Tory Government and the local Tory council is the new policy of bodge it and flog it. That is evident in several areas of Nottingham. No new council homes for rent have been built by the Conservative council and waiting lists have been lengthening.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: On a point of order, madam Deputy Speaker. I have been listening carefully to the debate, and the hon. Gentleman's speech does not seem to relate to the amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) has been on his feet for only 40 seconds. He should be allowed to develop his argument.

Mr. Allen: I can understand Conservative Members not appreciating my arguments, but if they care to listen they will find that the truth will out. The local council has also refused to build any new homes for the frail disabled and for the elderly. Houses are cruelly being sold, thus keeping hundreds of disabled people on the special priority waiting list.

The clause and the amendment refer to consultation. In Nottingham, teams of researchers, opinion pollsters, have been crawling round the council estates in Nottingham —in Bestwood, Strelley and elsewhere—asking people what would be the least offensive way for estates to be sold off from under their feet. That is taking place in advance of the passing of the Bill. It appears that the Department of the Environment can act in advance of Parliament. Last week the Tory council planned to sell a block of maisonettes, but that was exposed by the vigilance of local Labour councillors.

It underlines what we said before the general election and last May's local council elections. The Conservatives have continually denied that parts of estates and, under the Bill, whole estates may be sold off. Bradford Court on the Crabtree estate in Bulwell, which is in my constituency, was due to be detopped—which means the removal of the top story of a double maisonette. That raised the condition of that part of the estate to such an extent that the local Tory council took the opportunity of flogging it off. Perhaps more will follow. That took place without the local tenants being notified and without even a letter being sent to say that it was being considered, let alone a proper consultation process, as is embodied in the amendments. It was stopped only because the local Conservative council was found out. It was so embarrassed that it withdrew the proposal at the last meeting of the housing committee. No doubt the proposal will return at the next housing committee if the council feels that the heat is off.

11.30 am

The key question is whether the right to buy council estates as opposed to individual homes will have the same flaws as the individual right to buy. Many people did well out of the right to buy. However, hundreds of my constituents at Bilborough had the right-to-buy carrot dangled in front of them, but cannot now sell their homes. They bought a pig in a poke. No building society will lend on those properties—the BISF steel-framed properties—but the Government, despite representations from myself and my predecessor, have not designated them as defective. My constituents therefore do not qualify for grants to bring their homes up to a mortgageable state. The Tory council, Pontius-Pilate-like, has washed its hands of those people, many of whom are elderly and have quite happily spent between 10 and 30 years as tenants. I beg the Minister—that is not something that I do lightly —to accept the moral responsibility of his party and the Government and make new grants available to assist those victims of the right-to-buy policy.

I ask the Minister, even at this late stage, to withdraw the proposals to sell off our council estates, before ever larger numbers of tenants become victims of the short-term, short-sighted and short-changing approach to public housing in Nottingham and throughout the rest of the country.

Mr. Spearing: I rise to reply on this group of amendments, the first of which I moved at about 6.30 am. I confess that if we were a train we would be about 12 hours late. I was expecting to make this contribution about 12 hours ago. The reason why I did not do so is evident to everybody. Unexpectedly, certainly to Tory Members, the intensity of concern throughout the country has been reflected by my hon. Friends and by the variety of practical examples that they have brought to bear on a practical problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) said that the proto site in Manchester, which might become a housing action trust, was adjacent to an urban development corporation area. He reminded me that the possible site in Newham is also adjacent to an urban development corporation area. Clause 80 enables housing action trusts to get another authority to be an agent for them. That clearly shows a line of policy that the Minister may pursue when transferring housing action trusts to urban development corporations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) mentioned the lack of consultation where one might reasonably have expected it to have occurred. My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) referred to Thamesmead and to the needs of the coalfield areas. My hon. Friends the Members for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) asked how there could be genuine consultation if the Minister continued to resist amendment No. 87.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I should not like the House to go away with the false impression given by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) that Nottingham does not consult its residents. I shall mention just two projects. One is in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, where the tenants were consulted and they decided that they wanted a block of flats to be pulled down. There has been some dispute about what should be put in its place, but the tenants wanted it pulled down.

In our local press the hon. Gentleman has complained about lack of consultation in my constituency. When my constituents were consulted they said that they wanted a block of flats pulled down, and they are coming down. The hon. Gentleman's complaint is a spurious campaign for consultation on something that has not yet even been decided.

Mr. Spearing: I suppose that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman as a stand-in for my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North. I accept my hon. Friend's account of the matter. If the hon. Gentleman feels so strongly about consultation——

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I do.

Mr. Spearing: In that case, the hon. Gentleman should consider the merits of amendment No. 87. I see that he is now hurriedly looking at it. It is only by supporting the amendment that the hon. Gentleman can carry out the Conservative party manifesto, on which he was elected, to consult the people and to give them choice. Unless the House adopts the amendment, which would allow tenants in the proposed HATs to say whether they want them, there will be no fair and effective measure to discover whether they want them. The Secretary of State and the Tory manifesto say, "We will give people choice; we will give them freedom to decide," yet the Secretary of State is resisting an amendment that would provide the very machinery to achieve that. In view of the concern for consultation expressed by the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), I hope that the Secretary of State will not resist the amendment.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way a second time. An hour and a half ago I briefly summarised clause 56, and, because of the criticisms about lack of consultation, I shall now briefly summarise clause 59. If such a trust were asked for in Nottingham, the clause provides that

"The trust shall consult every local housing authority or county council"

and

"shall take such steps as it considers appropriate to secure . . .adequate publicity."

The clause also provides for those who live in the designated areas to be made aware of the opportunity to make representations about those proposals, and states: "the trust shall consider any such representations."

I hope that the House will consider that to be a fair summation.

Mr. Spearing: I regret having given way to the hon. Gentleman, because, as I understand it, clause 59 applies to what the trust will do after it has been set up. It is consultation only about what will happen after that. We want consulation before the order is laid. I fear that the hon. Gentleman rushed into speech a little too hastily because he has not understood the sequence of the Bill.

My hon. Friends were absolutely correct to say that all the Government's protestations about consultation have been shown to be what they called a sham unless, even at this late stage, they accept—although I do not think that they will—amendment No. 87 or give a commitment to introduce a similar amendment. If the Government do not do that, people in another place may do so, and they would be well justified. I commend that course to Conservative Members in the other place so that they can put their manifesto into effect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North referred to the question of staff. One of the great problems in this exercise is to obtain sufficient professional people, and there will be delays. There are always complaints about delays in respect of the Government's proposals for selling off council houses. That is because the number of people buying and selling houses in this enterprise opportunity state has increased enormously. One cannot suddenly pull a lever and change the direction of housing policy literally overnight through legislation and expect that the skills in the communities will operate automatically. It does not work like that. Is it intended to lure staff from housing authorities and from housing associations? Only a limited number of people know about housing management. We all know that it is a difficult task, particularly on the legal side, involving transfers and conveyancing. Solicitors will have a wonderful time. There will, therefore, be considerable difficulties on the staff side.

I wish to deal now with the central points contained in the questions that I put to the Secretary of State in my opening speech. That speech was lengthy, but I think that even he would acknowledge that the matters raised were important, and I was grateful for the way in which he attempted to reply to them. We are facing enormous change. There is the possibility of huge areas of council housing being disposed of to other management without even the tenants' choice being taken into account. In those cases involving individual applications to buy there will be a statutory consultation procedure, which we shall deal with later, but this is something different. This is a wholesale transfer by statutory instrument. Other people have called it a sale, and the property will be disposed of at about half-price.

To children in areas with housing action trusts that will be a confiscation, because they will not have the same access to vacancies as they would have under continuing municipal ownership. *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State asks why not. They will not be entitled to such access because the tenure stipulated in the Bill, with, for example, mixed operations, will not enable local people to go on to waiting lists or to transfer from one type of tenure to another, such as, from a four-bedroomed house to an old person's dwelling next door, thereby allowing another family to move in, to the extent that they can at present.

[Mr. Spearing]

I am rather surprised that the Secretary of State does not realise that. If he does not realise that, he cannot understand a great deal about the matter.

Mr. Ridley: I must protest at that because, even in cases of mixed tenure in succession, it is possible that there will be more dwellings because land can be used that is currently unused or underused. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the site occupied by a tower block can often yield more houses when the tower is pulled down than it does when it is standing up. The hon. Gentleman does not realise that, in those mixed tenures, far more people will exercise their right to buy and, therefore, will not be new purchasers. When a housing estate is made more attractive, many more people buy their homes.

Mr. Spearing: We shall deal later with the objectives of housing action trusts, which bear very much on what the Secretary of State has said. However, I wish to take him up on one particular point—that an increased number of people in a housing action trust area will be able to buy their own properties. He has given me the answer to the point that he raised. Does he not realise that, although that may be no immediate disadvantage to the people in the area, when they come to move or to depart this sorry world, their house becomes vacant? If the house is in municipal ownership, somebody living next door may be on the housing list and might be able to take up the vacancy. However—this is happening all over London at the moment—local people are unable to take up such homes because they cannot afford to buy them. Somebody probably comes in from outside, at the market level, and takes the house. People come to see me in my advice service about such matters.

The Secretary of State should hear practical examples from hon. Members who represent other parts of the country. I advise the right hon. Gentleman—I can give him the precise figure—that there are 300 fewer vacancies in the London borough of Newham every year because the stock available is reduced due to house purchases. Good luck to those who have bought, but that means that there are 300 fewer voids for Newham people every year. That is the answer to the Secretary of State, who has just said that more houses will be available for buying. They will not be available for the people who most need them.

11.45 am

Mr. Allan Roberts: The Secretary of State has also assumed that when problem council estates, such as the Hulme estate in Manchester, or the Marsh Lane estate in my constituency, are taken over by housing action trusts, and when money is spent on them and the nature of the development is altered by design improvements, there will be an increase in the number of dwellings. That is an absolute fantasy. When older council estates, such as those of the mid-1960s, have been improved and developed by local authorities or others in partnership, the aim has been to reduce the density. They have got rid of the maisonettes by decapitation. They have improved the environment by reducing the density. There will not be any increase in the number of dwellings. The Secretary of State does not have any idea of what council estates are like.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend has summed up the issue. I will tell the Secretary of State what one council estate is like. It is in an area that he may have in mind for one of his locations. It is the South Canning Town and Custom House Area of my constituency. The Secretary of State referred to tower blocks a moment ago. That area has eight empty tower blocks. It has 800 empty dwellings in the sky. If some of those blocks have to come down, for reasons that I may be able to explain to the House in a future debate, I assure the right hon. Gentleman that 100 homes will not be built on the site of each of those tower blocks. That would not be physically possible unless one rebuilt the tower blocks, and not even the Secretary of State would do that. What the right hon. Gentleman has said is, in mathematical and housing terms, incorrect. I hope that he will check that with his advisers, because I know that he listens to people with experience. If he checks, he may find that I am a little more correct than he is.

I shall comment on the Secretary of State's speech under the following headings: location, retrospection, consultation, hybridisation and aspects of planning. Those are the headings that I shall use, because they are the headings under which the Secretary of State courteously replied to my questions in an earlier speech. First, on the question of location, the Secretary of State still did not spill the beans about the sites. I take his point that he has no absolute obligation to do so, except that in Committee the Minister for Housing and Planning gave an undertaking. He said:

"The answer is, before the Bill leaves Parliament. While it is before Parliament we shall bring forward our proposals."

That has been repeated by the Secretary of State. The Minister of State continued:

"There will then be a prolonged opportunity to debate them in both Houses."—*[Official Report, Standing Committee G,* 9 February 1988; c. 768.]

I submit that "them" can only mean those locations. I put it to the Secretary of State again that while he may announce those locations before the Bill leaves Parliament, there will manifestly not be a prolonged opportunity to debate them.

I am glad to welcome—rather like a cricket commentator—the entry of the Minister for Housing and Planning at the very moment when I have been quoting what he said in Committee. I fear that the undertaking that he no doubt gave in good faith—I do not blame the hon. Gentleman—has not been fulfilled by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, perhaps for reasons that they can determine between themselves.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Does my hon. Friend agree that one problem with the Minister's undertaking is that the housing action trusts could be announced during the summer recess, before the Bill leaves Parliament? If that happened the measure would still be in line with what the Minister said, but would be an insult to the House of Commons. We should like an undertaking that the HATs will not be announced while Parliament is in recess.

Mr. Spearing: I hesitate to disagree with an hon. Friend. My hon. Friend might be right about an announcement being made, but it might be made after Report and Third Reading. Theoretically we may have an opportunity to discuss it, but only within the bands set by any Lords amendments. Although there may be an opportunity for prolonged debate, I do not believe that there will be any guarantee once we have finished this debate.

The second of my headings is retrospection. The Secretary of State has said that the legilsation is not retrospective because everyone can read what is in the Bill and it is not like a measure that catches a person because it is unexpected or unknown. The Secretary State says that we know about this, so how can it be retrospective? I try to understand the right hon. Gentleman's mind, and to him that seems reasonable. Alas, from a lawyer's point of view—I invite the Prime Minister to pay attention because she is a lawyer, and we certainly know it—it is not a definition of retrospection. It is a description of retrospection; it is a description of some retrospective legislation.

The Secretary of State was right. We have announcements such as the Budget, and we legislate later to take account of or regularise them, but that is not the same. The right hon. Gentleman invites us to endorse

"such steps as appear to him best designed to secure that the proposal to designate the area in question is brought to the notice of persons".

Whatever the Secretary of State chooses to do to tell people what it is all about,

"such steps as appear to him best designed"

covers that definition of consultation, whatever it is. He is self-regulating and acts retrospectively. Although the Secretary of State may be right in his description, he is wrong in his definition.

Mr. Cryer: The Secretary of State has a curious view of retrospective legislation, as he does of most things. Does my hon. Friend agree that the only way that retrospective legislation could be produced under the right hon. Gentleman's definition would be if all public and private Bills going through this place were kept secret? As soon as the First Reading occurs, there is notice that a Bill is on its way through Parliament. There is notice for every bit of legislation. The notion that because people know about a Bill it is not retrospective does not hold water.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend may be right. I understand, to some extent, why the Secretary of State thinks in these ways. My guess is that someone drew up clause 56 to stop judicial reviews. It prevents anyone from claiming that, whatever the Secretary of State does, it cannot be challenged. To that extent this legislation is not as retrospective as the very worst legislation, but it is retrospective in effect.

Mr. Ridley: There is an additional argument, which is so obvious that I imagine that the hon. Gentleman has spotted it. I am perfectly entitled to consult anyone about anything, without requiring any statutory power. As the hon. Gentleman said, the purpose of the clause is merely to make it clear that the fact that I had not undertaken these consultations would not be a ground of challenge after an order was approved by both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Secretary of State. I believe that I divined his thinking correctly, and he has courteously confirmed it. He is in effect waterproofing a particular challenge. However, he has not defined—or divined—that the nature of his consultation may place some people in an impossible position.

The next heading is consultation. I am glad that the Secretary of State has not already taken the steps that he would claim under the clause. That is a good thing. He says that the position will apply only to steps that he will take after an announcement and before and after Royal Assent. I shall deal with that aspect in two parts.

The Secretary of State's first consultation will be after the announcement of any particular area and perhaps before Royal Assent. That is what I might call postman's knock, part A. I presume that nearly everybody in the area will receive a "Dear Occupier" letter, which will spell out what is to happen. My hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West pointed out that we do not know what questions will be put in that letter, whether a response is expected, as it is under the sales consultation procedure, whether the Secretary of State will provide any information and what will be the nature of that information, and whether he will provide any information about inducements and the advantages of a housing action trust—which he is likely to paint in glowing colours. Incidentally, he is good at painting things in glowing colours, but on canvas rather than in literature.

We do not know, either, whether there will be any buy-out offers. Anyone who is able to buy his home at much reduced prices might certainly wish to do so. The Walker proposal, if I may improperly call it that, was canvassed in the press two weeks ago, and I dare say that it could be incorporated in housing action trusts and in such a letter. We do not know what offers might be made that any sensible person could not refuse.

Knowing the Secretary of State as I do, having read about the Walker proposal, and given the fact that we know that the Prime Minister is very interested in housing action trusts—and her presence in the Chamber at 8 o'clock this morning to support her right hon. Friend was a partial indication of that fact—my suspicion is that he will produce a letter to which there may be objections.

I refer now to the retrospective element, which I fear is particularly dangerous. At that stage of the consultation, the Secretary of State is effectively the applicant, writing to every householder. He is also the informant, deciding how much information will be divulged. If there are any questions to be asked, he will choose their content and the way in which they will be put. He will also be the returning officer, as the recipient of the votes. He will be the teller and the decider, and he has the law on his side.

The Secretary of State can do all that without telling anybody. Unless the hon. Member for Nottingham, South and his hon. Friends vote against this provision, which they ought to do, it will become law, and we are told that it will then constitute a form of consultation approved by the House of Commons.

Mr. Skinner: With all those powers of judge, jury, executioner and everything else, it sounds as though the Secretary of State will be in a position parallel to that of a commissioner in the Common Market. I do not want to start my hon. Friend off on that tack, but is it not worth some examination?

Mr. Spearing: There may be some similarities——

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order, or within the conventions of the House, for a Back-Bench Member to speak from the Opposition Front Bench, even in an intervention?

12 noon

Madam Deputy Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is nothing to do with the Chair where hon. Members decide to sit in the House.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not said in all the annals of the House of Commons that a Member of Parliament may sit on any Bench? I remember an occasion when the former leader of the SDP—he is now leader of the Provos, with an army of three—bustled his way past Opposition Members on the Bench below the Gangway and then nearly knocked over my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) in an attempt to get to the Dispatch Box. He has never looked up since. I am leaving now.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is far more learned than I am and will have read all the annals to which he referred.

Mr. Spearing: You will be pleased to know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I shall not be tempted towards Brussels and the Common Market, except to say that the centralisation in the Bill is markedly similar to the centralisation in that organisation.

The Secretary of State—I genuinely believe that sometimes he unwittingly deceives himself—has legitimised the consultation to such an extent that it is exactly how he wishes it. He now wants the House to say that whatever he does goes. Of course, he has some powers already, but this is an underhand way of doing it. The consultation may not be objective. Therefore, the response to the suggestion of housing action trusts may not be the same as would have been obtained had an objective assessment, not the letter from the Secretary of State, been put to each occupier.

Mr. McCartney: Has my hon. Friend noticed that the Minister for Housing and Planning is back in the Chamber? Many of us have been here since 6.30 yesterday evening. Has the Minister been in bed-and-breakfast accommodation? Some of us are looking rather dishevelled, but the Minister looks smart. He has missed all the questions that we have been dying to ask him, but towards the end of this debate he has turned up with a smile on his face and wearing a clean shirt, tie and shoes.

Mr. Spearing: I hope that my hon. Friend will have an opportunity to ask that question direct, but I think I know what is in his mind.

Will housing action trusts shoulder some of the duties of housing the homeless, apart from acting as contractors to the existing local authorities? I fear that they will not.

The "postman's knock" letter is only the first phase of the Secretary of State's consultation. We now come to what happens after Royal Assent. That consultation is covered in clause 59, which, as the hon. Member for Nottingham, South said, regulates what housing action trusts can do once they are set up. But whatever the local gauleiter or his friends choose to do, the Secretary of State can direct otherwise. There is no obligation on housing action trusts to go along with what local people want, nor is there an obligation on the Secretary of State to comply with what the housing action trust wants. He can reverse its decision if he pleases, as I pointed out in my opening remarks. The second phase of consultation that the Secretary of State so proudly unveiled will also be of no avail.

My penultimate point relates to hybridisation. I was rather shocked to hear that the Secretary of State agrees with my observation that there is a high probability that some HAT orders will be rendered hybrid in another place if petitions are laid against them. I emphasise that the Secretary of State's search for areas in which petitions will not be laid may be delaying the announcements.

It is possible that the other place, before or after the passing of an order, could restrict the Secretary of State in the exercise of his options. That might be welcomed by my hon. Friends and me, but it means that the scope and operation of HATs will not be those within the Bill. That affects the whole procedure of consultation.

My final point concerns planning. The Secretary of State said, in reply to a point that I made, "Oh no, planning will not be affected. I shall remain the umpire on the planning laws. All that will happen is that the HAT will take over the functions of the planning authority, and we shall then carry on as before." I hope that that was not too rapid a summary of the burden of his remarks.

Matters are not the same as before. First, the HAT may be too small to operate a proper planning organisation. A borough needs to be fairly big to have a full range of planning skills, which are highly legal and technical. It may get agents in to do the work, but there will be complications. Secondly, although the Secretary of State says, "I will be the umpire," that is not so. He has already made his own strategic plan for the royal docks area in London, and when a planning application comes up he can say that it does or does not lie within the plan that he, as Secretary of State, has already made. The Secretary of State will have powers which will not be assessable by local electors, and which will be exercised from Whitehall rather than from town halls.

All in all, we have here a remarkable multiplication of quangos which will not serve the people, but which will transfer ownership from local municipal organisations to those of other people. We do not know who those other people are. We can only guess that they will be friends of the Secretary of State and that they will be looking for some sort of pay-off.

The means by which all this will be achieved are wholly undemocratic, judged both by local democracy and by the procedures of the House. I call on my hon. Friends to support the amendments.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I commend amendment No. 87 to the House and thank my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for speaking so eloquently, if briefly, on the issue of consultation before a housing action trust is established by the Government.

In my intervention on my hon. Friend's speech I asked the Minister and the Secretary of State if they would give an undertaking that they would not announce during the recess the location of the six HATs that they said would initially be set up. This is important. If the tenants are not to be consulted about the establishment of a HAT—and it will still be established if they are all against it—there should at least be some debate in the House about where they are and the likely effects on the areas in which they are declared. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South will agree with me. We would like to know where the initial six HATs are to be located before

the Bill completes its stages in this place, so that we may have a debate at some length and of some significance on the subject. Even after the Bill becomes an Act and the Government decide to declare more HATs in addition to the original six, we would like an assurance from the Secretary of State and the Minister that such an announcement will be made in the House, so that those hon. Members whose constituents are affected and others who are interested can ask questions, receive assurances and discover information from the Government about the declarations and how the HATs will affect their constituents. We do not think that that is too much to ask. There is nothing in the legislation to guarantee that Parliament will be treated properly, that announcements will be made in this place and that we shall get a chance to debate them. I suspect that this is not an issue of too much controversy, and we should receive such an undertaking from the Secretary of State.

Conservative Members have probably purposely misunderstood what the amendments set out to achieve. At a later stage in our proceedings we shall debate what the Government call, "Pick a landlord" and what we call, "Pick a tenant" where a private organisation can ask to take over a council estate. In those circumstances, there will have to be a ballot and 51 per cent. of the people living on the estate must vote against the proposal or the estate will be taken over. We have criticised those arrangements. We believe that that voting system is undemocratic. With regard to the HAT——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The House will have an opportunity to consider that matter when we reach that point in the Bill.

Mr. Roberts: The point is that with regard to the HATs that we are debating now, there will not even be a chance for that kind of rigged voting. There is nothing in the legislation, as the Secretary of State admitted in an intervention, that requires any consultation with tenants of an area to be declared a housing action trust. We believe that that is completely unacceptable.

The Government claim that they are widening choice, that they are freeing tenants from the shackles of large-scale bureaucratic local authority housing management and that they will provide choice and freedom. However, that will not extend to allowing residents to decide whether they want a HAT imposed on them.

The reason why such a ballot will not be permitted is that most of the council tenants living on most of the estates likely to be selected as targets for housing action trusts would reject the idea of a HAT, if only from the belief that "The devil you know is better than the devil you do not," and that a bureaucratically imposed quango, peopled by the kind of people whom the Secretary of State traditionally appoints to his quangos, such as the development corporations, would be worse at running the affairs of tenants than the local authority. At least the tenants can vote in local elections against the actions of their local authority councillors.

We think that it is because tenants would reject the idea of HATs being imposed on them, particularly as they will not be given the representation that they need on the HAT to manage, control and run their own affairs, that the Government are refusing to accept our amendments, which implement the Conservative manifesto commitment to consult tenants, which the Conservatives claim is their mandate from the last general election.

We believe that the Government's response so far is completely inadequate. The response is totalitarian and it imposes undemocratically elected quangos on council estates which the Government choose to designate without consultation with the local authorities or tenants and residents of the estate. We believe that if the Government or Conservative Back Benchers really believe in choice, consultation and freedom in housing, they should support the amendment.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 138, Noes 227.

Division No. 355] **[12.14 pm**

AYES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fearn, Ronald
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel

Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: No. 87, in page 41, line 20, at end insert—

'(4) If, as a result of consultation under this section, it appears to the Secretary of State that a majority of persons consulted under subsection (2) above are opposed to the designation of the proposed designated area, he shall not make an order under section 55 above designating the said area.'.—*[Mr. Allan Roberts.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 133, Noes 219.

Division No. 356] **[12.28 pm**

AYES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John

Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ty)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth

Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

Question accordingly negatived.

Schedule 5

HOUSING ACTION TRUSTS: CONSTITUTION

Mr. Waldegrave: I beg to move amendment No. 328, in page 87, line 30, leave out 'people having' and insert 'persons who live in or have'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 329, amendment No. 91, in page 87, line 31, at end insert
'and a majority of the members of a trust shall be resident in the designated area'.
and Government amendment No. 330.

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) will agree that these amendments carry out a commitment that we gave in Committee following prolonged discussion about the importance and desirability of securing the services on HAT boards of people who really know the areas in question. The amendments mean that the Secretary of State would have to have regard to the desirability of securing the services of people who live in the HAT areas as well as those who have special knowledge of them. We also agreed to consult local authorities about the appointments. I think that these are welcome improvements to the Bill in line with what we discussed in Committee.

Amendment No. 91 is too restrictive because the temporary bodies will have a difficult task to carry out in a short time. The Secretary of State will need to find the best people with the relevant expertise, and he might not necessarily be able to do that with a majority of residents in every case. Qualities such as management skills and housing expertise and experience will also be relevant.

We intend to ask the HATs to create, in consultation with local people, non-statutory tenants' advisory fora that will provide a focus for generating tenants' views beyond representation on the HAT boards and other consultative arrangements. The fora would have a remit to advise the boards on any issue of concern to the tenants. We hope that some tenants will take over the running of their properties through the establishment of tenant co-operatives.

Amendment No. 330 seeks to ensure that anyone with an interest that might be prejudicial should not be appointed to a HAT board. At the same time, we wish to ensure that being a tenant should not be regarded as having a prejudicial interest. That point was legitimately raised by a number of Opposition Members in Committee.

I hope that Opposition Members will agree that amendments Nos. 328 to 330 are sensible and meet the points that they raised in Committee. Although we must reject amendment No. 91, I hope that they accept that we have gone some way towards meeting their concerns.

Mr. Cryer: I want to say a few brief words about the proposals. The Government's rejection of amendment No. 91 is singularly unfortunate. As the Minister accepted, the Government's wording is more discretionary than amendment No. 91. As amended by amendment No. 328, the schedule would read;

"In appointing members of a trust, the Secretary of State shall have regard to the desirability of securing the services of persons who live in or have special knowledge of the locality in which the designated area is situated."

Our amendment requires that

"a majority of the members of a trust shall be resident in the designated area."

We have advanced the arguments on previous occasions, but this is the place to reduce, modify or qualify the Secretary of State's powers.

The schedule states that

"the Secretary of State shall have regard to the desirability".

That is not an imposition on the Secretary of State; he only has to consider alternatives. Having considered people living in the area, if they do not satisfy his criteria he can reject them. That rejection could be for a variety of reasons —for example, he may oppose them politically or he may have had an argument with them. He may think them to be brash or quiet and, therefore, the wrong people to serve on the boards. We know that the Secretary of State is likely to have arguments with people every time that he goes into an area. That has happened on more than one or two occasions. I believe that, more than anything else, if the Secretary of State suspects that anyone is politically opposed to him—and he would not have to be a Labour supporter, but simply a critic of Government policy—he will use his highly discretionary powers not to appoint that person.

12.45 pm

One of the grounds that we can put forward to support this argument is the way in which the Government have treated other quangos. In all those bodies that we use to administer the various institutions in our national life, the Government have been assiduous in sacking people whom they regard as having been critical in any way and appointing people who conform to their own point of view.

Mr. Patnick: The hon. Gentleman is still the European Member of Parliament for Sheffield. I recollect that, when the Government nominated Councillor Roy Thwaites, the then leader of South Yorkshire county council, to the chairmanship of the South Yorkshire residuary body, he at first accepted the position, but subsequently declined. How does that square with your thinking?

Mr. Cryer: I know that the hon. Gentleman is not referring to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker; he is referring to me.

Mr. Patnick: I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman can have two stripes for that one.

Mr. Cryer: I shall simply use an old phrase and say, "Grovel, grovel, grovel."

The hon. Gentleman said that the Government appointed Mr. Roy Thwaites who was subsequently persuaded to resign. Of course, there are occasions which tend to prove the rule. The Government occasionally pick out members of the Labour party to make a particular body appear more acceptable, and I believe that that was the case on that occasion. However, we are talking about the majority of people who will not be prominent and who will simply be carrying out day-to-day administration. In

those circumstances, the predominant qualification should be that they live in the area, as stipulated in our amendment.

Mr. Patnick: I thank the hon. Gentleman again for his courtesy. How does he explain the fact that Lord Mulley, a former Member of Parliament for Sheffield and Minister in the Labour Government, has been appointed deputy chairman of the Sheffield urban development corporation?

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for bearing out exactly what I said: that the Government persuade people who have been prominent in the Labour party in the past to chair or act as deputy chair to a body for which they wish to gain acceptance and credibility in an area. One of the reasons why the Government appointed Fred Mulley was that they knew perfectly well that the Labour-controlled Sheffield council was unhappy about the proposal in the first place. This is part of the reconciliation. The Government have the power to ride roughshod over democratically elected local councils, and they attempt to put a better face on it by appointing someone who, although he does not live in the area, nevertheless knows it. Roy Thwaites lives in the area. Both the people concerned have local knowledge and understanding which is precisely why the Government appointed them, in addition to the political connotations that I have mentioned. When people go down to the other end of the Palace of Westminster, some funny things happen to them.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend referred to the question of public and political appointees in terms of offering a job to a member of the Opposition. Perhaps I can give him a classic example from south Yorkshire. My local area health authority has sacked a Socialist chairman who has done a sterling job during the many years since reorganisation in 1974. The job has been offered to the leader of the Labour council in the knowledge that, given that one Labour member had been dismissed, another could not accept the nomination. A member of the Conservative party was then appointed. He happens to be one of my constituents. He was put into a job that he knew that the Labour party had to turn down because of the dismissal.

Mr. Cryer: That is a good illustration of what I was describing. It demonstrates why we want a qualification different from the absolute discretion of the Secretary of State. Area health boards provide good examples. A member of the Labour party was chairman of the Airedale health authority. He was so moderate as to be almost untrue. He tried his best to reconcile all the difficulties and to meet the pressure from the Government while maintaining services. He tried to compromise as best he could in the decent way in which he was accustomed to act, yet he was sacked by the Government, who then appointed a Tory.

Mr. Patnick *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) wishes me to give way to him again, and I am pleased to do so.

Mr. Patnick: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. I notice that the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) is sitting complacently on the Opposition Front Bench. His former leader, Sir Jack Smart, was given the chairmanship of Wakefield health authority. We can carry on trading such things across the Chamber, if that is what the hon. Gentleman wishes——

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford) *rose*——

Mr. Patnick: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I am intervening in the speech of his hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who is sitting in the opposite corner. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene in his hon. Friend's speech, I am sure that he can.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South changes his ground. He began by saying "no person" but now everything is different.

Mr. Cryer: If the hon. Member for Hallam examines *Hansard*, he will find that I have made a carefully balanced case, as is always my desire.

My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) is not sitting complacently on the Front Bench. He is sitting, as he usually does, with a sharp eye, taking an interest in this matter, hour after hour to his great credit. He has long experience and expertise in local government affairs and we are grateful that he is here today to give us the benefit of his knowledge and application in this matter.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton) *rose*——

Mr. Patnick *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: No; I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton.

Mr. O'Brien: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way and for the opportunity to explain the situation that was outlined by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick). Sir Jack Smart is chairman of the Wakefield area health authority, but that authority is in tremendous difficulty because it is having to bow to pressures from Ministers. Because Sir Jack will not accept those pressures, we are to have an inquiry into the operation of the health authority. We are asking for an independent inquiry. That is the measure of it. I advise my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that that is exactly the result that will come about unless we get the right balance in appointments to the trusts. I hope that my hon. Friend will dwell further on that issue because it is important and we must highlight it. We must convince the hon. Member for Hallam about how wrong he is on such issues.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House has spent sufficient time discussing the Health Service and appointments of chairmen. We should now get back to housing action trusts.

Mr. Cryer: Certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have been helpful in assuring us that the House retains a balance in these discussions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton has illustrated the point that I was making: that the Secretary of State should not have the absolute powers that he is given in the legislation because, when a Secretary of State in a Conservative Government is given such absolute powers in areas where there can be specific qualifications, to which I shall turn in a moment, he must have regard to vague generalities. He will usually appoint a majority of Conservatives to a board, possibly with a Labour

[Mr. Cryer]

figurehead to give a fake appearance of balance. That causes difficulties, and the circumstances that my hon. Friend has described have illustrated those difficulties which, when all is said and done, have not helped the Health Service. If the Secretary of State for the Environment appoints in like spirit, it will not help the administration of the housing action trusts.

Although we are opposed to housing action trusts, we are putting forward proposals to improve the legislation. There is always a grey area for an Opposition: do they simply oppose legislation tooth and nail and vote against every Government amendment—the large number of amendments to the Bill show how badly drafted it is—or do they say that they are opposed to the legislation but will try to improve it? In a spirit of constructive opposition, the Labour party is doing the latter. We are putting forward a constructive amendment to curb the powers of the Secretary of State. We are saying not that he should choose people in a political ballot—we know that he would not do that anyway—but that the majority of members of a trust shall be resident in the designated area.

The Minister said that there may not be enough talented and able people to participate in a trust. I should have thought that there would be a body of people dealing with the trust's affairs—to which the Minister has not yet made us all privy—with the knowledge, gained from experience, to ensure that the trust operated to the benefit of those living in the area. By and large, it is a truism that the people who live in an area have their own interests at heart and want the area developed for those interests. People who come to the area do not have quite the same vested interests and desires.

I wonder whether the Department of the Environment would have had so many disasters on its hands in the 1950s and 1960s, when it was busy peddling tower blocks through grant aid, if the architects who designed them and the civil servants who promoted them had had to live on the top floor with a family for a minimum of five years after completion. I should have thought it salutary for an architect to have to explain all his plans and drawings to the community and then say that he will live there to share the experience. If that had been a criterion, there would not have been so many tower blocks foisted on local authorities by grant aid. Local authorities are even more hard pressed than those in the past.

Tower blocks have not been a success. This is due in part to the fact that there was no shared experience between the architects who promoted them and the civil servants in the Department of the Environment who were busy promoting them. We are now facing the whirlwind of that ill-judged planning debacle. The Department of the Environment must now fork out money—not enough—to get the tower blocks out of the way so that the kind of houses that people want can be built.

By and large, people were not consulted about the development of the tower blocks. They were not given the right of democratic participation, except through local elections, which avenue, although unsatisfactory, was better than the Government's proposals. This fact points once again to the desirability of a majority of members of a trust being resident in the designated area. I do not know what the SLD will say about the amendments; I suppose the policy of the moment will depend on which Member is in the House. Certainly the Labour Opposition put this forward as a basic, common sense policy.

1 pm

There has been a reference to lush villages in the stockbroker belt in Surrey which have a high Conservative voting turnout. If we proposed that a quango should take over the running of such a village, would the Government suggest that a group of people from, say, Lambeth should run parts of Esher? Of course not. They would say that there are a lot of chaps and chapesses there who can run their own affairs. The proposal that the Secretary of State should appoint people resident in the designated area as a majority of the trust has much to commend it. It does not take away the right of appointment; it modifies it to ensure that the Secretary of State takes note of the interests of the people who are vitally concerned in the housing action trust. That would be better than the political manipulation which we have seen by the Government in so many parts of life which they have atrophied by the application of misleading and misguided policies.

The first part of amendment No. 330 would provide:

"Before appointing a person to be a member of a trust the Secretary of State shall satisfy himself that that person will have no financial or other interest likely to affect prejudicially the exercise of his functions as a member; and the Secretary of State may require a person whom he proposes to appoint to give him such information as he considers necessary for that purpose."

The second part does not affect people who are likely to become tenants. In the same way as I gave a parallel to amendment No. 91 by saying that residents in the designated area are more likely to have the interests of their own area at heart than even well-meaning people from outside, I think that amendment No. 330 is useful. The Government should use that philosophy more widely when drafting, for example, legislation on company law.

As a side issue, let me refer to the appointment of Peter Luff as an adviser in the Department of Trade and Industry. He was employed by Good Relations, which is part of the Luff group which is being investigated by the Department of Trade and Industry. Under the criteria in amendment No. 330, the Secretary of State could not have appointed him.

Having criticised the Government, I accept that after constructive pressure from my hon. Friends in Committee the Government have proposed an amendment which will make a useful addition to the Bill. Even though it is muddied patchwork, and even though we are opposed to it in principle, it demonstrates, as we have been demonstrating all through the night, that the Labour Opposition are trying to be constructive when the Government are trampling on the rights of Parliament by trying to push this legislation through the House. The hours of debate show how the Labour party is standing up for the rights of ordinary tenants against housing action trusts by putting forward modest, minor amendments to improve the legislation.

We are bitterly disappointed by the Government's unwillingness to accept amendment No. 91. It was tabled in a spirit of helpfulness, yet the Minister spent only two minutes in dismissing it—I thought somewhat contemptuously. I regret that some of the arrogance of the toff who is the Secretary of State is rubbing off on the Minister of

State. It is alarming that that should happen; perhaps it is a fungus that is spreading throughout the Department. If that is the case, it ought to get in a few fungicides.

The Secretary of State's response was unsatisfactory, and failed to rebut adequately the proposals in amendment No. 91. I shall urge my hon. Friends to vote for that amendment, but, again in a spirit of helpfulness, I say that it would be a mistake to vote against amendment No. 330, which would give some modest assistance in what is otherwise a terrible imposition upon tenants and local authorities alike. That attitude reflects the work we have been trying to do through the night to improve the muddy mess that the Government have presented.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I am delighted to make a contribution to this debate, and believe that hon. Members should address their minds to a vexing problem of green belt protection confronting my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I introduce the topic for a particular reason. We wish to regenerate a number of urban areas. There is much dormant and under-utilised land——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House is debating means and methods of making appointments to housing action trusts. The hon. Gentleman is a long way from that subject.

Mr. Dickens: The establishment of trusts will enable the regeneration of urban areas and re-utilisation of dormant land, which in most cases is in public ownership. I do not know how many hundreds of thousands of acres of under-utilised land there are——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House is debating not the functions of the trusts but appointments to them.

Mr. Dickens: We must make the right appointments, selecting people who will appreciate the value of our objective, and who will co-operate with the Government. It will be unsatisfactory if people are appointed who are not prepared to do that which the Government wish—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]. It matters not of whatever political persuasion that Government might be, given that such is the will of the nation, as would be this measure if it is passed by the House. If the right appointments are not made, additional pressures will be placed on the green belt.

Hon. Members should remind themselves of the trust's framework. It will use public and private resources in renovating an estate and providing tenants with a better housing environment. That is an obligation placed on those appointed. The Secretary of State will be asked to ensure that there is tenant representation and that local authorities will be consulted about the appointment of local residents or others having special local knowledge. The trust will also have a duty to co-operate with the local authority in respect of its responsibilities towards the homeless. Once the trust has completed its task, it will transfer its housing stock to other landlords, who must be approved by the Housing Corporation. Any tenant who wishes to return to a local authority when the work of a housing action trust is complete will be able to do so, provided the local authority is willing.

Council housing will be transferred from the local authority and managed by a trust established by the Secretary of State. This is the Government's effort to regenerate the nation's worst council estates, and it is important to appoint like-minded and sensible people of whatever political persuasion. The Government are trying to help the people. They are trying to save the green belt, and this is an important way of doing it.

Mr. Lofthouse: Our amendment seeks an assurance that the majority of members of a housing action trust will be local residents. I should have thought that any Government and any fair-minded person would be only too willing to ensure that local people were active and well-represented on those boards. For the life of me, I cannot understand the Government's objection to the idea. When all is said and done, the Secretary of State would still have powers to select the chairman, vice-chairman and up to five other board members.

This move is another step towards fulfilling the Government's desire to wipe out democratically elected local authorities or at least major parts of their duties. It is a retrograde step. The people who live in those areas should have an avenue of complaint to board members. With local authorities, people have an avenue—mostly to their elected members—at least to let off steam. That avenue will not exist if the boards are run by people selected by the Secretary of State. I should have thought that the Secretary of State would at least ensure a majority of local people on the boards.

The boards will affect many people's lives, but there will be few avenues for representations by those people. We have all had experience of water boards and area health authorities. Even Members of Parliament have difficulty making representations to those people. The press is not allowed to report board meetings. There is no information and no avenue of representation for the public. Even at this late stage, I hope that the Minister will consider accepting our modest amendment.

I have had some bad experiences with my local health authority. I have been unable to obtain information that the public requires, and we have been unable to make proper representations to try to stop savage cuts in our health services. Were the health authority composed of elected members it would be much more responsive to the public. Recently in my constituency I have had experience of a charitable trust—I do not yet know who appoints its members—that gives very little information——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If I allowed the debate to continue along those lines, it would create infinite possibilities, and I cannot do it. We must return to the appointment of members of housing action trusts.

Mr. Lofthouse: I was comparing my experience of those boards with what will undoubtedly happen with the housing action trusts, but I accept your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a worthwhile exercise to examine boards that have been set up in a similar way to those suggested boards. We can make our case only by comparison with such similar boards.

1.15 pm

In my constituency there is the alms houses charity trust. Great concern has been expressed about the allocation of the alms houses, and there is no avenue for people to get information about, for example, how the tenancies are let. Similarly, under the Bill, these boards will be administered and people will carry out substantial duties, which will affect many lives, and unless a majority of people residing in the area—or at least people whom those in the area know—are represented, there will be

[Mr. Lofthouse]

problems. We are all aware, particularly if we reside in our constituencies, that people know their Member of Parliament and can approach him. That is a safety valve, which will not exist in this scheme unless there is local representation. We are going down a dangerous path. We are taking away democratically elected members and we are taking away duties from elected local authorities and giving them to these boards.

For the life of me, I cannot believe that any fair-minded person would not want these boards to be manned by local representatives. I hope that the Secretary of State will not select the representatives on these boards purely because of their political persuasions. The track record of bodies made up of those appointed by Government shows that they are politically biased, and anyone who suggests otherwise is not being honest. We all know that that is the case. What guarantee is there, even if this amendment is accepted, that the boards will not be staffed solely by politically motivated people? We heard reference earlier to the Wakefield area health authority. I have nothing to say about that, because it is not in my area, but I have something to say about the Pontefract area health authority, which is 100 per cent. staffed by political appointees. As a result, the policies of this Government have been carried out slavishly in that health authority.

The dangers are there, and I hope that, if the Government want to show that they are fair and honest and believe in their policies, they will at least accept an amendment that is just and fair and would be for the benefit of the local people.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I do not intend to make a long speech, but one or two points must be made, not least because amendment No. 91 is infinitely the best of the four amendments before us. Over the past three or four years, Ministers have delivered diatribes against local authorities for not going far enough in divesting responsibility to their tenants. Comments have been made about "aldermen tortoises", and the Minister has boasted that power would be transferred to the tenants. Therefore, logic and consistency would require the Government to view amendment No. 91 as favourably as we do.

One or two aspects of the other amendments cause me grave concern partly because over recent years the Government have shown that they believe that the first qualification for anyone to be appointed to any position is for that person to be "one of us". However, the people from among the Government's ranks and their political supporters have frequently shown their unsuitability.

The record of public appointments over the past five or six years is full of examples of people appointed to positions, perhaps because the Government assumed that they had special knowledge, but whose performance has been somewhat less than successful. I base my anxiety on my constituency experience. My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) is aware that there is an industrial estate in part of my constituency that is close to his constituency. I saw an opportunity for a substantial number of jobs to be created there. We sought the support of the Department of Trade and Industry, but the Secretary of State refused it. After pressure from me he referred the matter to his advisory committee for the Yorkshire and Humberside region. Those gifted people with special knowledge who enjoyed the Government's support recommended that the support should not be given because that would not be in the interests of the region or the community. At that time we had the highest unemployment level in England.

I made inquiries about the advisory committee consisting of people appointed by the Secretary of State. When I looked at a list of the members I discovered that a substantial proportion of them did not live in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. They may have had special knowledge, which will be retained despite Government amendment No. 328. I am more concerned that people who live in the area and who understand the reality of the area should be appointed. I would much prefer the Minister to accept amendment No. 91 which would ensure that the majority of the members of the trust live in the area than that he should appoint people whom he believes possess special knowledge. The kind of knowledge which the Secretary of State might consider to be special may not necessarily confer an ability on those people to give advice on the management of housing.

I was also somewhat surprised at my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) being rather more kindly disposed towards amendment No. 330. The amendment contains a reference to

"no financial or other interest."

That is

"no financial or other interest"

that the Government or the Secretary of State might imagine would disqualify the individual from service on the trusts. The Government take a rather more relaxed view of profit and of the principle of motivation of service than many hon. Members.

Although the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) took a fairly generous view of the Government's position, he had the audacity to say that he was concerned and wanted appointments to reflect the concern about the green belt. We have seen the Secretary of State for the Environment overturn inspectors' recommendations about the protection of the green belt. We have seen a larger assault on the green belt under this Administration than under any Government since green belts were protected. We are therefore entitled to maintain——

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is aware that he cannot substantiate that claim. There is now twice as much confirmed green belt as there was when the Labour party left office.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I can now see the wisdom of my reproach directed to the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens). It appears that there may be an attempt to have a debate on the green belt. We cannot have that and I hope that we shall return to the amendments before the House.

Mr. Hardy: I am delighted by your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I certainly did not wish to see the debate extended. We can pursue the Minister's point on some other occasion. It is not appropriate to do so now, except to say that several of us, not necessarily on these Benches, are deeply worried about the quality of the advice which the Secretary of State seems most disposed to take. The wisdom of that advice hardly suggests that the Secretary of State is the best judge of a special knowledge or a financial disqualification. Indeed, he is probably the worst judge.

Mr. Barron: I thought that the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) was willing to accept amendment No. 91 providing that the local people, who would be a majority on the housing trust board, did what the Government wanted them to do. Did my hon. Friend also get that impression?

Mr. Hardy: Yes; my hon. Friend is absolutely right.

Just as I have grave doubts about the Secretary of State's capacity to perceive a special knowledge and a disqualification, so I have grave doubts about the meaningful nature of any consultation on which the Secretary of State may embark with each local housing authority whose district is included in the designated area covered by amendment No. 329. I can imagine what sort of consultation will be carried out. Let us suppose that of three housing authorities serving a designated area, two are good Labour authorities and one a poor Conservative authority. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown) may laugh. He may be surprised to hear that there are Conservative authorities in areas where housing trusts would be designated, but there must be some and it would be reasonable to suggest that they would not be good. If the Secretary of State complied with his obligation to consult those three authorities, I know to which he would be most eager to pay attention, and it would not be the good ones.

Heaven knows why the Government have to get themselves into the difficulty which their amendments will create. They will land themselves in trouble because the special knowledge will be criticised and the people whom they appoint will not necessarily enjoy public confidence. The record suggests that probably they will not. They will get into trouble when they take a lighter view of financial disqualifications. It would be simpler and easier for the Government—I think that some Ministers shared this view when these matters were being considered—to accept amendment No. 91 instead of the foolish amendments which they are tying around their neck.

I urge the Minister at least to recognise that a voice or two may be raised in the other place in favour of amendment No. 91 and that amendments Nos. 328 to 330 risk pitfalls and embarrassment, and will engender anxiety, if not condemnation.

Mr. Dickens: Does the hon. Gentleman recollect the Government's excellent record on making appointments to such bodies and the sanctions available? Many people whose performance is in question have short extensions to see whether their performance will improve and after a short term they are replaced. People of all political persuasions are appointed to these bodies and the Government look first and foremost at their performance in a job, which is important. The hon. Gentleman forgets that. It must be because of the frustrations of being in opposition for so long.

Mr. Hardy: I shall not respond at length to the hon. Gentleman except to say that he is already in deep trouble. If we were not short of time I would raise a point of order about the excessive domination of an individual in this Chamber—*[Interruption.]*

1.30 pm

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Government Chief Whip to intimidate innocent, humble, Back Benchers in such a threatening, offensive and brazen way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I merely saw two hon. Gentlemen on the Government Benches having a conversation. I regret the fact that several conversations seem to be taking place simultaneously.

Mr. Hardy: Just as I was about to respond to the intervention from the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth, the Government's disciplinarian went to talk to him and made it impossible for me to fulfil the normal courtesies of the House.

The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth appears to believe that all Government appointments are successful except for those few instances when failure leads to dismissal—no one objects to the dismissal of those who demonstrate their incapacity. If the hon. Gentleman analyses those who enjoy Government support and preferment, he will discover—he should have perceived it, because, unlike most of his colleagues, he is a north country Member—that a disproportionate number of Government appointees come from the south of England.

Housing illustrates the weakness of the Conservative attitude. I recall how in the 1970s the then Secretary of State for the Environment, Tony Crosland, appointed an individual to be the chief housing adviser who had served in the Rotherham area and who was a Geordie with considerable experience of the north-east. That appointment was regarded as an astonishing step for a Secretary of State to take in the southern half of England. The same could be said about the recognition of merit. Those who work in the City of London are much more likely to receive recognition than those who are 200 miles further north. If anyone 200 miles further north receives recognition, that demonstrates that he is especially outstanding. I shall not pursue that matter any further, but I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley understands the reference I have made.

I commend amendment No. 91. I suggest that it is in tune with the various public pronouncements that have been made by the Minister in the past 12 months. Certainly the amendment is consistent with the remarks that have been made by those who held the ministerial office before him. It would remove future embarrassment for the Government and would enable tenants to understand that the Government have given them some consideration. Given that the Government are supposed to be opposed to quangos, the amendment would demonstrate that the Government were not seeking to create more jobs for the boys.

Mr. Soley: The Minister was correct in saying that the amendments are the result of concessions made to the Opposition in Committee. We were worried that the housing action trusts would confer considerable powers and potential economic benefits on the people who serve on them. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was correct to say that Government amendment No. 330 is useful. Although my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) is worried that that amendment is not strong enough, basically it addresses our fears about estate agents or other such

[Mr. Soley]

people serving on housing action trusts. That would be undesirable. I accept that the Government's amendments are helpful, and I welcome them.

Amendment No. 91 is important for the reasons outlined by my hon. Friends. Our objection to so much of this Bill is that the Government have used and abused the concept of democracy as they think fit in its various parts. One clause allows dead people to vote so that their vote is counted in favour of a private landlord taking over a council housing area. The Government are allowing empty properties to be counted as yes votes, but, by rejecting amendment No. 91, they are saying that they will not allow a majority of local residents to be on the HAT board. They are taking away the powers of the local authority. The HATs will take away not only the housing powers of local authorities but their planning powers and a wide range of other powers—removing them from the elected representatives of the people, so that the ordinary person in the street can no longer turn to the council to complain about planning issues or housing matters; he or she will have to go to the housing action trust.

Housing action trusts will be appointed; they will not be representative. If they do not have a majority of local people on their boards, we can only assume that at best they will constitute benign, benevolent dictatorships that decide what is best for the people, having listened to them first. If that works well, we shall be lucky. If it works badly, we could end up with the sort of misjudgments and mistakes that were widely made in the 1950s and 1960s, with some of the inappropriate high-rise buildings that went up then. We offer this warning to the Government.

We accept that we have had useful concessions from the Government. I suggest to my hon. Friends that we should not vote on amendment No. 91, not because it is not useful but because we have debated this matter in considerable detail. Other important matters are coming up for discussion and I want to focus the House's attention on them.

Mr. Michael Welsh: As planning will be taken over by the HATs, will they take over building control, too?

Mr. Soley: As I understand it, they will have full powers over planning, which will include certain aspects of building control—although, if my memory serves me aright, some of these areas do not necessarily come under local authority control now. However, I think that some aspects would fall under HAT control and others would not. My hon. Friend is right to be concerned about that.

It is possible for HATs to build parks or turn other areas into parks. They have significant powers, but we should move on to some of the following groups of amendments. I shall not press amendment No. 91 to a vote. I am grateful to the Government for the amendments that they have tabled in response to our requests, but this debate has served to show that the proposals are an abuse of the democratic process and that the Government have not thought through the consequence of legislating for the people of an area and removing their democratic right to a voice in it.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 329, in page 87, line 31, at end add

'and before appointing any such person as a member he shall consult every local housing authority any part of whose district is included in the designated area'.

No. 330, in page 87, line 31, at end add—

'(1A) Before appointing a person to be a member of a trust the Secretary of State shall satisfy himself that that person will have no financial or other interest likely to affect prejudicially the exercise of his functions as a member; and the Secretary of State may require a person whom he proposes to appoint to give him such information as he considers necessary for that purpose.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Mr. Allan Roberts: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 89, line 2, at end insert

'subject to paragraph 13A below and'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 8, in page 89, line 4, at end insert—

'13A. In section 100J(1)(f) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, after "authority", there shall be inserted the following—

"and any reference to a principal council in sections 100A, 100B(1) in its provisions for the agenda of a meeting, 100B(3) and 100E in its application of sections 100A, 100B(1) and 100(3) includes a reference to a housing action trust established under Part III of the Housing Act 1988"'.'.

Mr. Roberts: I am sorry that the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) is not in his place. He may have been caught napping as the debate has proceeded through the night and into the morning, but he put his name to our amendments because they extend the provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 to housing action trusts. The hon. Gentleman sponsored a private Member's Bill that became law with the support of the Government, and it dealt with access to information as it affects local authorities. So it would be logical, given the all-party campaign on freedom of information in local government, to extend the provisions of the access to information legislation to HATs. What is good for the local authority goose should be good for the housing action trust gander. The hon. Member for Hornchurch believes that, and so do I. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) was one of the major sponsors of the campaign for freedom of information and the trio consisted of myself, the hon. Member for Hornchurch and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. We have all-party support for freedom of information and access to information.

It is important that people, the press and the media generally should have access to organisations such as the housing action trusts which govern the everyday lives of people. It was quite wrong for committees of local authorities to be able to go into secret session when discussing matters that were not official or state secrets, or did not involve the letting of contracts or commercial interests. All those things have been allowed for in the freedom of information legislation. Contractual or personal matters or the problems of an employee of a local authority, in this case the HAT, can be debated in camera.

As well as the desire to provide freedom of information, there is also a desire to safeguard the privacy of people and commercial requirements when going out to tender. Measures are necessary to protect the interests of the local authority and the housing action trust. It is right that local authority committees should be open to the public and the press, that the minutes should be available and that notice of when committee meetings are to take place should be

published. That enables the media and constituents and residents to know about the meetings. If it is right to apply such rules to local authority committees, surely they should be applied to the housing action trusts.

As I have said, this is a non-political all-party approach to freedom of information. The Government support access to information in local government and such access should apply to the housing action trusts. A housing action trust is not an elected body, but an appointed quango that will govern a housing estate and its residents, who were previously governed by people who were directly elected. Because the people running the housing action trusts are not directly elected by the people being governed, we need this freedom of information and access to information legislation even more than we need it for local authorities.

In the debate on previous amendments, the Government refused to consult residents before an area is declared to be under the control of a housing action trust. They refused not to declare it a housing action trust area if the residents were opposed to that, and they are about to refuse residents the right to have majority representation on the housing action trust. After all that, they surely will not want to deny the residents the right to know what the trusts are doing and talking about. It is the residents that the trusts will discuss and the residents or their representatives want to be able to go and observe at meetings of housing action trusts. They want to see the agenda in advance so that residents' associations can make representations to the members of the trust about what is to be discussed.

If residents are to consult, participate or involve themselves in the activities of the housing action trusts, it is essential that the access to information and freedom of information legislation enshrined in the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 be applied to the housing action trusts. We are not asking the Government for anything that is particularly political. It is not political dynamite and does not divide the political parties. I hope that the Minister will look favourably at these two amendments. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Hornchurch is not here to contribute to the debate. I know that the hon. Gentleman strongly supports freedom of and access to information not only for local government but all organisations. We do not want HATs to become like water authorities—meeting in secret, suspected by everyone and keeping the people whom they are there to serve in the dark.

If the Government do not support the idea of applying the freedom of information legislation to HATs when they were so enthusiastic about its application to local authorities, one will begin to suspect their motives. The Government did not mind any machinery being used to criticise, attack and make things difficult for local authorities. They thought that the access to information legislation would do that rather than support residents', tenants' and consumers' rights. If they do not accept that the freedom of access to information legislation should apply to HATs, their motives will be open to suspicion.

1.45 pm

Mr. Waldegrave: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be persuaded to withdraw his amendment when he realises that we are not quite as far apart as he thinks.

The amendments do not wholly apply the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 to HATs but reasonably seek to pick out the parts that are applicable to them. The amendments recognise that we should consider the structure of HATs and how access to them can be made to work.

In Committee we discussed in detail how HATs will be accountable through the House to the Secretary of State. They will be controlled through the corporate planning system and will have to submit annual reports to Parliament. We are about to discuss an amendment that was promised in Committee to allow the National Audit Office access to HATs so that the financial and ultimate accountabilities of the House are clear.

We have been discussing how to build in provisions to make HATs responsive to tenants' needs. I accept the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) that tenants cannot take part in HATs unless they have reasonable access to information and what is going on. We have reconsidered this matter and in Manchester I made an announcement, which was generally welcomed, that the Secretary of State will use his powers of direction to require HATs to hold their meetings in public. The hon. Gentleman said that water authorities in England do not meet in public, but HATs will be different in that respect. I am sure that the HATs' boards will only profit from that. They will have to be extremely close to tenants if they are to succeed in their tasks.

The amendments would cover committees and sub-committees as well as boards and would specifically require all meetings, except those exempted under schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, to be open and for agendas and papers to be available for inspection. As we do not have a picture of the best organisational structure for a HAT, it is premature to decide whether the detailed provisions of that Act are the best way forward.

The Secretary of State's directions to HATs for their meetings will cover the circumstances in which HATs may decide to hold their meetings in private. A local authority planning committee may want to discuss in private confidential commercial material or individual matters to do with a tenant. Obviously a local authority will want to protect the interests of the tenant, so we shall set out the circumstances in which we think it proper for a HAT to meet in private. In general, HAT board meetings should be held in public. We shall look closely at the provisions of schedule 12A to the 1972 Act to see how they may best be applied to HATs when we have decided their structure. It would be silly to apply detailed requirements that would not fit with what happens on the ground.

I hope that the hon. Member for Bootle will accept that we have taken steps in the direction that he wants and will consider withdrawing his amendment.

Mr. Allan Roberts: It is a refreshing change to have a response from the Minister that satisfies virtually everything that the Opposition have requested. Although we have been dissatisfied with the Minister's consultation arguments, it appears that, in this case, the Government have accepted our arguments and come forward with a suitable amendment.

In the light of the Minister's comments that access to information legislation will, in effect, be applied to HATs and that they will meet in public and be open to the press

[Mr. Allan Roberts]

and the media, and as about 98 per cent. of our other requests appear to have been met, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 6

HOUSING ACTION TRUSTS: FINANCE ETC.

Mr. Waldegrave: I beg to move amendment No. 331, in page 93, line 5, at end insert—

'(5) Section 6 of the National Audit Act 1983 (which enables the Comptroller and Auditor General to conduct examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which certain departments, authorities and bodies have used their resources) shall apply to a trust.'.

Again, this amendment was requested by the Committee, which quite properly said that the National Audit Office should have access to HATs to carry out value-for-money audits.

Mr. Allan Roberts: We welcome the Government's concession and are pleased that the National Audit Office will report on the HATs. It is a valuable organisation—it has, for example, just published a report on the Liverpool Docklands corporation. That excellent report highlights many of the shortcomings in the corporation and the way in which it has been administered. If a local authority had been so criticised by the NAO, there would have been a scandal. At least the report was published and it can be debated.

Although we welcome the concession, we want to know whether the NAO reports will be published and whether they can be debated in the House. It is no good producing reports unless they are published. If the NAO is to publish its reports, we wholeheartedly welcome the Government's proposals.

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that I am right in saying that the NAO reports are always published, and certainly they should be in this case.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Waldegrave: I beg to move amendment No. 332, in page 93, line 28, at end insert—

'( ) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-paragraph (1) above, a report shall give particulars of the name and address of every person who, in the financial year to which the report relates, has received financial assistance from the trust under section 66(1) of this Act, together with particulars of the form of the assistance, the amount involved and the purpose for which the assistance was given.'.

The amendment meets the point raised in Committee by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle). He did stalwart service during the middle of the night, and it is understandable that he is not in his place now, and we certainly do not hold that against him.

The hon. Gentleman said in Committee that it would be fair for details of financial assistance by HATs to other bodies to be published in the annual reports so that we would know what sort of bodies they were supporting. We agreed to that and the amendment meets his request.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 58

OBJECTS AND GENERAL POWERS OF HOUSING ACTION TRUSTS

Amendment made: No. 298, in page 42, line 45, at end add—

'( ) Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 (local authorities: general statutory duty) shall apply to a housing action trust as it applies to a local authority.'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 59

THE HOUSING ACTION TRUST'S PROPOSALS FOR ITS AREA

Mr. Allan Roberts: I beg to move amendment No. 89, in page 43, line 8, at end insert—

'(1A) The statement shall include the trust's intended policy on—

(a) the implementation of its duties under section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976;
(b) adherence to codes of practice issued by the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission;
(c) rents and service charges;
(d) any planned programme of renovation;
(e) the disposal of housing accommodation;
(f) its response to management guidance issued by the Secretary of State; and
(g) the programme through which the trust will discharge its duties and make arrangements for its dissolution.'.

We want some definition in the legislation of what a HAT will do and of its functions and its limitations. That is why amendment No. 89 is important. We want a statement of the activities of the trust to include its intended policy on the implementation of its duties under section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976. We do not think that the Government will disagree with that. Indeed, there was a major discussion on that issue earlier in our debates.

We want the trust to adhere to the codes of practice issued by the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission. That has been one of our major disagreements because, although the Government accepted the need for action under section 71 of the Race Relations Act, it was difficult to convince them that a trust should have some responsibility for equal opportunities. That does not surprise us because in all the legislation, including this legislation, the Local Government Bill and the Local Government Finance Bill, the Government have paid scant attention to equal opportunities and have legislated to prevent local authorities from being concerned about equal opportunities. However, we should like housing action trusts to be concerned about them and to take account of what the Equal Opportunities Commission has to say. That is important.

We want the rents and service charges policies of housing action trusts to be spelt out. The Government's definitions of market rents, affordable rents, fair rents, reasonable rents, assured tenancies and secure tenancies have always been rather nebulous. The Government have been moving the goalposts throughout the course of the Bill in respect of their definitions of rents. Although it may take a few years, they will return housing to the market place wherever they can and thus have a free market in housing and have high market rents which relate to what people can charge. So far as Ministers are concerned, the higher the rents the better.

However, because of the criticism, pressure and worries about the political consequences of that proposal, the Government have hedged their bets. They have talked about affordable rents in the housing association sector —whatever that means—and market rents in the private sector, and they have given some assurances about the nature and level of rents for council housing and housing estates taken over by private organisations. However, we have not had any assurances about the levels for housing action trusts and what they might be in the future, whether they will be affordable and remain fair, or whether they will be market rents and how quickly the Government's aim of market rents will be achieved. We would like the housing action trusts' intended polices to be spelt out when any HATs are declared.

The same is true of service charges. Basically that is a way of obtaining more rent than is allowed under the machinery to which any organisation must submit itself in respect of rent. If there are ways of charging higher rents through loopholes in respect of service charges, they should be spelt out and any abuse prevented. The Government should be sympathetic to that because they were keen to criticise any local authority that happened to be Labour-controlled and used service charges in connection with the right-to-buy provisions in the Government's legislation. We do not believe that service charges should be used in the legislation to allow HATs to charge what would be virtually higher rents than would otherwise be allowed in the legislation. We see no reason why the Government should not provide a policy statement in respect of HATs in that connection.

We want to know, in advance of publication, any planned programme of renovation proposed by a HAT. We want to know about the disposal of the housing accommodation. That is one of the great fears of many council estate tenants throughout the country. It is not just a question of HATs taking over or of picking a landlord and handing over an estate to a private body. It is also a question of what will happen eventually to the housing when the HATs are wound up and the private landlords want to sell to another third party. We are most concerned about any proposals for the disposal of accommodation after the period during which the HAT has been operating and has done the job that the Government set. We need to know about that.

We also need to know the HATs' response to the management guidance which was issued by the Secretary of State. We hear enough criticism about local authorities and responses are demanded from them on management guidance issues in the circulars issued by the Secretary of State. I imagine that the Secretary of State will give guidance to the HATs on management. We want to know what that guidance will be and what the HATs' response will be. As I have said, the programmes through which the trust will discharge its duties and make arrangements for its dissolution are major issues relating to exactly how the HATs will be dissolved.

2 pm

In a later amendment we will consider the rights of the residents in housing action trusts to be able to opt to return to local authority control if they want to do so. If the Government believe in freedom of choice, they should give freedom to the residents of the declared housing action trust areas to determine their long-term future once the HAT has completed the job that the Government have set it.

We understand that, having starved local authorities of resources by cutting housing investment programmes and subsidies for the housing revenue accounts, the Government feel guilty about the fact that local authorities which could have solved the problems of many of those council estates have been starved of the resources to do so. As a result, social problems have developed on those estates as well as problems with the fabric. We understand that, because the Government feel guilty about that, they have declared these HATs which will pump resources into the rundown estates. As the Government have been party to running down those estates, they want the housing action trusts operating so that they can deal with the problems of those inner-city estates.

Having done that, there is no reason why in the future, once the job is done, and once the resources have been poured in, the local authority and the tenants should not have a say in their long-term future and in the type of tenancy under which they live. Tenants should have a say in whether the local authority should be their landlord. Again, if Conservative Members really believe in choice in housing, they will support that proposal and our amendment.

As I have said, the amendment is wide-ranging and covers many policy areas for which HATs will be responsible. Whether they like it or not, the Government, or the HATs when they are established, must address those issues. It is right and proper that the House of Commons should put down its requirements now in the form of amendments if the management of the estate is to be taken over, often against the wishes of the tenants.

Mr. Waldegrave: The argument is not about our objectives but about whether the Bill meets those objectives. The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) has stated that he is keen to see the objectives set out clearly and in detail. We believe that clause 59 achieves that. Clause 61 makes it clear that the statement which the HATs must produce should cover the HAT's proposals with regard to the exercise of its functions in that area. There is a clear requirement that housing action trusts should set out their proposals in relation to their responsibilities when drawing up that statement. Many of the items included in the amendment need to be addressed in the statement. We do not believe that it is right to set that out in advance and in detail on the face of the Bill, because the situation may be different in different HATs and we should wait to see what appear to be the proper priorities for the first statement from a HAT.

Opposition Members are anxious, as we all are, to keep an eye on the progress of HATs. That is why we are, in the first instance, committed to publishing our management guidance for HATs, which was welcomed when we made the commitment in Committee. Secondly, HATs will be subject to the corporate planning system which will annually review their progress against individually set performance measures. Thirdly, HATs will produce annual reports to be laid before both Houses of Parliament.

Fourthly, we have fulfilled the commitment that we gave in Committee and have brought forward the amendment, which was welcomed generously by the hon. Member for Bootle, about giving the National Audit

[Mr. Waldegrave]

Office access to HATs. Taking that together with the extensive consultation requirements that are being placed on the HATs, HATs will be subject to close public scrutiny. By their nature, they will be subject to close scrutiny locally and in this place, and that is right.

We would have to resist amendment No. 89 if it were pressed. I hope that, when the hon. Member for Bootle looks at the battery of constraints that we have placed on HATs, he will believe that we have met at least some part of his concern.

Mr. Allan Roberts: We are not happy with the Government's response, although we accept that there have been some minor concessions. We should like the details to be spelt out in the Bill. Because the Government have not gone far enough, we will press the amendment to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 136, Noes 189.

Division No. 357] **[2.5 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Canavan, Dennis
Clelland, David
Coleman, Donald
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Critchley, Julian
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mariand, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 60

HOUSING ACTION TRUST AS HOUSING AUTHORITY ETC.

Amendment made: No. 362, in page 44, line 19, at end insert—

'( ) Where a housing action trust is to exercise functions conferred on a local housing authority by any of Parts VI, VII, IX and XI of the Housing Act 1985, section 36 of the Local Government Act 1974 (recovery by local authorities of establishment charges) shall apply to the housing action trust as if it were a local authority within the meaning of that section.'.—*[Mrs. Roe.]*

Clause 61

PLANNING CONTROL

2.15 pm

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move amendment No. 311, in page 44, line 34, leave out 'after consultation with' and insert 'with the consent of'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 312, in page 44, line 35, leave out 'with' and insert 'of'.

Mr. Spearing: Clause 61 of this controversial Bill confers planning control powers on the housing action trusts. As was said in an earlier debate, it is in itself a controversial matter, because, it will involve taking powers from the local borough or district council and putting them in the hands of a HAT. That is an exceptional step of which there has been only one previous example in this country, in urban development corporations. It is particularly controversial because, despite their reassuring name, housing action trusts are appointed by the Secretary of State. HATs are not accountable to local people and are not formally connected in any way with local councils, but fall entirely within the jurisdiction and direction of the Secretary of State.

The power that will be given to housing action trusts is controversial because they will be entirely within the remit of the Secretary of State and because they will remove powers from local authorities. The subsection about which I am worried states:

"A housing action trust may submit to the Secretary of State proposals for the development of land within its designated area and the Secretary of State, after consultation with the local planning authority within whose area the land is situated and with any other local authority which appears to him to be concerned, may approve any such proposals either with or without modification."

I emphasise the latter few words because they mean that even if housing action trusts have an idea of what to do —they may have conducted some informal non-statutory consultation with the local authority or with the people whom they are supposed to benefit—the Secretary of State can modify those proposals. That is controversial because it means that Whitehall can modify a planning application made in Manchester, Newcastle or Wales without intervention by our democratic planning procedures. Under those procedures, appeals are made to the Secretary of State, cases are called in occasionally or there are public local inquiries to which the Secretary of State sends an inspector. In this case, not only will the planning proposal be drawn up not by the democratic planning committee but by the housing action trust, but the Secretary of State can modify the proposal without giving a reason and without democratic dialogue.

The simple change that I propose would mean that, instead of just consulting the local planning authority on the development of land, the housing action trust must obtain its consent. The HAT may cover only a small area, whereas a planning district or borough may be fairly large and may require a range of technical expertise in its staff. For those small areas to have their own planning powers is a grotesque interference with the established structure of planning. By substituting "consent" for "consultation" I wish to bring back the democratic process so that there can be a proper relationship between the housing action trust area and the much larger surrounding area.

Let us take the example of docklands. As we know from an earlier debate, it is possible that a housing action trust will be established in the Canning Town area of the London borough of Newham. The area has a local plan and is subject to Newham's planning proposals. The facilities provided and the amount of open space established in the borough are regulated by a well-known planning process. The idea that people appointed by central Government should draw up a plan for the area that is unrelated to the plans of local elected councils and subject to central direction from the Secretary of State, with only the limited consultation available under the Bill, is wrong and undemocratic.

We already have something like this—the London Docklands development corporation. It is a planning authority, which means that there is now no proper democratic accountability for its decisions other than through the House. Hon. Members know that we have a lot to do here, but it is ludicrous that accountability for

[Mr. Spearing]

certain decisions in my constituency is via the Secretary of State. The planning proposals that come from the LDDC are not subject to any democratic check other than across the Floor of the House or via the Royal Mail or, occasionally, the pigeonholes in the Central Lobby.

At the moment, we have an important planning application for jets to use London City airport. The decision to put jets into an airport surrounded by tower blocks, flats and factories, some of them with important works, has aroused a great deal of local controversy. However, instead of the planning authority now considering an application by the airways people for those movements, and being responsible to the local people, it is responsible only to the LDDC, which in turn is responsible to the Minister. It will make the decision and, although local people may have a say, they will not decide.

The same will apply to a housing action trust. I am not suggesting that there will be many airports bang in the middle of a HAT, but we do not know what applications there may be for high-value developments. Many such schemes—for example, for luxury flats—might easily be located in a HAT. For instance, there may be an area of open space which the HAT considers to be in excess of need. There is nothing to prevent it from selling off part of the space for a luxury hotel. The planning application would be agreed, and without let or hindrance the HAT would get the plan through. It is a nominee of the Secretary of State.

Who would have believed that this Government, who talk about local freedoms, would establish a planning system in which somebody in Whitehall could determine the future use, "with or without modification", as clause 61 says, of somewhere in Nottingham, Cheshire or anywhere to the north of Berwick?

Mr. Hanley: Or Richmond.

Mr. Spearing: It could be Richmond, although I doubt that HATs are likely to be there. It is not the sort of area that the Secretary of State has in mind.

Who would have supposed that a Conservative Government would have made such a proposal? What about the relationship between this proposal and the strategic plan? In an earlier debate, the Secretary of State, trying to be reassuring, said that the HATs will have to be in accordance with the strategic plan. The Secretary of State is not here, so I ask the Minister: what is the strategic plan for Greater London? We have not got one.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: The elimination of Labour seats.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman has brought me on to my next point about the elimination of the GLC.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: No, Labour seats.

Mr. Spearing: A Secretary of State may have the elimination of Labour seats in mind when he considers areas suitable for HATs—we have not yet been told where they will be. They are not being given to the people. Conservative Members say that they are being given to the people, but they are being given to the members of the housing action trust, who will be local gauleiters, local stewards of the Secretary of State, not only because they will have the ownership of the land which they will have purchased from the council at knock-down prices, including all the peasants, all the peons, all the villeins, cotters and bordars in occupation of the manor which at the moment belongs to the people, but they will also have planning permission for vacant land.

It is a formula for all sorts of problems to give people who are not democratically accountable locally the ownership of space plus the magic Midas touch of planning permission, and for all that to be subject to the diktat of the Secretary of State.

2.30 pm

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that, as far as the House is concerned, it remains Tuesday and that Wednesday's business has now gone? Secondly, would it be possible for you to ask the Leader of the House to make a statement on business? He is not here, and I should have thought that the Leader of the House should be present to make a statement as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order. It remains Tuesday and we are debating amendment No. 311.

Mr. Allan Roberts: On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are debating the Housing Bill, and the Opposition are doing that at length because of the importance of the subject and not with any wish to talk out any other business. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I fully accept that. The occupants of the Chair will ensure that the debate remains in order, as has been the case so far.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am very grateful for your last comment because there have been suggestions that there have been unduly lengthy speeches on some points. In case one or two of the rowdy hooligans on the Tory Benches failed to catch it, you, Mr. Speaker, have just confirmed that the debate has been conducted in good order throughout. The Labour Opposition certainly have been examining the Bill in detail. It deserves every bit of detailed consideration.

Mr. Spearing: May I confirm what my hon. Friend has just said. In an earlier debate I moved a group of amendments at about 6.30 am which were voted on at about 12.30 pm. I do not recall at any time the occupant of the Chair calling any hon. Member to order for wandering beyond the scope of the amendments. Although I spoke at some length, I challenge anyone to look at *Hansard* and say that what I said was not necessary and important.

Just to put it on record, it would have been possible for the Government to have moved a closure motion. I am not saying that it would have been accepted because we were dealing with very important matters. If they had an intimation that it would not have been accepted, and therefore did not move it, that proves what my hon. Friend said, that the matters concerned were such that the Government did not claim to move a closure motion.

Having made a little procedural detour, may I now revert to the Greater London council and its strategic plan. At the moment, there is no strategic planning in London. Therefore, for the Secretary of State to say that planning goes on as before and that the housing action trust will have to take account of the local strategic plan means that he does not understand that, although there was a strategic plan for London, and it stands for something, it cannot be

updated. Nor can it be updated for the metropolitan counties because they have disappeared. How we are to have proper strategic planning in the metropolitan counties or in Greater London is becoming more apparent day by day. Every week we have some announcement from the Department of the Environment or the Department of Transport about studies concerning railways, roads, and airports or we receive rumours of new housing estates from various Departments willy-nilly and not at all co-ordinated.

The Department of the Environment is now considering building large numbers of what are called low-cost areas in various parts of Greater London, particularly in east London. The Department is now in consultation with people about those areas. Some of them could be housing action trust areas, but in putting those areas on the map, and in discussions about them, there has been very little regard to strategic planning, particularly transport and roads, which are vital for getting people in and out of areas to and from work.

Here we have yet another planning body spatchcocked into an already unsatisfactory situation. Also, the Secretary of State is given unprecedented powers centrally to determine what should happen. He does not even do that for the urban development corporations, which are bad enough. I can see what will happen. There will be more correspondence in the press, more letters, more Adjournment debates from enraged hon. Members, more deputations to the Department of the Environment in Marsham street and more confusion. When people in the areas ask, "Why can't the planning committee do something about it?" and they are told, "It is up to the Secretary of State", they will then say, "What? All the way down in London?". We get that from a Government who say that they believe in giving people freedom and choice, but this measure will do the very opposite. It will restrict choice.

There is an example of what already has gone wrong in planning in London. I conclude my remarks on the benefits of the amendment by mentioning what has happened. At the moment east London is suffering from an enormous housing shortage. We all know that in London there is an extreme shortage of rented housing at reasonable rents because the Government have cut council house building by about half throughout the country.

A few years ago the Government said, "We will regenerate east London. We will regenerate the docklands area. Let us have a docklands development corporation." There has been a lot of controversy about what has happened.

I have the record of the other place for 1 July 1981. I believe that I cannot quote exactly the words said in the other place unless they are the words of a Minister, but in column 214 the Chairman of the Select Committee of the House of Lords, who, in my view mistakenly, permitted the London Docklands development corporation to proceed, said that the greatest need in docklands must always be for rented accommodation for people of modest means. He said that at the moment it was not possible for that to be built, but he looked forward to the day when it would be.

We all know what has happened. We now have Canary wharf, 12 million sq ft of commercial property surrounded by similar developments, with a knock-on effect on housing values and no plans for any large area of municipal building. That has caused a great deal of trouble, not only in terms of transport but also for the local community. The knock-on effect on house prices is making it impossible for local people to stay. They are looking for even cheaper accommodation further away.

In Newham the escalating cost of new houses means that families who have lived in the area for generations are now unable to stay. Whereas years ago in the same job they would have had a modest mortgage for a small house, that is no longer possible. That is because the LDDC, which is not democratically accountable locally either to the GLC, which has been dissolved, or to the local council, has got away with putting up Canary wharf without even a planning inquiry. I am not saying to the Minister that it therefore follows that there will be such developments in every housing action trust which is created. However, I am describing the danger of departing from the normal post-war planning laws that in broad terms were agreed by both sides. If that can happen disastrously in respect of the social and economic effects of a development such as Canary wharf, there could be many developments of that sort in any designated housing trust area. That could happen anywhere in the country, not only in London. Such plans would be under the direct authority of the Minister and he could modify them should he care to use the powers that are included in the Bill.

It was wrong of the Government to draft the clause in this way. It would make much better sense if the word "consultation" were deleted and if the words "agreement of the local authority" were inserted. I hope to hear from the Minister that she will consider doing so. If the Government cannot do so now, I hope that they will be prepared to make the amendment when the Bill reaches another place in the next few weeks.

Mrs. Roe: I regret that these amendments represent a further attempt by the Opposition to frustrate the objectives of housing action trusts. Not content with the provisions in clause 61 that require the Secretary of State to consult local planning authorities about a housing action trust's development proposals, or with the provisions in clause 59 that require HATs to consult authorities about their general proposals for the designated area, the amendments seek to add a further layer of planning bureaucracy.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is concerned about the lack of a strategic plan for London. There is now a London planning advisory committee to which the Secretary of State has issued guidelines, on the basis of which the committee is in the process of drawing up strategic guidance. If HATs are proposed for London, that guidance will be taken into account.

We have made it clear that we do not intend HATs to take over the role of local planning authorities in drawing up formal development plans and we shall expect HATs to have regard to such plans when working out their proposals. That reaffirms our wish to see co-operative working arrangements being developed between HATs and local authorities.

However, the job that HATs are being set up to do is urgent. The people who currently live in run-down areas dominated by unattractive council estates deserve to see early results. If that can be achieved in harmony with local planning authorities I shall be delighted, but we are not prepared to risk obstruction from those who want HATs to fail.

[Mrs. Roe]

Clause 61 is therefore necessary to achieve that purpose. We have built in adequate consultation procedures with local authorities both in respect of a housing action trust's general proposals and its development intentions. Beyond that, we have already debated the extent to which HATs will be accountable for their activities. There is therefore no justification for the amendments and I invite hon. Members to reject them.

Mr. Allan Roberts: In Committee, the Opposition made it clear that they oppose the need to establish housing action trusts, but we welcome the fact that for the first time in nine years the Government have committed themselves to providing additional resources for problem council estates that need money to be spent on them to revitalise them. The Opposition Front Bench view is that the best way to deal with problem estates would be to provide the necessary resources to local authorities to carry out the job, in consultation with, and with the co-operation of, their tenants.

Many of the local authorities in which HATs are to be declared have already consulted their tenants and have drawn up plans for their problem estates. For example, that is true of the Hulme estate in Manchester. All that is preventing action being taken by the local authority, in consultation and in conjunction with their tenants, is the Government's refusal to give to local authorities the resources that they need to do the job. That has been the position for nine years. Housing action trusts do not need to be declared before the Government can make money available to local authorities to deal with problem estates.

We recognise that problem estates exist and that the only way to deal with them is to pump into them the necessary resources. If the Government push through their legislation, against all the advice that they have been given by the Opposition, no local authority in its right mind will oppose additional resources coming its way, but we are opposed to the bureaucratic machine that is to be established to spend that money. We are opposed to the fact that the tenants and the planning authority will not be involved or consulted.

The worst way to deal with a problem estate is for the Secretary of State to appoint a non-elected quango that will probably act against the wishes of the residents. Instead of tenants benefiting from modernisation, renovation and improvements, they might be driven out by gentrification and yuppification, as some Conservative Members implied earlier.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has moved an amendment that would restore accountability, democracy and reasonable planning procedures to housing action trusts. It is not a wrecking tactic. The Government ought to welcome my hon. Friend's amendment.

2.45 pm

Mr. Spearing: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker, I should like to comment on the Minister's reply. I was astonished by its brevity and illogicality. She will correct me if I am wrong, but I think she said that my amendment would add yet another layer of planning bureaucracy to that which already exists.

Mrs. Roe *indicated assent.*

Mr. Spearing: The Minister nods her head. I do not suggest that planning is without its bureaucracy. Many people get up-tight when they are told that they cannot have planning permission, but one man's bureaucracy is another man's protection.

The additional layer of bureaucracy is not in the amendment; it is in the Bill. The amendment seeks to remove the additional layer of bureaucracy that the Secretary of State is imposing on local authorities. I expected a higher standard of accuracy from the Minister. If she would care to withdraw her accusation that my amendment imposes an additional layer of bureaucracy, I should be very pleased to accept an apology. To accuse me of imposing an additional layer of bureaucracy when that is what the Bill is doing takes the biscuit. It is not even up to Standing Committee standard on a bad Wednesday morning, let alone on the Floor of the House. Standards in Marsham street must be dropping quite remarkably.

The Minister also said that there is a strategic plan for London and that the London planning advisory committee has been asked to get on with it. That committee is what it is called; it is an advisory committee. It does not have the resources of the old Greater London council. It does not know the views of local people, through their elected representatives. Representatives of the borough councils serve on the advisory committee, but borough councils have their own particular view. As a Member of Parliament with a London constituency, you will know, Mr. Speaker, that Croydon is all that matters to the councillors of Croydon and Newham is all that matters to the councillors of Newham. That must apply also to Kensington. Kensington is everything to the councillors of Kensington. Can we expect them to get together in the London planning advisory committee and sort out an effective strategic plan for London? I suggest that that is impossible.

The Minister also referred to run-down council estates. There may be a need to rehabilitate, rejuvenate and regenerate—a word that is being used in connection with the London Docklands development corporation. It may be regenerating the environment, but the LDDC is not regenerating communities.

Will those run-down council estates be assisted by development for which local authorities cannot give planning permission? In the amendment, we are talking about not money but planning. What planning permission could be given by a HAT that could not be given by a local authority to an applicant to improve the quality of the environment of those estates? That will not require a new planning authority.

I suggest that the Government have a different objective in mind. Why? Because it is in the Bill. Clause 58(1)(c) states that the objective of a housing trust is

"to encourage diversity in the interests by virtue of which housing accommodation in the area is occupied and, in the case of accommodation that is occupied under tenancies, diversity in the identity of the landlords".

That is the objective of a HAT. A landlord who wishes to develop the slice of territory that he has been given by the HAT may make a planning application. At present, if the change to a new landlord has been effected by one of the voluntary arrangements in the White Paper, the landlord is still subject to planning permission from the borough. He cannot do exactly what he likes. Under this part of the

Bill, the HAT can hear an application from the landlord, who may have vacant possession of a plot of land, and say "You can put up a building, hotel or a block of offices."

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is talking about the generality of the new HATs, but he should understand that certain areas will not be touched at all. It would be incredible, following the Secretary of State's alarming television interview this week, if somebody said that they were to develop in his back yard. My guess is that there will be no HAT in that area, and I do not think that there will be one for Chequers. If a developer said "We shall turn Chequers into 20 flats under a HAT", the Government would not wear it and the Prime Minister would put a stop to it.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend is right. I cannot foresee planning powers in areas such as Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Essex or Berkshire being taken away from their county councils. Berkshire county council is not always in agreement with the Government, but imagine what would happen if a Labour Government said to Berkshire county council, "We are creating a rural development area in Berkshire. The county planning authority has no power." Imagine the indignation and accusations of dictatorship that would follow. That is, however, what is happening in urban areas. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was right to say that it would not happen where the Secretary of State lives.

The Minister said that planning permission will be in the hands of the Secretary of State. We therefore deduce that the Government are interested in taking the right to grant planning permission away from elected, democratic planning committees. In Newham it is not planning permission but money that is required. We have eight tower blocks unoccupied because they are unsafe. I have an estimate that was given to Newham borough council in 1985 of how much it would cost to repair those tower blocks. Hume point would require £2·5 million and John Sopp and Ault points would require £6 million for essential repairs. If the repairs were done on a unit basis, it would cost between £22,000 and £36,000 per housing unit. I believe that the same problem is to be found in Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. It may not be to the same intense degree, but if run-down estates are to be rejuvenated, such resources will be needed, rather than the transfer of planning permission, which undoubtedly will be used by the Minister's agents to grease the slipways for planning developments which will not help the area's people and which will be out of kilter with the sort of strategic plans that exist elsewhere.

For those reasons, I urge that the amendment be pressed to a vote. It is important to make a protest against the takeover by lackeys in Whitehall of areas that belong to the people.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 63

PUBLIC HEALTH

Amendment made: No. 364, in page 46, line 44, at end insert—

'( ) Where an order under this section provides that a housing action trust shall have the functions conferred upon a local authority by Part III of the 1936 Act, section 36 of the Local Government Act 1974 (recovery by local authorities of establishment charges) shall apply to the housing action trust as if it were a local authority within the meaning of that section.'.—*[Mrs. Roe.]*

Clause 65

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL HOUSING AUTHORITIES AND HOUSING ACTION TRUSTS

Mr. Allan Roberts: I beg to move amendment No. 88, in page 47, line 42, at end insert

'and at the end of that section there shall be added—

"(2) In deciding what assistance it is reasonable to render in discharging its duty under this section, a housing action trust shall have regard to the proportion of all vacancies arising in housing accommodation transferred to it by an order under section 69 of the Housing Act 1988 let to homeless persons in the year before the making of the order.".'.

We want to make progress, but the amendments are so important and deal with such significant issues it is difficult to move quickly.

Amendment No. 88 relates to homelessness. We could not be discussing a more important issue in the House, whether it be Tuesday or Wednesday.

Mr. Skinner: It is Wednesday at Ascot.

Mr. Roberts: If the people at Ascot were addressing their minds to homelessness, the nation would be on the road to solving the problem.

The problem is that when HATs are declared and the bureaucratic quangos or lackeys of Whitehall take over, the responsibility that rests with local government for rehousing and homelessness ceases to exist within the area that the HAT has taken over. Following pressure from the Opposition, the Government admitted in Committee that that was a problem and introduced an amendment designed to give HATs some responsibility for rehousing homeless people. That took the form of an amendment to section 72 of part III of the Housing Act 1985, which we used to know as the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. It covered co-operation between local authorities and other housing bodies. Where a local housing authority requests a HAT to assist it in the discharge of its functions relating to rehousing the homeless, the HAT

"to whom the request is made shall co-operate in rendering such assistance in the discharge of the functions to which the request relates as is reasonable in the circumstances."

If any hon. Member, including the Minister, can tell me what that means, and what responsibility is placed on the HAT within the definition of the HAT's requirements, they are doing better than I am. It is obviously Civil Service, legal or ministerial mumbo-jumbo, which does not place any responsibility on the HAT at all, except that it must

"co-operate in rendering such assistance in the discharge of functions to which the request relates as is reasonable in the circumstances."

What does

"as is reasonable in the circumstances"

mean?

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): My hon. Friend has mentioned the monolithic council estate in Hulme in Manchester—a system-built estate which, from the day of its construction, has proved faulty. Suppose that that is declared a housing action trust. Because we cannot let the properties, there is an imbalance; the tenants are mainly students and single people, including single

[Mr. Robert Litherland]

parents. Suppose that the Government bring in an unelected, unrepresentative body, a HAT, which says, "We cannot get any entrepreneurs to come back into Hulme to produce the necessary finance to rejuvenate the area." The Secretary of State will then give that body the responsibility—or authority—to demolish. Once it had been demolished, what will happen to all the single people who will then be declared homeless?

3 pm

Mr. Roberts: That is an important question and if Hulme is declared a HAT the Government will answer it. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland), I have had some experience in dealing with the Hulme estate; I was chair of housing in the city of Manchester. If the Government had the courage to act on a real problem estate, they would not declare the houses in Hulme, which can be rehabilitated, a housing action trust; they would declare the crescents a HAT. In 10 years' time they will have to be demolished anyway. Then, in co-operation with the local authority, they would accept responsibility to rehouse the people who live in the crescents and provide the necessary housing investment programme allocation to enable the city of Manchester to build low-rise council houses with gardens and purpose-built accommodation for single people. However, I do not expect that that will be the Government's response.

We are dealing with the responsibility of housing action trusts, wherever they are, for the homeless. One of our criticisms of the Bill is that homelessness is mentioned in only one place—in the amendment that we managed to persuade the Government to move, but which we believe to be inadequate. The words "reasonable in the circumstances" could enable a bureaucratic HAT to say, "We do not have any accommodation in the area for which we are responsible. It is therefore not reasonable to expect us to assist in housing the homeless". That could happen even if those people have become homeless in the area for which the HAT is responsible.

Our amendment seeks to tighten the definition of what is reasonable in the way of assistance by drawing the HAT's attention to the previous use of its newly acquired stock for rehousing homeless people. The ineffectiveness of section 72 of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, the homeless persons legislation, is clear. Section 72 applies where a local authority approaches another local authority, a registered housing association, a new town corporation or the Scottish Special Housing Association for assistance. During the debate on the provision in 1977 strong doubts were cast upon its effectiveness in forcing co-operation on unwilling bodies. We are sure that HATs, peopled by the friends of the Secretary of State for the Environment, will be unwilling to accept some responsibility for homeless families in their local authority area.

In the debate on the Housing (Homeless Persons) Bill in 1977, the present Secretary of State for Defence said:

"That is not an extremely hard and demanding requirement."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*; 23 June 1977, c. 369.]

He said that it was a very mild requirement. You can say that again. It left the door wide open for the SSHA, for example, to say that it appreciated that it was being asked to co-operate but that it was not prepared to make houses available for homeless people. There were plenty of reasons that a body could give. That is what the housing action trusts are likely to say. They will say that they are not prepared to make their houses available for homelessness; there are plenty of reasons that they can give under the Bill.

Housing associations can also be required to help under section 72. The problem with them is also clear. The misgivings expressed in Parliament in 1977 have been borne out over time. Housing associations have been the major bodies to which local authorities have had recourse for help in fulfilling their responsibilities for rehousing the homeless. It is worth considering the results of that relationship. I do not criticise the housing association movement in any way. There are reasons other than the housing association movement's desire or otherwise to help the homeless to explain why matters have unfolded as they have. If co-operation with such generally sympathetic bodies as housing associations is not working out, there is even less likelihood of successful co-operation with housing action trusts.

Useful and mutually beneficial arrangements have been built up between individual councils and housing associations under section 72 of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act. Many housing associations perform a valuable role in helping to rehouse the homeless. However, according to reports from many London boroughs, not all is perfect. While some associations give all, or a large proportion of, their stock to rehousing the homeless, others house few or no homeless applicants because it does not appear to them to be "reasonable in the circumstances". The Londonwide figures give us some idea of the problem. Between 1980 and 1986, the proportion of London local authority tenancies let to the homeless increased from 31 per cent. of the vacancies to 51 per cent. In the same period, the proportion of housing association stock let to homeless nominees rose from 16 per cent. to 21 per cent.—an increase of only 5 per cent. as compared with the 20 per cent. increase faced by councils.

The Minister does not accept that the council is the housing authority of last resort. When all else fails, it is the council that has to deal with homeless people who have been rejected by private landlords, the housing association movement—and in future by the housing action trusts if they are established.

Mr. Skinner: Unless it is Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Roberts: Unless it is Tower Hamlets, which does not want to house the homeless at all.

The royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea provides a useful local example. In Committee the Minister mentioned the royal borough with pride as a good example of co-operation. The number of vacancies offered to it by local associations dropped from 386 in 1985-86 to 280 in 1986-87. That was despite the fact that the borough is unique in having more housing association property than council property, that it has provided more than £137 million in the last 10 years to develop housing association fair rent accommodation and that it alone provides around 12 per cent. of the total national and local authority funding for associations. There are many good reasons why the housing associations cannot fulfil their obligations to house the homeless as many of them would wish. In spite of blandishments and public statements by Housing Ministers and successive Secretaries of State for the Environment about how they support the voluntary

housing association movement, the movement has faced exactly the same cuts in capital allocations as the local authorities during the Government's nine years in office.

There are many good reasons that partly explain the seeming reluctance of some housing associations to pull their weight. Housing association stock is not always appropriate for rehousing families, as many of the associations have been established to meet special needs. That is the special role of many of them, and it is welcome. Some housing associations are geared towards specific client groups of non-priority homeless whom councils would not have the responsibility of rehousing. Some prioritise internal transfers for their tenants before they take in new tenants.

The fact remains, however, that there are serious and growing worries among local authorities about the proportionately reducing role of housing associations in housing homeless people in London and throughout the country. The Bill makes matters worse by attempting to change the whole nature of the housing association movement, slowly nudging it out of the voluntary sector into the private sector with affordable rather than fair rents—with cuts in grant from central Government to housing associations and with housing associations being encouraged to take on the role of the organisation that facilitates the privatisation of council estates. As a result, housing associations will be less able to deal with the homeless.

Mr. Spearing: If there is a decline in supply, and the general level of rents goes up—which the Government have made clear is one of their aims—the amount of accommodation available to housing associations will decline, thus reducing their ability to help the homeless, and the cost to borough councils will increase as market rents rise. As somebody in my constituency said, that will result in camp sites in Epping forest.

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is right. The squeeze on the homeless is coming from all directions. I am not criticising housing associations. I am criticising the Government for creating the circumstances in which housing associations, some of them very good, cannot fulfil their responsibilities.

The Labour party is committed to a housing association movement which is part of the public sector and involved in the provision of social housing for people in housing need, and which receives Government assistance to that end. We reject the Government's proposals, which would force housing associations into the private sector and into becoming instruments of the free market. That is what the Government plan.

I hear you asking, Mr. Speaker, how all this relates to the amendment. We have heard that no local authority has ever used section 72 of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 to influence a housing association to remedy a problem. Even when the section was drawn to their attention, they did not feel that it could be used effectively.

In Kensington and Chelsea borough council, for example, long negotiations initiated by the council with a view to increasing the number of voids offered to it by housing associations have ended without the council getting its way. It could argue that the housing associations are being unreasonable, but it is unlikely to do so because it has no confidence in the effectiveness of section 72.

The same will be true for HATs. I paraphrase what the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) said in 1977: it leaves the door wide open for the HAT to say that it appreciates that it is being asked to co-operate but that it is not prepared to make the houses available for homelessness—there are plenty of reasons that it can give.

The amendment would make the duty to co-operate more realistic. It would not make housing associations' duty to co-operate more realistic, as that could be done only if we tabled amendments that ensured that the housing association movement got the resources necessary to provide the accommodation needed for it to co-operate more realistically. Our amendment would make the HATs' duty to co-operate more realistic.

The HAT is, after all, taking over the local authority's housing stock and thus diminishing the local authority's ability to help the homeless. We think that there is a special reason why the duty on HATs should be stronger than it is on housing associations. We are making the duty to co-operate more realistic by defining more closely the criteria to be used when assessing whether it is reasonable for the HAT to assist a local authority. The amendment does not go as far as we should like, but it gives the HAT guidance, which is better than the amorphous phraseology of the Government's current draft.

3.15 pm

Given that, in theory, a HAT is meant to continue to use its newly acquired stock to provide social rented housing—that is what the Government have said, although we have reason to doubt that that is their long-term intention—it will need to have a clear picture of how the stock was used by the local authority. A large and increasing percentage of local authority housing is already being used to rehouse the homeless. Removing a substantial part of their pool of potential lettings will exacerbate local authorities' difficulties.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): My hon. Friend said that the number of homeless families being rehoused has risen from 25 to 50 per cent. of all vacancies in some parts of London. In the London borough of Hackney, the homeless are taking up 90 per cent. of vacancies.

Mr. Roberts: I am sure that that is true. Homelessness is increasing throughout the country. Many people who are not strictly defined as homeless are on waiting lists and would feel justified in being given accommodation, but they are having to wait much longer because of increasing homelessness and local authorities' responsibility to house homeless families. That is a major problem, and it will be exacerbated if HATs take out a significant proportion—or even a small proportion—of the local authorities' available stock. Removing properties available to the local authority does not affect just the homeless—it adds to local authorities' difficulties when trying to fulfil their housing responsibilities.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I do not challenge for a moment what the hon. Gentleman has said about the problem of finding homes for homeless people, but I am puzzled about how amendment No. 88 tackles that problem. If, for example, 12 homeless families were granted a tenancy in the year before their homes were declared part of a HAT, there is no way in which they could be evicted. They would

[Mr. Brandon-Bravo]

have to be rehoused—unless I am reading the amendment incorrectly. They would not be homeless. Presumably they would have secure tenancies.

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman has obviously not listened to what I have said. Nor has he understood the amendment.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I have read the amendment.

Mr. Roberts: I have explained what the amendment would do to strengthen section 72 of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. It would strengthen the Government's inadequate amendment, which would make HATs responsible for accepting the need to co-operate under section 72. If the hon. Gentleman would like it, I shall illustrate how our amendment would work, based on 1987 figures for a south London borough, which has so far managed to avoid using bed-and-breakfast hotels for its homeless families.

If the legislation requiring HATs to assist with homelessness is not strengthened, that borough will find that if a HAT is declared in its area and takes over 5,000 council properties, in the first year, it will lose 190 vacancies on the estate to which it would previously have had access. Some 81 per cent. of the vacancies would have gone to the priority homeless because the borough has the problems which my hon. Friends have mentioned, but more than 150 more homeless households will have to be housed in temporary accommodation.

The borough has used every alternative to bed-and-breakfast accommodation, but it will now be forced to start using it. Bed-and-breakfast accommodation would cost the borough £2·3 million in the first year. Unless the people involved can be rehoused, that cost will be paid in year two as well. By that time, however, another year's vacancies will have been lost, and so yet more families will have to be put in bed and breakfast. Our amendment attempts to prevent that happening. It would prevent HATs refusing at least some of the 190 vacancies on the estate of 5,000 council properties being used to rehouse homeless families.

The Government do not want HATs to be responsible for rehousing homeless families. HATs are not designed to assist tenants who live on the estate or the homeless or to alleviate the local authority's problems. The Government's aim is to yuppify and gentrify the council estate, and in the end bring in different people—in other words, their aim is to destroy Labour's base by getting rid of Labour voters. In Wandsworth, the council has modernised and improved the estates, built walls round them to keep out local residents and introduced security guards. Such councils do not want that gentrification to be spoilt by homeless families. That is their motive. They fall into the prejudiced trap of believing that the definition of a homeless family is similar to that of a problem family. We know that that is not true and that homeless families have as much right to a decent home as other people.

Our amendment means that the housing action trust will have to take factors such as I have described into account when deciding whether to assist a local authority. It will have a clear mandate to remain part of the local social housing sector and also a clear duty to act as a responsible agency in helping to solve local housing problems, which we suspect that the Government do not want it to do. They are involved in social engineering, not in dealing with social housing problems. That is the problem with the Government's proposals.

If the Government are prepared to accept the amendment, all well and good. However, if the Government and the housing action trust do not assist adequately and seek to avoid their responsibilities, the amendment gives clearer grounds for legal action to enforce the duty to the community. That is what we want.

In 1987, 112,730 households were accepted as homeless by local authorities under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985. Homelessness has more than doubled in the past few years while the Government have been in power. On 1 April 1987, 1,289,492 households were on council house waiting lists in England, of which 879,831 —68·2 per cent.—were assessed to be in serious and urgent need. All those figures come from the housing investment programme returns that the Department of the Environment has had from local authorities.

Homelessness is one of the scandals of our age. At Prime Minister's Question Time some weeks ago, I asked the Prime Minister why homelessness had doubled during her period in office. She told me that it was because of marital breakdowns. If the party of the family has doubled homelessness because of increased marital breakdowns, it deserves condemnation by its own standards and moral values.

Homelessness is a serious problem. There are no proposals in the legislation that will help to meet the problems of the homeless. As I have explained, there are proposals in the Bill that will make the problems worse and will increase, not reduce, homelessness. Our amendment is a small attempt to alleviate the problems of homelessness and mitigate the difficulties that the Government are creating.

Mr. Boateng: In an intervention that he may regret, the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), told the House that homelessness was to be a separate debate—I think that those were his words. But has he not realised over all the hours that we have been sitting here that this is a debate about housing? If housing is not about homelessness, what is it about? Why are we here? Why are we spending our time in this place if it is not to house the homeless?

The Conservative party agenda has nothing whatsoever to do with homelessness. Nowhere in the Bill, certainly nowhere in this part, which we are seeking to amend, does one find the word "homelessness". That is because the Conservatives do not care about the homeless. They do not care about those who, day in, day out, find themselves out in our streets in wooden boxes. They do not care about those who are cramped in appalling bed-and-breakfast accommodation and about those who are in inadequate and unsatisfactory accommodation throughout the length and breadth of our country. They simply do not care, so they do not address the matter in the Bill.

Mr. Winnick: Did my hon. Friend notice that when my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) said that one of the purposes of transferring council accommodation to HATs and then further into the private sector was to ensure that those properties were used by yuppies, the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) nodded vigorously in agreement? He was honest enough—I give him credit for it—to admit what the

Government refuse to acknowledge, which is that much of what is now in the public sector is being transferred to people who are not in housing need and who have the income to find other accommodation.

Mr. Boateng: My hon. Friend puts that well. The fact is that there are two purposes in the Bill, particularly in the provisions on housing action trusts.

The first purpose is to fatten up and farm out the best estates—to get rid of them and put them into the private sector. Then Porsches will be in and people out. That is the mentality of Conservative Members: out with the people, in with the Porsches.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Disgraceful.

Mr. Boateng: I hear the hon. Gentleman, from a sedentary position, shout "Disgraceful," but if he would only go but a few miles from this Palace of Westminster, he would find manifold examples, in docklands and Wandsworth, of precisely what I am talking about. One cannot move in docklands for the Porsches, yet does one see a pram there? Does one see children playing there? No, one does not. One sees people who make their money in the City and who go home at night to their demi-palaces, at £250,000 and £500,000 for a bijou maisonette. That is the reality of housing provision under the Tories, and we are here to say no to it.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo *rose*——

Mr. Boateng: The hon. Gentleman has had his say.

We are here to say that we are not prepared to tolerate Conservative Members using the vehicle of housing action trusts to drive those whom we represent out of their homes. We are not here to allow them to do that.

That is the Government's first purpose, but there is another.

Mr. Sedgemore: My hon. Friend is talking about homes in docklands. Is he aware that in St. Katharine's dock he will find, as homes, yachts valued at £750,000, with radar equipment, which never see the sea?

Mr. Boateng: There is something peculiarly obscene about that picture, yet it is the day-to-day reality of our city now. Yachts are in docklands but there are cardboard boxes a few hundred yards down the road from the House.

There is a second agenda. I note that the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) is smiling, grimacing and nodding. He knows a lot about fattening up and farming out. No wonder what I have to say brings a smile of recognition to his lips. I welcome that—it is always welcome to see recognition of the truth on the face of Conservative Members.

Mr. Skinner: It is not a real smile because the hon. Gentleman is upset as he wanted to be at Ascot.

Mr. Boateng: The Opposition are sorry to be keeping the hon. Member for Crawley away from Ascot, but no doubt he will find a way to get there somehow.

For the price of a box at Ascot one could house a family in London for a year. But will the Conservatives spend the money on that? Do they know what it costs to keep a family in bed-and-breakfast for a certain time? It costs £11,000 a unit. Do they know what it would cost in the first year to build a home for that family? The cost would be £6,000, reducing by the end of the seventh year to £1,000. Yet Conservative Members prefer to keep families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation rather than spend the money, as they should, in the public sector, providing low-cost accommodation to rent and, indeed, to buy, to give all the people a real choice.

3.30 pm

There is a second and more sinister reason behind housing action trusts. It is part of the hidden agenda. The hon. Member for Nottingham, South cannot wait to hear what is coming next. I will tell him. The second part of that hidden agenda, as he knows only too well, is to destroy the ability of democratically controlled local authorities to make adequate provision for housing in our cities. The Government want to destroy that function by introducing unelected, unaccountable bodies that will not be obliged to consult and take on board the needs and aspirations of the people in whose areas they have been imposed. There is no pretence about consulting on where those monstrosities will be erected. They will be erected according to the diktat of Ministers.

That is a totalitarian way of behaving. It denies people opportunity and choice, the very things that Conservative Members claim to support. They claim to belong to the party of the family, of choice and opportunity. Yet they deny opportunity and choice to families who seek no more than adequate and decent shelter. Why should they not have that? The Government will use the housing action trusts to drive a wedge between communities and their elected representatives.

The way in which they will use the housing action trusts is ingenious. The mischief that our amendment seeks to correct is that they will prevent local authorities from meeting the demands that we deal with in our surgeries every day. People with housing problems must even go to the hon. Member for Crawley in his surgery. It probably does them little good, but I am sure he is faced with such problems. When they come to us, what are we to say to them? We know that our local authorities, under the present regime, do not have the slightest chance of being able to house them.

The Under-Secretary is adopting a pose of becoming silence. If she were to speak, she would be obliged to say that only a few weeks ago she was busy congratulating my local authority, the London borough of Brent, on the innovative schemes it was developing, together with housing associations, to meet the needs of the homeless in my constituency. She has been to Brent and knows what is being done. Therefore, she must know that there is no way, with the imposition of housing action trusts, that that will continue. It will be like having a black hole imposed in one's constituency. All the capital and loot that Conservative Members are promising us for housing will be sucked into the housing action trusts. The most deprived estates, the houses that need refurbishment and repair and the new build for homeless families will be neglected.

The Minister must know that while she is heaping praise on the London borough of Brent for the work that it does—long may she continue to do so—our housing allocation for 1988-89 was only £19·25 million. We had asked for £82 million to deal with 900 homeless households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and a further 800 in temporary accommodation. That is the extent of the crisis in that borough alone—the eighth most deprived borough. My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) is

[Mr. Boateng]

nodding because he knows only too well that his borough is the most deprived in the country in terms of housing and on every other social and economic index. Yet the Government are cutting the resources available to us.

We have come to the House with a relatively minor and modest amendment. We are not asking for the world. We are asking only that the housing action trusts, when they are imposed, have a duty to take account—in the way in which Conservative Members are not prepared to do—of the plight of the homeless. We stand up for the homeless and, whether the Government like it or not, we intend to ensure that homelessness and the homeless are mentioned time and again in the Chamber and, one way or another, we will drive that into the Bill.

Mr. Winnick: One of the reasons why Labour Members are not willing to offer any apologies for what has happened during the Report stage of the Bill is our concern about the plight and tragedy of the homeless which has been expressed by my hon. Friends the Members for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) and for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). I find it difficult to believe that Conservative Members really understand their plight.

In your absence, Mr. Speaker, at about 5 o'clock this morning, I referred to the people sleeping about a quarter of a mile from here. They are not all tramps or irresponsible people but they are sleeping, night after night, in cardboard boxes by the Embankment tube station. Is not that a tragedy? How many of those people have come from areas of high unemployment simply because they have been told that London is the place to find work? Even if they can find work, which is perhaps not as easy as is sometimes claimed, they cannot afford accommodation. The price of the cheapest housing unit in London and the south-east is about £50,000 or £60,000 and that is for a one-bedroom flat. Rented accommodation is simply unavailable. Is it surprising that they sleep in cardboard boxes just a quarter of a mile from the Palace of Westminster?

Mr. Skinner: I am sure that my hon. Friend will appreciate that there would be plenty of photo opportunities for the Prime Minister if she went to Charing Cross instead of St. James's park. She should take the television cameras with her so that there would be a photo opportunity with the down-and-outs who have come to London to find a job because there are no jobs in the north. It would be wonderful if the Prime Minister recognised the gravity of the problem. All her photo opportunities are with the people she represents, those who will vote for her, so that she can kid the people by using the television. It would be a good idea, on some future occasion, if Labour Members went to Charing Cross and recognised the plight of those people in cardboard boxes.

Mr. Winnick: Even if, in the evening, the Prime Minister were to walk from No. 10 Downing street to Embankment tube station, it would not take long. In a car, it would take about two minutes. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is absolutely right, as he usually is on such matters. He knows that Mother Teresa had to lecture the Prime Minister about homelessness in London. It is almost impossible to believe that, with all the problems to which Mother Teresa has devoted her life on the Indian sub-continent, she is now having to lecture the Prime Minister about homelessness on the Prime Minister's doorstep.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Winnick: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover would agree that not only should the Prime Minister visit that area but the Secretary of State for the Environment should also go, as should the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), who is seeking to intervene.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman is suggesting that the Prime Minister should visit the area. Will he tell us when he last paid a visit?

Mr. Winnick: Yes, certainly. I went about three weeks ago.

The feeling I had then was one of sadness. It is entirely up to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West whether he believes that I am telling the truth. I felt sad that in a country where much has been achieved over the past 50 or 60 years there are still people who spend so much of their time having to sleep in such conditions. It is a disgrace to a society in which the richest people are being so well rewarded by the Budget.

In addition, thousands of families are forced to live in bed-and-breakfast hostels. Let hon. Members imagine what it is like in this day and age trying to bring up young children in one squalid room, not through any malice on the part of the local authority—far from it—but simply because authorities are not in a position to offer accommodation. In the past eight or nine years, very few local authorities have been able to build. I do not know about your local authority, Mr. Speaker, but mine has been unable to build any local accommodation in the past nine years and there is no sign of the necessary finance being available in the future. That is one reason why there is so much housing stress and misery.

As a result of this part of the Bill, a certain amount —we do not know how much—of local authority rented accommodation will be transferred to completely unelected bodies appointed by the Secretary of State. After two or three years' managerial responsibility for the accommodation, the housing action trusts will not transfer it back to the local authority. The property will go from the local authority to the housing action trust and then into the privately rented sector. The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) nods his assent to that.

Mr. Spearing: It is more likely to go out of the rented sector altogether and become privately owned.

When the Prime Minister came to the House this morning, she was reminded of her moral responsibility, a subject on which she claims to be an expert. The Under-Secretary of State must tell the House why the proportion of accommodation snatched from the local authorities should not carry with it a pro rata responsibility for any homelessness in the borough concerned. That would be moral, and it could be incorporated in our amendment.

Mr. Winnick: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, but the Under-Secretary of State will do no such thing because she has no instructions to do so from the Secretary of State or the Prime Minister. One cannot imagine the people at a Thursday Cabinet meeting being concerned about the

plight of the homeless or discussing what should be done to help people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and those living in cardboard boxes. On 30 November, when the Secretary of State moved the Second Reading of the Bill, he said in effect that the only way in which rented accommodation could be provided was through the privately rented sector. In other words, if one buys bread or other food in a private market, why should not one obtain rented accommodation in the same way?

Mr. Morgan: When the Prime Minister came here at 8.15 this morning, it was not to give the Secretary of State advice about the problems of the homeless but to ask him to go back to St. James's park with her because she had noticed another rising tide of rubbish and intended to do as President Kennedy did in August 1961 and assert her moral leadership of the western world with the ringing words, "Ich bin ein bin-liner."

3.45 pm

Mr. Winnick: I cannot improve on that. My hon. Friend sums up the situation very well.

The Prime Minister is keen to take credit for what she regards as her position as a senior statesman on the international scene, while a quarter of a mile from her official residence people have to sleep in cardboard boxes. Things would be different if the Government really cared about the homeless and those who, like so many of my constituents, are not technically homeless but have to live at the top of high-rise blocks with young families. Nowadays, even those with two children have almost no chance of being offered a council house. At one time, people with two children stood a chance. I have already described the shocking and tragic plight of people bringing up families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, but there are also thousands trying to bring up children in top-floor flats when they clearly need houses. Why should they have to wait for years on end to reach the top of the list?

One cannot blame the local authorities. They are not in a position to build houses, and so much public sector accommodation is being sold off. The situation will be exacerbated when more public sector accommodation is transferred to housing action trusts. One cannot blame the local authorities for the plight of all those people, whether they be in the west midlands or in London.

By definition, those people cannot obtain mortgages. If they could, their problems would be eased so long as they kept up the payments. The Minister will correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that there is some consensus between the two sides of the House in that both accept that a substantial minority of people require rented accommodation. The crucial difference, which lies at the heart of this debate, is that the Opposition believe that the needs of those people can be satisfied adequately only by local authority accommodation or genuine housing associations whereas the arch-Thatcherite Secretary of State believes that they can be satisfied only by the private sector and at market rents.

As the advertisements show, market rents in London or even the midlands are not £60 or £70 per week but more like £200 per week for a flat, let alone a house. Meanwhile, housing benefit is being drastically reduced. Anyone who can afford that kind of market rent can obtain a mortgage, with tax relief. We are concerned about the people who cannot afford market rents, but I detect no such concern from the Conservatives. The Government have not explained how the needs of those people will be satisfied by accommodation at market rents and the tenancy arrangements set out in the Bill.

The purpose of the amendment is clear, and it has been set out with characteristic eloquence by my hon. Friends the Members for Bootle and for Brent, South.

Mr. Boateng: Charismatic.

Mr. Winnick: I would certainly describe both my hon. Friends in that way, though I plead not guilty to the charge myself, despite the fact that lack of charisma is almost a cardinal sin in politics these days. I do not make late-night telephone calls to Chris Moncrieff—I simply carry out my duties in the Chamber when necessary at that hour, along with my hon. Friends.

The amendment will place responsibility on housing action trusts to ensure that, in co-operation with local authorities, they assist the homeless. Originally, of course, there was no such provision in the Bill. Housing action trusts were to have no responsibility for the homeless. To some extent, the Government have recognised our argument, because they moved an amendment in Committee. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle said when he moved his amendment, the amendment that the Government moved in Committee adds nothing of substance, because it is so vague. At the end of the day, housing action trusts will be free of any responsibility. They will simply tell local housing authorities, "We have taken your request into consideration; we have noted it," and that is all. We want to ensure that, in practice, housing action trusts are responsible for the homeless.

As my hon. Friend said—he has not been challenged by any Conservative Members—in the first stage, the purpose of housing action trusts is to take accommodation from local authorities, manage it for two or three years at most, and then send it to the privately rented sector, or, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, it will simply be sold off. If it is to be sold off, or if it is to go to the privately rented sector ar market rents, how on earth will that help the people whom we are debating—the homeless, whether they are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation or sleeping in cardboard boxes?

When he raised a point of order, my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) asked you, Mr. Speaker, to confirm that at no stage were Opposition Members filibustering. You said that everything that was said by Opposition Members during the long hours of the debate was perfectly in order. I am pleased that you confirmed that. The last thing that we want to do on an issue that is so crucial to our present and future constituents who desperately need housing accommodation is to filibuster to prolong matters. We do not do that, least of all on such a crucial matter.

I ask those who challenge our sincerity and say that our words are mere rhetoric to state the three dominant domestic issues that the Labour movement has been concerned about from day one: the right to work, decent accommodation and adequate health. Those three major issues have dominated our political lives and those of our predecessors. They are crucial to our very being as Labour politicians. We feel strongly about the right to work. No one should be denied the right to work, decent accommodation and decent health services—hence our defence of the National Health Service. That is why my

[Mr. Winnick]

hon. Friends and I entered politics. Why else? It was not to sit in the House of Commons or to become a councillor at an early age or at any other age. It was to serve our community in the best way possible.

I suppose that all hon. Members have resolved their housing matters. Most of us own our accommodation and are able to pay off a mortgage. We want benefit for the people whom we represent, because we believe that we have a duty and responsibility to ensure it.

I hope that, even at this late stage, the Government will recognise that my hon. Friend's amendment is reasonable. As I have said, the Government have recognised that some of our arguments are valid, or presumably they would not have moved their amendment in Committee. We are extending it a little further. However well-intentioned it was—if it was well-intentioned—the Government's amendment does not mean much, and it will not mean much to housing action trusts that take the view that they should have no responsibility for the homeless. They will simply say, "This is the law. We have looked at the matter, and we are satisfied that we cannot do anything." At least the amendment goes some way—but only some way—to ensure that housing action trusts have adequate regard for the homeless.

We are not in favour of housing action trusts. It would be foolish of us to argue otherwise. The Minister and her ministerial colleagues know how strongly we are against housing action trusts. But, to the extent that they will come into existence, because of the Government's majority there will be no rebellion here or in another place. We shall have housing action trusts for as long as this Government survive. Surely we are not asking too much. For goodness, sake, the Government should at least ensure that such undemocratic organisations do not play any role in housing. If they are to be brought into existence, let us ensure that they have some responsibility to help the homeless.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has always spent a great deal of his time talking about housing. Over many years, Opposition Members have listened carefully to what he has said when he represented Croydon, Central and, later on, part of Walsall. We could never accuse him of being naive. However, towards the end of his good speech, he pleaded with the Government to wreck their own Bill. That is roughly what he said. There is no chance at all of this Government accepting our amendment. As my hon. Friend said, they do not care about the homeless. They do not care about those who live in cardboard boxes at Charing Cross; they are not worried about them. They will not wreck the housing action trusts that are the embodiment of the Bill. That is where money will be made. People like Peter Clowes will be able to make a small fortune out of business expansion schemes allied to housing action trusts.

Although my hon. Friend is doing a great job—I hope that he gets the publicity he needs—the Government will not shift on this matter; there is no doubt about that. I hope that my hon. Friend will point out to the Government that we shall drag the Bill right through tonight and beyond to prove to the outside world that Opposition Members will fight tooth and nail today and, if necessary, tomorrow to support the homeless and all those who are looking for a roof over their heads.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend deserves a reply. I value any compliments from my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), whom I regard as a personal friend. He gave a potted history of my political life or career, as the case may be, and I appreciate that. He was perfectly right to say that I take a close interest in housing. He argued—perhaps realistically—that the Government will not undermine their own Bill. Like my hon. Friend, having been an hon. Member since the Government came to office, and being totally without illusions, I know that the Government are not concerned about ordinary people. They are dedicated to the interests of the rich and most prosperous in our community. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover recognises that I have no doubts or illusions.

I said that the Government made some movement in Committee. They at least recognised, whether well-intentioned or otherwise, what we have been arguing for a long time on this issue. If the Government do what my hon. Friend has predicted and refuse to accept the amendment, they will strengthen what my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has said. I said that we recognise that we cannot stop the Bill. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. We spent a long time on this measure on Tuesday. It may well be that Tuesday will be with us for many hours to come. I am pleased that you confirmed, Mr. Speaker, that we have not been filibustering. We have been trying to illustrate the problems of the people about whom we are worried.

4 pm

If the Minister refuses to acknowledge our arguments, it will confirm our worst fear: that the housing action trusts will be unconcerned about the homeless and that the Government will not give those organisations any responsibility for the people who live, sometimes with their families, in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Without wishing to be personal, I imagine that the Minister has a family and has managed to ensure financially that they will not be brought up in such dire circumstances.

The Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer are always telling us that great economic progress has been made and that Britain is a prosperous country. At every opportunity, they boast about our economic success and say that Britain is doing wonderfully well. If we are doing so well, why must people live in the circumstances that my hon. Friends and I have been describing? If accommodation is taken from the control of local authorities and is given to housing action trusts, unless those trusts have some responsibility for the homeless, local authorities will be put in an even worse position than they are in now. That is why this reasonable amendment should be supported.

Mr. Sedgemore: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) intervened during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and quoted some German from President Kennedy. I lived in Germany for a couple of years, and I have obtained a copy of Harrap's Concise German dictionary. My hon. Friend quoted President Kennedy as saying, "Ich bin ein Berliner." The dictionary says that that means, "I am a doughnut." What President Kennedy meant to say was, "Ich bin Berliner." By using the indefinite article, my hon. Friend has given an historically inaccurate definition.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that that has anything to do with the Housing Bill.

Mr. McCartney: I shall make a short contribution to the debate, especially in respect of the work that I do on behalf of the Greater Manchester fire and civil defence authority.

There is a link between homelessness and houses in multiple occupation. In most urban areas where local authorities cannot provide hostel or other accommodation for the homeless, many young people and families end up in bed-and-breakfast accommodation or, worse, in houses of multiple occupation. The stress and pressure placed on the housing market mean that, almost daily, horrendous fires cause serious and sometimes fatal accidents. In some cases, entire families have been incinerated. That has happened because of the housing crisis and because of short-term measures taken to place families in houses of multiple occupation. Those premises are totally unsuitable and unacceptable, and the inability of local authorities to police housing arrangements has led to major fires.

Within the past two months, a homeless family placed in such a unit in Blackpool was destroyed completely. Days later, it was followed by another fire in the midlands. The Government recognise that it is a major problem. The Department of the Environment has received a survey showing that the crisis is deepening and that it is claiming many lives.

Recently the Department of the Environment conducted a postal survey, to which 96 per cent. of local authorities responded. It asked for information about the condition and location of houses in multiple occupation. It found that 40 per cent. of properties had inadequate means of escape from a fire and that 38 per cent. of properties required additional means of escape from fire. Thirty three per cent. of properties required major repairs and 28 per cent. required additional amenities and facilities for the families placed in them. In all, 162,862 properties were found to be physically unsatisfactory.

Ms. Gordon: My hon. Friend may wish to consider the fact that there are other hazards for homeless people. Some Bengali families have been forced by Tower Hamlets council to sleep in church halls. One mother who has two sick children is on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Some people have been placed in John Scurr house, where the rent is £100 a week, but the estate is semi-derelict and people are afraid to go outside at night because it is an ideal place for them to be attacked.

Housing action trusts will be a close parallel to the urban development corporations from which we have suffered in Tower Hamlets. The London Docklands development corporation has encouraged house prices to rise and land prices to spiral, and it is clear that in a few years' time, or perhaps sooner, housing action trusts will force huge increases in rents and a great increase in homelessness.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend has highlighted some of the problems of the homeless, and I hope that other hon. Members will mention them during the debate.

The Home Office has received statistical confirmation and evidence from fire authorities that the pressure of homelessness means that local authorities must use totally unsatisfactory houses in which to place homeless families. That places them in the moral danger to which my hon. Friend referred, and in physical danger, and some families have perished as a result.

The Department of the Environment report entitled "Houses in Multiple Occupation in England and Wales" shows that local authorities have had to take action against 3,853 landlords who have not provided adequate means of escape from fire, 2,268 landlords regarding the provision of extra amenities, and 897 landlords because of overcrowding. That shows the crisis among homeless families, yet in many areas housing action trusts will take out of the public sector the housing stock required to move families out of those dangerous conditions and into adequate homes.

Recently the Home Office provided statistics on the nature of fires and the number of deaths. It makes harrowing reading. For example, in detached and semi-detached houses in multiple occupation, some 77 people have perished—two because of cooking appliance fires, as a result of the cramped nature of the property, 16 because of fires from space heating appliances, four from matches, 29 from other ignitable materials and another 26 as a result of an unknown or unspecified type of ignition source.

In other dwellings of multiple occupation there were some 13,000 fires, in which 180 people perished and 1,828 suffered serious but non-fatal casualties. Some 4,385 fires are caused by cooking appliances, 793 by space heating appliances and 2,555 through matches and other ignitable sources. One could go on and on with such lists, and many such injuries and deaths are because the families have no means of escape. Such deaths could be prevented. They occur because families are in dreadful housing as a result of the housing crisis and the inability to provide homeless people with adequate, safe and secure homes to rent either on a long-term or short-term basis.

The Government must, as a matter of urgency, face up to this crisis. It is one thing creating a situation in which homelessness causes danger but another to continue such a situation with the result that people are dying simply because they are homeless. If all those 77 people died in one incident, there would be a national crisis, but because they were single incidents happening on a regular basis, in ones, twos, threes and fours, there is no such publicity.

The stark reality is that we are talking about the possibility that on each day of the year, there is the potential for one person or one family to die as a result of being declared homeless and placed in a multi-occupation house. It is unacceptable that children below school age should run the risk of incineration simply because parents are homeless and they are placed in temporary accommodation. It is unacceptable that, when the Government have these figures as a result of their own survey, they are still not prepared to take action to protect people. They must either provide local authorities with the resources to take these families out of multi-occupation properties or provide within the Bill the facilities for HATs and local authorities to work together in areas of multi-occupation systematically to get rid of such accommodation. Without such positive action, working people's families will continue to die and people will be maimed for life at an early age simply because their parents were homeless.

Such a dreadful situation would not have been accepted in 1888, and we should not allow it to continue in 1988. The Minister must tell us what action, irrespective of the

[Mr. McCartney]

clause, she will take to prevent fire deaths among the homeless, because they have reached crisis proportions. Perhaps she will be able to provide us with the latest information, because these statistics are not up to date. This year's statistics are not yet available, but I believe, because of what has happened in Blackpool and elsewhere, and what happened with polyurethane foam in January, February, March and April, there will have been an increase in the number of fires in houses in multi-occupation, and an increase in fatal fires.

Many in Committee I asked the Minister to give us an adequate response to the issues that we had raised. On this issue of deaths among the homeless, she owes it to the House, to the homeless and to the country at large to give us the Government's response to this tale of carnage. All of us have children or know members of our family with children. Why should someone else's child die because the family is homeless? That is unacceptable, and the Minister must respond to it.

4.15 pm

Mrs. Roe: In Committee we discussed at length how HATs could work alongside local authorities in helping to deal with the homeless. We responded to Opposition concerns by introducing clause 65. Amendment No. 88 now seeks to go over that old ground by imposing a statutory requirement on HATs which we do not consider to be necessary. As we explained in Committee, we believe that many of the estates where the Secretary of State may decide to seek parliamentary approval to designate HAT areas are places where few would choose to live of their own free choice, where the problems have proved beyond the capacity of local authority management to solve and, therefore, where there are a large number of empty properties. The key contribution which we could make in part III to alleviate homelessness with HATs is to bring back into use stock that is lying empty. I say to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) that we care, but we do not just talk about caring, we do something about it.

Mr. Boateng: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Roe: Not just yet.

I do not wish to debate yet again the local authorities' role in dealing with homelessness, but let me just repeat a few facts. First, this year the housing capital programme has been increased to £3,827 million, £365 million up on earlier plans—a 9·5 per cent. increase. We have also given local authorities additional resources totalling £53 million in the past six months.

Mr. Boateng: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Roe: No, but I will give way when I have completed these points.

Secondly, there are 112,000 council properties standing empty, and a quarter of those have been empty for over a year. At 1 April 1987, there were some 27,000 empty dwellings in London, and that is nearly three times as many as the number of homeless families. Thirdly, there is no restriction on the use of accumulated capital receipts for capitalised repairs. Fourthly, authorities not taking advantage of the absence of these restrictions are Camden and Fulham which, at 1 April 1987, had over £60 million in accumulated receipts.

The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) has suggested that the Government have been starving housing associations of resources, but nothing could be further from the truth. We have increased the Housing Corporation's approved development programme from £705 million in 1987-88 to £737 million in 1988-89, and we are further increasing this provision to £850 million by 1990-91.

Mr. Boateng: I am obliged to the hon. Lady for giving way in her catalogue of the Government's generosity to local authorities, but will she bear one thing in mind when she returns to it? Only a few weeks ago in Southampton, the hon. Lady specifically singled out the London borough of Brent for praise for its work for the homeless. In 1986-87—these are the figures in that catalogue—we were given £22 million for housing allocation. [HON. MEMBERS: "We?"] Yes, "we"—we, the people of Brent whom I represent here and for whom I am putting questions to the Minister; we, the ratepayers and the taxpayers. In 1986-87, we received £22 million. The next year it dropped to £18·7 million—a further reduction in real terms of 20 per cent. compared with the previous year. However, the borough had increased its estimate of essential repair costs to £154 million. The result was a 20 per cent. cut and a substantial increase in repair costs. How does that square with the Minister's picture of generosity to boroughs such as the one that I seek to represent?

Mrs. Roe: Brent council is one of the recipients of the estates action programme. I remind the hon. Gentleman that £140 million of the Department's estates action programme resources have been made available in 1988-89 to turn around the rundown local authority estates and to make empty estate properties available for the homeless. I have visited some of the estates in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and I know that a very good job has been done in that area.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): My constituents and I are glad to know that, following her visit to my constituency, my hon. Friend has singled it out to become part of the revitalisation service. I understand that the first public meeting will be held in July. It is hoped to have a housing action trust within the service. That will do a great deal to revitalise an area in my constituency which has been giving cause for concern for a number of years.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose*——

Mrs. Roe: I shall give way a little later in my speech.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) for her intervention. I enjoyed my visit to her constituency.

Local authorities will retain their overall responsibilities towards the homeless under part III of the Housing Act 1985. In most instances, it is likely that HATs will be taking over a comparatively small proportion of a local authority's stock. However, because they will become landlords of stock, HATs should be well placed to help local authorities to find accommodation for the homeless.

In Committee, we rejected amendments tabled by Opposition Members that would have imposed on HATs a statutory requirement for them to make available a specific percentage of HAT properties. Amendment No.

88 is more of the same. There is no need to impose such a requirement on HATs when clause 65 makes our intentions clear.

The duty on HATs is exactly the same as that which applies under section 72 of the Housing Act 1985 to local housing authorities, new town corporations, the Commission for the New Towns, registered housing associations and the Scottish Special Housing Association. It is a duty that requires that, where a local housing authority requests assistance in the discharge of various of its functions under part III of the 1985 Act, the other bodies specified in section 72(1) are required to co-operate in rendering such assistance in the discharge of these functions as is reasonable in the circumstances.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister accept that the difference between the duties on the other authorities and those that impinge on housing action trusts is that the other authorities have not been placed compulsorily in the position of local authorities, which have been forced to hand over their property? Will she accept also that it is somewhat disingenuous of her to say that nothing that was said in Committee suggested that there would be any lessening of local authorities' duties towards the homeless? The hon. Lady says that, but it appears to be clear from one national daily newspaper that in the next Session there is to be legislation to reduce the duties of local authorities towards the homeless. With a reduced housing stock, they will have even less opportunity to carry out their responsibility to house the record number of homeless people.

Mrs. Roe: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's argument. I believe that HATs will help local authorities. I am sure that local authorities will be able to co-operate and will find that their requests will be looked on favourably.

We know that it is common for local authorities to agree nomination arrangements with housing associations, for example, even though authorities are not directly involved in grant-aided schemes that are funded by housing association grant, without any further specific statutory requirement under section 72. We see no reason why there should not be similar co-operation between HATs and local authorities, with clause 65 as the legislative back-up.

There are further safeguards. First, we shall make it clear to HATs in the management guidance that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will issue to them, which will be published, that they will be expected to enter into agreements with local authorities, possibly by means of formal contracts that give local authorities access to stock held by HATs. Secondly, if local authorities were not satisfied with HATs' performance in fulfilling their duties under clause 65, it would be open to them to have recourse to the courts, although legal confrontation is unlikely to be in the best interests of the residents or of the HAT areas. Thirdly, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State could use his direction-making power if he considered that HATs were not co-operating sensibly with local authorities.

Mr. Lofthouse: Will the Minister explain to the House how local authorities can escape facing further and greater difficulties in housing the homeless with a housing stock that is much smaller than it is now?

Mrs. Roe: If the hon. Gentleman had been listening, he would know that I have already covered that argument. In the areas in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may be considering to have HATs, we may find that many of the properties will be lying empty. Those properties will be brought back into use. Some of the areas that I have visited during my trips through the country have contained many half-empty properties. It must be good news that we intend to bring all these properties into use.

Against that background, I believe that the Government's response to the concern of Opposition Members is helpful and reasonable. I invite them to withdraw amendment No. 88.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The Opposition consider the Minister's response to be unreasonable and unacceptable. It is a complacent response that shows no concern for the homeless, who represent one of the major scandals of our time. The Minister's response is consistent with all the housing myths that the Government have tried to perpetuate as excuses for their lack of action in providing the accommodation that the nation needs in the public sector to help deal with the overall problem of homelessness.

Mrs. Mahon: My hon. Friend may have noticed that the Minister did not allow me to intervene on the estates action programme. There was a good reason for her refusal to give way to me. In Calderdale, we have seen the result of the programme, which is the flagship of the Tories' enterprise scheme. The private sector let us down and we were faced with the demolition of 400 flats and houses. Debt charges are now being paid on empty land on which flats and houses were demolished.

Mr. Roberts: Indeed. The schemes to which the Minister referred, on which my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) has commented, are welcome, but they are mere palliatives. They amount to a small sop in local authority areas where housing investment programmes have been cut by massive amounts. The Minister had the audacity to blame local authorities. She added that the estates where HATs will be declared are beyond the capacity of local authorities to manage. They are beyond the capacity of local authorities to deal with adequately because the authorities have been starved of the resources that they need.

The Minister quoted increases in housing capital programmes and referred to small increases this year over last year's figures. In Wolverhampton, for example, there has been an 87·3 per cent. cut in the housing investment programme since 1978-79. Warrington received £15,727,000 in 1978-79 and this year it received £2,378,000. That is an 84 per cent. cut. In Bolsover—unfortunately, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is not in his place—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?" My hon. Friend is normally to be seen in his place. If I were a Conservative Member, I would not welcome him back. In Bolsover, £6,791,000 was made available in 1978-79. It received only £1,063,000 this year. That is an 84 per cent. cut.

The story continues. In Manchester, in 1978-79 but at today's prices, £108 million was made available for the housing investment programme. It received £23 million this year. That was a 78·8 per cent. cut. In Sefton, which is the local authority in my constituency, the HIP in

[Mr. Roberts]

1978-79 was £90 million. It is now £4,152,000, which is a 78 per cent. cut. In Liverpool the amount was £75 million in 1978-79 and is now £19 million, a 73 per cent. cut. In Bristol, the local authority which the Minister for Housing and Planning represents, in 1978-79 the figure was £32·969 million; today it is £10 million, a 69 per cent. cut. How dare the Government claim that they are increasing housing allocations for capital expenditure when they have been cutting them for nine years? The limited small increases which they quote are what they gave last year.

4.30 pm

Mr. Cryer: I hope my hon. Friend will challenge the Minister's assertion that local authorities can take housing action trusts to court if they are dissatisfied with their performance. That would involve a local authority in hundreds of thousands of pounds of expenditure, without any grant aid from the Government. In a sense, that is another cut in local authority expenditure if the local authority wishes to exercise any influence over a housing action trust which is not being helpful. As the Minister would not allow me to intervene, will my hon. Friend ask her why the Government did not produce decent legislation?

Mr. Roberts: I accept what my hon. Friend has said. To suggest that the legislation is satisfactory, and then to suggest that HATs should be taken to court by the local authority if they behave unreasonably, is outrageous. The Government actually suggest that a local authority may have to go to court to ensure that its own housing stock, which has been taken from it, is used to help the homeless.

The Minister reiterated another myth. She said that the way to solve the homelessness problem was to get the local authorities to bring into use all the empty houses in their ownership. I have an honourable record of campaigning to get empty houses in local authority and other ownership into use for homeless families and others. It is a travesty of the truth to suggest that local authorities are guilty of keeping houses empty unnecessarily.

In 1986 there were 111,600 empty local authority houses. In 1987 the number had gone down to 108,600. What about the private sector? The Government intend to hand council housing to the private sector if they can. In 1986 there were 493,000 properties standing empty in the private sector, compared with 111,000 in the public sector; that is nearly four times as many. The number in the private sector is increasing rather than going down. In 1987 in the public sector, 511,000 properties were standing empty. The real problem is caused by the properties standing empty in the private sector. The Government pretend that they are doing something about that; their shorthold provisions in the Housing Act 1980 were to do something about it, but they did not.

Mr. Spearing: Does my hon. Friend recall that Government spokesman have often cited the London borough of Newham as an authority not making use of vacant houses? I had a letter from the housing chairman only yesterday in which he told me that the effective vacancy rate in Newham is 3 per cent. and the figure in Wandsworth is 2·8 per cent. Those figures are both lower than the percentage in other sectors. Does this not show that the hon. Lady's claim is not right, that the visible solution to the homeless problem is to put those properties into use? She must know that.

Mr. Roberts: We want all empty properties to be in use and we want all properties that become vacant in any sector to be occupied as quickly as possible. But even in the owner-occupied sector the turn-round rate of properties which become empty for sale is lower than the turn-round of properties which are relet by local authorities.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Is it not the case that many good Labour authorities are giving people three choices of empty properties? When people are offered such a choice, it is unavoidable that there are more vacant properties, because of the way the system works. In the past, some Conservative authorities have offered people only one property on a "take it or leave it" basis. Is that what will happen with the housing action trusts?

Mr. Roberts: One problem with the housing action trust legislation is that we do not know what we shall see, and we do not know what the code of management will be. All we know is that there will not be the same accountability to tenants and to the electorate as there is in local authorities, with all their faults. I do not accept that the Government have already dealt with the contents of our amendment and that they are aware of the need for housing action trusts to assist with homelessness. Their proposals are a recipe for the homeless not to be accepted by HATs.

It is clear from that what my hon. Friends have said in the debate that the Labour party regards this as an important issue. We feel strongly for those in housing need. We have policies to deal with homelessness, which has reached record heights. Last year, there were 112,730 homeless households, the equivalent of about 230,000 men, women and children accepted as homeless by local authorities in England alone. That compares with 53,000 homeless households in England in 1978.

Many more homeless people are not included in the official statistics, because most homeless single people and childless couples are not legally entitled to rehousing. In Great Britain since 1978, when the present homelessness legislation came into force, 800,000 households, most of them families with children, have been accepted by local authorities for rehousing as homeless. That is nearly one in 25 of the population. That is the scale of the problem. About half those who are accepted as homeless are rehoused by councils in permanent accommodation. That is what they use their permanent accommodation for. They fill it as quickly as possible with homeless families but they do not have enough accommodation to offer, because the house building programme has ground to a halt.

Because of the lack of accommodation that local authorities have to offer, homeless people have to stay in temporary accommodation such as hostels, caravans or bed-and-breakfast hotels for months or even years. The numbers in temporary accommodation have been rising, especially over the last few years when Conservative Housing Ministers have been trying to revitalise the free market.

In June 1987 there were 23,000 households in temporary accommodation, double the figure in June 1984. The number living in bed-and-breakfast hotels this June was 11,000, 4,000 more than 12 months ago. Homeless families from ethnic minorities tend to end up in

bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Over 90 per cent. of homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation are in the south-east of England, where people come to look for work.

The Government have admitted that in Greater London a newly built council house would cost £7,000 in the first year, while acquiring a house in the open market would cost £5,000. The cost of keeping a family in bed-and-breakfast accommodation is £11,000 a year. That cost keeps rising with inflation and is not falling, like the cost of providing new council housing. What kind of Thatcherite, monetarist economics is that in housing? It does not make sense; it does not add up to anything except a policy of not caring about the homeless.

The homeless are reflected as well in the massive council house waiting lists to which I have already referred. The underlying problem is a shortage of decent housing to rent, estimated at 1·1 million by the Duke of Edinburgh's inquiry into British housing. The shortage is greatest for homes to rent, especially council homes. With the proposals for housing action trusts, the stock available for local authorities to rent to homeless families will diminish considerably without the safeguards that we want to write into legislation.

We want housing action trusts to have a duty to consult, to co-operate and to offer a reasonable number of relets to the homeless who need to be rehoused in the local authority area in which the HAT is. That is not a stupid or unnecessary thing to ask for. Anyone who had compassion for the homeless and who was concerned about the homeless would ask for that. We believe that the Government are rejecting our proposals because they do not care about the homeless and, as my hon. Friends have said, because they care about the gentrification of the estates that they are taking over and they do not want their friends who are taking over those estates to be encumbered by any social concern for those in housing need.

The Minister's response was scandalous. As a result of that, and because the Labour party and all Opposition Members feel so strongly about the problem of homelessness and about the homeless, we wish to divide the House on this, one of the most important issues of the Housing Bill, although every issue that we are debating is important.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I shall not keep the House long, but I should like to make two short points that, to my knowledge, have not been mentioned in the debate.

First, if the amendment were carried, it would introduce a new word—"homeless"—into the Bill. As the Minister of State admitted, there was a problem of presentation when the Bill was drafted—the homeless were left out. In 1988, when more than 100,000 families per year present themselves as homeless to local authorities in Britain, and when the number of homeless families has doubled, the Government have presented a Housing Bill which leaves out the homeless altogether. That in itself should be sufficient to make us support the amendment.

There is an argument that, if one is to do anything about the housing problem, one should start by meeting the needs of those who most need help—above all, the homeless.

Secondly, we need to be clear that the amendment seeks to preserve—not even to extend—the present position. The present position is that, if one is homeless and considered as eligible by law, the local council has to do something to give one a home. The amendment seeks only to make sure that when the property that the council used to own—empty or let—is taken over and handed to new housing action trust landlords, the same percentage of property in those units of accommodation goes to the homeless as it did under council ownership.

The figures up to the end of 1986 for every local authority in England were published in *Hansard* on 15 July 1987. They show that increasing numbers of properties owned by local authorities have been let to the homeless. Take my own local authority. I am not defending it or pretending that it could not do much better in other areas of housing management. I am arguing the simple case that the figures show that the demand on it to house the homeless has grown ineluctably.

In Southwark in 1981-82, 348 homeless families were housed and 8·3 per cent. of all new lettings were to the homeless. In 1982-83, 409 homeless families were housed, and 15·2 per cent. of all lettings went to the homeless. In 1983-84, the figures were more than double those of the previous year—878 homeless families were housed and 35·5 per cent. of lettings were to the homeless. In 1984-85, there were no figures, because there was a change in statistics in Southwark, as there was in other authorities. In 1985-86, a total of 1,119 families were accepted as homeless by Southwark. It had a duty to house them, and more than 50 per cent. of new lettings owned by Southwark borough council were let to the homeless.

I have reason to believe that since then the figures have continued to grow in a similar way and that now, in Southwark, no new lettings of property go to anyone other than the homeless or to those who have to be moved because of harassment or for personal protection. No one can move because they need a bigger property or a property on the ground floor instead of on an upper floor. They have to be homeless to move, and they have to be homeless to be taken in.

4.45 pm

The figures are similar in other authorities in London and elsewhere. I could go on in some detail, but I shall take only the most acute examples. For the last year in which figures are available, in 1985-86, a total of 68·6 per cent. of all new lettings in Camden went to the homeless. In Greenwich, 54·1 per cent. of new lettings went to the homeless. In Hammersmith and Fulham and in Islington, 61·9 per cent. of new lettings went to the homeless. In Lewisham, 58·6 per cent. of lettings went to the homeless. Even in the City of Westminster and in Wandsworth—Tory-controlled boroughs—the figures continue to be high. In the City of Westminster, 42·7 per cent. and in Wandsworth more than 50 per cent. of lettings went to the homeless. Of course the problem is most acute in London. In the last year for which figures are available, Wandsworth, a Tory-run authority, had to use more than 50 per cent. of its lettings to house the homeless.

Mr. Spearing: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of accusations, particularly from Conservative Members, that getting on to the homeless list is a quick way of jumping what would otherwise be a long waiting list? Does not the fact that he just mentioned, that Conservative-run Wandsworth has the enormous figure of 50 per cent. of its lettings going to classified homeless people, suggest that that argument, in respect of Wandsworth and probably elsewhere, does not hold water?

Mr. Hughes: Not only do I agree with the hon. Gentleman, but I have checked three other areas of the country. I shall start with Broxbourne, Hertfordshire, the local authority of the Under-Secretary. For the last year for which figures are available, that authority in the affluent south-east and the home counties allocated more than 30 per cent. of its new lettings to the homeless. The Minister may be able to tell us that the figures have increased since then—that would be quite compatible with other figures. In an area that certainly is not renowned for its problems of social disadvantage, nearly one in three of new lettings by the hon. Lady's local council goes to families who have nowhere else to go.

In Gloucestershire, the home county of the Secretary of State, there are six local councils. In Cheltenham, 17·4 per cent. of lettings go to the homeless. The figure for the Cotswolds local authority is 22·2 per cent., for Forest of Dean the figure is 25·6 per cent. and for Tewkesbury, the Secretary of State's own constituency, the figure is 33·6 per cent.—one third. For Gloucester and for Stroud the figures are 48·2 per cent. and 49 per cent. respectively.

Lastly, I thought to look at the county of the Minister for Housing and Planning. Avon has six local authorities. They range from Bristol, with 21·9 per cent. of new lettings going to the homeless, to Bath—hardly poverty-stricken England—where 56·7 per cent. of new lettings go to the homeless.

Ms. Gordon: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that many of those whom local authorities accept as homeless are mortgage defaulters who tried to buy their own homes but who ran into trouble and failed?

Mr. Hughes: I entirely accept the hon. Lady's point. A friend of mine, who is a Southwark councillor and a solicitor, speaks for my party on housing matters. She tells me that an increasing percentage of those who come through her door are mortgage defaulters and need help to try to prevent their homes from being taken over, after they have had pressure put on them to buy their homes.

Mr. Home Robertson: The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that in the local authority that includes my constituency, East Lothian, no fewer than 5 per cent. of council house allocations last year went to people who had lost their homes as a consequence of mortgage default.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I did not know about that. The hon. Gentleman's constituency is not the kind of place that one imagines as the epitome of the housing crisis in Britain. It is a rural constituency, just north of the border. The statistics show that no area in Britain is exempt from the housing crisis.

Despite having been encouraged by several hon. Members to do so, the Minister did not refer in her speech to the press article which picks up the point that was made by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) —that young single people and young married couples are becoming increasingly concerned and frustrated, not surprisingly, about the fact that they cannot obtain local authority housing because the homeless take all that is available. Several young couples come to my advice centre every week and say that they are waiting for housing, but that they are not getting it. They include married couples, certainly those who are planning to be married and those who are engaged. They have no prospect, probably long after they are married, of obtaining accommodation.

The Government now propose, after the proceedings in Standing Committee, that in the next Session of Parliament the legislation relating to homelessness will no longer oblige local authorities to house those who have nowhere else to go. It is reported that the legislation for housing homeless persons that my noble Friend Lord Ross of Newport piloted through the House just over 10 years ago is to be repealed. Homelessness is to be replaced by ruthlessness. A permanent obligation on local authorities is to be replaced by a temporary obligation to take people in for a short period, immediately after they have been thrown out on to the street.

The amendment requires, very simply, that the same percentage of property should remain available for the homeless as was available before the transfer of property. It is not an unreasonable request. If 30, 50 or 60 per cent. of property is being used for housing homeless families in Broxbourne, Bath and central London, it is not unreasonable to ask that that obligation should be retained. Otherwise, that property might be used to accommodate people who can much more easily manage and afford to find their own homes. It is a modest amendment. If the Government reject it, that will be a token of their unwillingness to make even very modest concessions in favour of those who at the moment have nothing and who are asking for but the smallest crumbs.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 189, Noes 260.

Division No. 358] **[4.54 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'ist'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*

Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ilsley, Eric
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alun Michael and
Mr. Adam Ingram.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bitten, Rt Hon John
Bigg-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'e)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Critchley, Julian
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hn Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Roesi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*

Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*	Waddington, Rt Hon David
Shersby, Michael	Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Sims, Roger	Waldegrave, Hon William
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*	Walden, George
Soames, Hon Nicholas	Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Speller, Tony	Waller, Gary
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*	Walters, Sir Dennis
Squire, Robin	Ward, John
Stanbrook, Ivor	Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Stern, Michael	Warren, Kenneth
Stevens, Lewis	Watts, John
Sumberg, David	Wells, Bowen
Summerson, Hugo	Wheeler, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter	Whitney, Ray
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*	Widdecombe, Ann
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*	Wiggin, Jerry
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman	Wilshire, David
Temple-Morris, Peter	Winterton, Mrs Ann
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*	Winterton, Nicholas
Thorne, Neil	Wolfson, Mark
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*	Wood, Timothy
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*	Yeo, Tim
Trippier, David	Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Trotter, Neville	
Twinn, Dr Ian	Tellers for the Noes:
Vaughan, Sir Gerard	Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Viggers, Peter	Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 66

POWER TO GIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Spearing (Newham, South): I beg to move amendment No. 313, in page 47, line 45, leave out 'person' and insert

'statutory authority or registered charity'.

The amendment relates to the grant-making powers of a HAT. Clause 66(1) says:

"For the purpose of achieving its objects a housing action trust may, with the consent of the Secretary of State, give financial assistance to any person."

It sets out the forms in which such assistance may be given.

Amendment No. 313 is a probing one, but I believe that it has probity. Being able to give assistance to any person —admittedly with the consent of the Secretary of State —is a wide power. My hon. Friends will confirm that such power is not given to local authorities. They are subject to strict auditing by the local auditor, despite the fact that they share with a HAT the objective of improving living conditions in an area. The objectives of a HAT go much wider than that. A HAT can do almost anything, as was shown in earlier debates.

Under clause 58(3)(d), a HAT can

"carry on any business or undertaking".

I am not suggesting that the Secretary of State or Ministers will agree to allow a HAT to pay money to anyone for doing anything. I should not be quite so naive as to believe that. Nevertheless, the consent of the Secretary of State is obtained not by an open, glasnost process but by writing letters. A local authority, using its more limited powers, must obtain consent from the Secretary of State—a letter is sent, the local authority committee receives an answer and there may be something in a council's minutes to say that the Secretary of State has given consent.

No such conditions apply to a housing action trust. We have heard nothing much about the meetings that the housing action trust will have and we have heard only vaguely about an annual report. Nominated persons in the HAT will have the power to give any person grants—albeit with the consent of the Secretary of State—for very wide purposes. That is an enormous privilege, and I use that word advisedly. Privilege is something that we prize greatly in this House, but privilege has another side to it, which is responsibility. I suggest that the clause as drafted contains a temptation to irresponsibility.

I speak with some experience because, as everyone knows by now, we have a sort of housing action trust in the London area. We have a quango called the London Docklands development corporation. We are now being asked to form heaven knows how many other, smaller quangos in different parts of the country. From what we heard in the last debate, it appears that even Broxbourne may be a candidate for a HAT, surprising though it may be to hear that that part of Hertfordshire has a problem of homelessness.

The Government are usually very worried about public expenditure. They were worried to the tune of £4 billion, which they doled out to well-off people. As we know from the Prime Minister's rather nasty replies last week, when it comes to people on social security and to pensioners, the Government are as tight as tight can be. The clause allows housing action trusts to give away money to more or less anybody for anything, subject to the consent of the Secretary of State. We must ask for what purpose they will give it away.

Unfortunately—I was not present for the debate—I understand that, since I tabled the amendment, or around the same time, the Government have tabled their own amendments to the effect that a list of persons to whom money has been given will be published at the end of the year. Perhaps the amendment appears in another group. That amendment has been tabled and discussed since I tabled mine, but that does not detract from the probing nature of my amendment.

There is a risk that a dependent society may arise. The Government are all against a dependent society. They tell us that they are against dependency, whatever that is, when it is municipally funded or when it is funded by the Department of Health and Social Security. They will have to shell out an awful lot more on the homeless as they increasingly fall out of the bottom of the housing market, and on those who get into debt. There is not an hon. Member who does not receive almost daily through his letter box inducements to get into debt, from banks and many others.

Let us consider the powers available to the HATs. As we know, they have the power to dispose of property and

I believe that the HATs will promote a dependent attitude because of the example of the London Docklands development corporation in east London, where little money is available from local authorities.

Sports organisations, youth organisations, old people's organisations and advice organisations are all having their grants cut and cut again, sometimes to the extent that they cease to operate. Then the LDDC comes along and hands out money here, there and everywhere—for a sports kit for a primary school, a presentation to an old persons' club or for the increased architectural merit of a new school. In each case, "by courtesy of the LDDC" will be posted up. It is well known that if one wants money in east London one tries the LDDC.

5.15 pm

It is all public money, but it is not being disbursed by an accountable elected authority. We know the LDDC's record. It has repeatedly been pointed out how much a housing action trust will resemble an urban development corporation. HATs will be seen as bodies to which to apply for money, because they will have a lot of it. That will give them power—the power of patronage and to be the squirearchy of the area.

I am not suggesting that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would be called upon to be a member of a housing action trust, because you are in this House. But imagine being invited to be the chairman or chief executive of a housing action trust. I know how such people operate, because I have seen them. Everywhere they go, people doff their caps almost because these functionaries, nominees of the Secretary of State, can hand out £10,000 here and £100,000 there in east London. They do so all the time. That is a reversion to another age, although the genuine squirearchy used their own money. The characters in the HATs will hand out our money.

I do not impugn their integrity. I am merely saying that the Government have set up in law a thoroughly 19th-century arrangement. We know how Victorian the Prime Minister can be when she chooses, although it is all Victorian vice and very little Victorian virtue. The Labour party is a Victorian organisation, but a virtuous one.

Ms. Gordon: Does my hon. Friend agree that the LDDC is virtually a dictatorship in docklands and that the housing action trusts will be another form of dictatorship? Consider the problems that there have been with the management of the LDDC—the members of the executive and the executive officers. Will there be an equal amount of bumbling in the boards of the bodies that will control vast amounts of public money in housing? Will we see an equally sad lack of help for those in need in the area?

Mr. Spearing: I am afraid that my hon. Friend is right. We cannot be certain that the animal will work in that way, but from my experience of the jumbo animal, the little jumbos will probably work in the same way. I say that for one reason alone: it is human nature. I do not think that there is a single hon. Member, however to the Left or the Right of the spectrum he may be, and however moral according to the Prime Minister's precepts, who, given the power to hand out such sums almost on the nod, would not be tempted. I am told that in the LDDC three or four people meeting in secret decide these matters. I suggest not that there would be subversion—that is a strong term—but that the members of the HATs would tend to be a little casual in dealing with these matters.

I do not believe that such a way of going about things is in the best tradition of British public administration. I am not so sure that it is in any traditions of British public administration, of which the Government constantly say they are in favour. It is an invitation to temptation. I do not question the integrity of future members of a HAT, its chief executive or chairman, but they will be in a position to hand out substantial sums for a wide range of purposes that are only indirectly related to the operation of the trust.

Clause 58 says that HATs may

"acquire, hold, manage, reclaim and dispose of land . . . carry out building and other operations; . . . carry on any business or undertaking: and may generally do anything necessary or expedient for the purposes of those objects and powers or for purposes incidental thereto."

They could assist people to move. A HAT would undoubtedly find it profitable to assist people to buy their homes elsewhere, as the capital gain on sale of the HAT property would be considerable. If the Treasury did not want the money, the Secretary of State might. Indeed, the Secretary of State might direct a HAT to do that.

Some may say that that is going a bit far, but not at all. About one year ago, the Secretary of State for the Environment said that he wanted the LDDC to make as much profit as possible from increased land values, so that he could help fund dockland development corporations in other parts of the country. I think that he may have softened his tune a little, because he now understands the needs of people in east London. His attitude is, however, only slightly different now, and if he can do that for the LDDC, a HAT could operate in the same way.

People may be glad to take the money made available to them to move. I can imagine people vacating nice property in my constituency which the HAT could dispose of at an enormous capital gain. Indeed, I think that that has already happened in the Isle of Dogs.

Ms. Gordon *indicated assent.*

Mr. Spearing: I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) is nodding in agreement. Her local authority is operating in that direction, and the Bill will speed up the process.

The Minister may wish to comment on my suppositions. If she can deny them, I will be pleased. I am one of those who believe that there is a hidden agenda. Much of the Government's legislation has a hidden purpose, which may be discerned by spotting its salient features. The Minister for Housing and Planning, whom we welcome back, may not be enthusiastic about that approach, but I am sure that those who were responsible for the genesis of HATs were.

That approach was given a boost by all that stuff about the Walker plan a fortnight ago. We were told that council tenants are to be offered their own premises not at half price but at virtually no price. That has not appeared in the Bill, but what is to prevent HATs from being vehicles for that process? Nothing. They can dispose of land. It does not have to be at market price. If there is anything to prevent it, perhaps the Minister, if she knows about it, will tell me. What is to prevent HATs from becoming "mini-Walker sales bodies"?

Mr. George Howarth: My hon. Friend has introduced the English Secretary of State for Wales into the equation and said that there is an element of Victorian values here. Does my hon. Friend agree that, with the Secretary of State for Wales, the role of the LDDC and the possibility of HATs, what we are talking about is neo-colonialism? Good and worthy people are going out and doing their good works during the day and retreating to their leafy suburbs for the night. The only thing that they probably do not carry with them that the colonialists did is a Bible to tame the heathen savages.

Mr. Spearing: There are elements of that, but my hon. Friend reminds me of when an Austrian radio commentator came to my constituency to look at what was happening in docklands, as there was some rehabilitation

[Mr. Spearing]

and rejuvenation in some Austrian towns. He was appalled and said, "Mr. Spearing, what is happening here is a takeover by an imperial power."

The Secretary of State for Wales has put forward his plan. It could operate well with HATs. There is nothing to say that the plan is confined to areas that are absolutely physically rundown. Clause 55 tells us that among the factors which the Secretary of State has to bear in mind is the extent to which housing is occupied, its physical state and design, the area it is in and any need to repair or improve it. It does not say that the housing has to be in a bad state. It can be in jolly good state. The more we examine the matter, the more possibilities emerge and the more we are worried.

As I said earlier, the best Victorian virtues are very good. They are the ones which the Prime Minister pretends to practise, but in fact she practises only Victorian vices. We can take the example of the Division which took place not very long ago. It was about the homeless. The word "homeless" does nof appear in the Bill. For how many hours have we discussed it? What sort of Housing Bill is this which does not mention the homeless when, even in leafy Broxbourne, 15 per cent. of the people having to be housed by the council are homeless? That is the sort of Victorian vice that we know all about. The subject was explored in the excellent play by Galsworthy that we saw recently on television. It was about a man of integrity who was wholly out of tune with his time.

Why should there not be a list confining assistance to statutory authorities and registered charities? If somebody wished to avail himself of a HAT's largesse, he could form a small local charity which acts as a second tier. That often happens in other areas. That would avoid any suspicion of a conveyor belt taking public money to people who do not need it. I await the Minister's reply, but I fear that it will not be very satisfactory.

Mr. Morley: One would have thought that, when framing legislation, the Government would consider the problems being experienced in housing and try to alleviate local authorities' difficulties.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has advanced a strong argument, and said that we do not know how much money HATs will have, where it will go and who will control it. If we are to have organisations with spare money to dole out, I should have thought that the Government would consider meeting housing need. One group that I wish to bring to the Government's attention is the young single homeless. If financial support is to be possible, why cannot some of it go towards counselling and support services for such people?

We all know that the crisis of the young single homeless will increase when the poll tax is introduced as many families with children aged over 18 who live at home will find it difficult to carry the burden of poll tax. There is, therefore, a danger that yet more young people will be shoved out on to the streets, where they will join the many who are already wandering around. Local authorities have no statutory responsibility to house the young single homeless unless they are considered to be at some special risk.

Therefore, if funds are to be made available to the HATs, I hope that they will consider such groups, which have been ignored for many years by housing authorities. I do not blame local authorities—they have enough to do as it is to meet the increasing demands that are made on them. Although they are sensitive to the needs of the young single homeless, and of other groups such as single parents, they find it difficult, within their budgets and facilities, to meet those needs and make accommodation available.

5.30 pm

That brings me to the accountability of the housing action trusts. The lack of accountability has been mentioned. It is amazing that the Government seem to think that lack of accountability in housing is more desirable than accountability of local authorities, which know local needs and local issues, and can direct their attention to areas of stress and need, rather than to have a quango that may not be closely associated with the area.

Mrs. Mahon: I am sure that my hon. Friend has read "The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists". I was reminded of the council carving up little bits. They were suspect elected representatives.

Mr. Morley: My hon. Friend is right, and "The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists" is compulsory reading for all Socialists. There is a danger of such a carve-up and a lack of accountability. The clause also introduces the danger of patronage in how the money will be doled out. It worries me that the Government assume that the housing action trusts will be more responsive to local needs.

In my constituency, the local council has embarked on a radical scheme, in co-operation with building societies and English Heritage, to modernise steel workers' ironstone cottages, which are part of the local historic tradition. That will not only preserve that heritage but provide useful two-bedroomed accommodation. The local authority has not had difficulty getting the scheme off the ground, but the Government have prevaricated in the negotiations between the authority and the building societies, placing the scheme in doubt. That does not give me a great deal of confidence about any independence of the housing action trusts and their meeting local needs any more efficiently than the local council.

What will happen to any housing stock that is handed over to housing action trusts? I return to the single homeless. My local council recently modernised a pre-war block of flats in Queensway, the idea being that the accommodation should be for couples and single people. I wonder whether the same priority will be given by a housing action trust that finds a similar block of flats. The trust may find it useful for yuppification and dispose of the property, possibly for profit.

Make no mistake, those ripples of yuppification are spreading out of London as far north as my constituency, where yuppies from London are looking for bijou boltholes in Scunthorpe. Believe me, I would rather have a bijou bolthole in Scunthorpe than live in docklands any day. I say that from the bottom of my heart.

That trend has the undesirable consequence of forcing up the price of local property and puts yet more pressure on young people who want to leave home and, in many cases, have to leave home. Such young people want a start on the housing ladder and to find somewhere to live.

There does not seem to be any direction for the money that is being made available to HATs. I should like money

to go to local authorities, where it could be controlled by democratically elected and accountable people. It could be directed towards need, not greed, rather than being doled out in the spirit of paternalistic 19th century patronage.

We should face such issues. I know very well that the Government will not accept the amendment, because they do not care about issues such as I am raising. But Opposition Members intend to pursue those matters in great detail because many people face considerable stress and are in great need. I want to highlight the needs of young single parents and single-parent families, who are only one group of many.

Ms. Primarolo: My hon. Friend mentioned single young people. In Bristol, of 14,000 people who are able to register on the housing waiting lists, almost two thirds are couples—*[Interruption.]* I believe that there should be just one debate in the Chamber. I appreciate that hon. Members talk in the Chamber, but sometimes the noise is so loud that it distracts others.

Nearly two thirds of the 14,000 people on the waiting lists in Bristol are single people and childless couples. In 1985, the city council projected, on the basis of the census, that in Bristol we should need to build accommodation for single people only to account for the demographic changes. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that that is where the money should be directed, not into property speculation through HATS.

Mr. Morley: I thank my hon. Friend, who has put her finger on the issue by identifying where any resources should go. It is a sad reflection of the trends in our society that there are more single parents. That is a growing group, as the Government know, because of the stresses and strains on marriages and the increasing divorce rate. There are also stresses and strains on the family unit. Increasing numbers of young people have to leave home for all sorts of reasons, not least to look for work in other areas.

That is why I argue that the Government are not giving enough attention to the single person, the young single person and single parents. If money is to be made available to the housing action trusts, it should be directed in a logical and accountable way towards meeting people's needs, and not simply be a paternalistic backhander from the Government to the HATs.

Mr. McCartney: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) who, in an assiduous manner—displayed these past 24 hours—has extracted the hidden agenda of the HAT proposals.

After the debates in Committee, I believe that there is a danger of what can be described only as a slush fund. The Under-Secretary is yawning once again, but she and the Minister of State made it clear that HATs were about transferring millions and sometimes multi-million sums of public assets to unelected organisations with a responsibility for disposing of those assets. The profit from the disposal of the assets would go to the national Exchequer, not back to the local community, which built up the assets in the first place. In the legislation, we are seeing the possible preparation of a slush fund.

Mr. George Howarth: My hon. Friends the Members for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) have both referred to a hidden agenda, which seems to be obscured from the Under-Secretary. Will my hon. Friend speculate as to why the hon. Lady has not been told about it?

Mr. McCartney: The whole Bill has been somewhat obscure to the Under-Secretary—I am not being nasty when I say that. One can only speculate on the number of notes passed between the unknown civil servants and the Minister and come to the conclusion that the Secretary of State has not told her what the Bill is about. The Minister was in such a state that she had to go to Finland for a rest. She is back now——

Mr. Tony Banks: Looking like a sherbert lemon.

Mr. McCartney: Yes, but I would not have said that.

I hope that the Minister will be able to put our minds at rest.

We can only surmise about Government policy. For example, through the Greater London council and so on, the Government virtually handed over to Thamesmead plc lock, stock and barrel, the housing assets of the estates, the land and the derelict land. It has now become clear that the derelict land holding of Thamesmead plc is worth about £300 million. That has been stripped from the public purse.

The Government's intentions as to financial assistance are not clear. We do not know where the money will come from. Will it be money that has accrued from the sale of public assets? Will it be additional grant from the Department of the Environment? Will the housing action trusts be able to claim aid? Will they be able to claim money from the Manpower Services Commission? Will they be able to claim money from other public sources? Will it simply be money accrued from the sale of public assets, to be disbursed without any accountability?

I am curious to know why the Government have included in the Bill the words "any person." In a local authority, the district auditor would take action. I can give an example of that. During the miners' strike, in the Wigan metropolitan council we used certain sections of the Local Government Act 1986. We used the product of a penny rate to assist families in need. We helped the children and wives of miners with food and emergency payments. The district auditor ruled that the payments were not legal. Repayments have continued since the end of the strike and will continue until everything has been repaid. That is the public's perception of a local authority assisting families in need.

The Bill allows public assets to be stripped and the profits disbursed without public accountability. I could understand that if there were to be community centres, advice agencies, centres for the unemployed, tenants' associations, meals on wheels or pre-school nursery groups within the community covered by the HAT. I could understand it if the HAT was providing assistance—albeit, as has been said, in a colonialist way. In some instances such organisations would be registered charities and would be recognised by the community for the work they have done.

Will the HATs be like a bank allowing the sale of the property, organising mortgage arrangements and assisting with repairs and rehabilitation so that the property can be resold on the open market? What is the nature of the assistance to be given? In disposing of the assets, will

[Mr. McCartney]

financial assistance be given to those to whom the assets are disposed? It is important that the Minister clarifies the position.

In areas where HATs may be set up, the public are worried about what will happen to their property and community. Local authorities which are under threat from HATs are entitled to know whether the profits from their assets will be given to others inside or outside the community.

It is important to know that, because HATs will have other functions, particularly in relation to environmental health. Is it intended that the money be used to pump-prime houses in the private sector or for repair grants or other refurbishments? If the money is used for that purpose, will the local authority have its grant reduced because that money will be taken into account when considering the overall level of spending on refurbishing and repair grants?

5.45 pm

Mr. Morley: Does my hon. Friend agree, apart from the points that he has eloquently outlined and with which I agree, that there is another potential problem with HATs? If they remove a substantial chunk of public sector housing, if the authority wishes to undertake estate renovation or whole-street renovation, it will be difficult to find empty properties so as to decant the tenants. To lose a substantial amount of property will hold up whole-house developments or large-scale developments of older housing stock.

Mr. McCartney: That goes back to the arguments that some of us were putting in relation to the grounds for eviction and whether ground for possession is the rehabilitation of a property. We discussed the position of the tenure being offered to new tenants within the HAT.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend asked a question that may have been rhetorical or actual and may have been for the Minister or the world in general. The answer is part of the hidden agenda. Clause 58 says:

> "The primary objects of a housing action trust in relation to the designated area for which it is established shall be—
>
> (a) to secure the repair or improvement of housing accommodation for the time being held by the trust".

I emphasise the words "for the time being". That implies that it is transitional and that the power is to be used for the sale of properties.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is not part of the hidden agenda. That was clearly the position of the Minister. The Minister made it clear that we are talking about a transitional period of, say, five years. The job of the HAT will be to move in, take over the public sector stock, have it revalued and then make its decisions as to whether the stock and assets are to be sold to the private sector as they stand or after they have been refurbished, or whether they are to be offered to sitting tenants. This is a massive asset-stripping job. It is probably one of the largest asset-stripping jobs in the privatisation programme.

The first HATs are only a lead-in and provide a learning process for the Government on the best way to get rid of public sector accommodation. Conservative Members have occasionally muttered a few comments about the Bill. They and the Ministers have made it clear that local authorities are no longer seen as providers of housing. They are there to deal with aspects such as homelessness and to maintain a register for the homeless, registers for the transfer of tenancies, and other things that cost money in terms of administration costs and with which the Government do not want to lumber HATs.

We are dealing with a slush fund. We are debating whether that slush fund is for short-term gain in terms of HATs promoting their image within the community, or for facilitating the rapid sale of the properties and land within the confines of the HAT. The Minister will have to tell us what will happen to derelict land. I have already said that Thamesmead has £300 million—worth of derelict land. Will the HAT be able to claim derelict land grant, or will the money replace the grant?

Mr. George Howarth: The Minister will correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that the ability of any housing authority to obtain derelict land grant for housing development was taken away last year. In fact, I believe that the last such grant was made in my own constituency. So that option will not be open.

Mr. McCartney: That highlights my point about selling assets to the private sector and then giving it the resources to use the land for its own purposes, whether to create something for the community or purely to make profits. In many areas, especially in the north of England and in parts of industrial Wales, north-east England and London, huge tracts of derelict land are available as a natural resource and massive profits can be made overnight through speculation and transfers of ownership. A major example is the way in which the docklands development has transferred derelict land assets from the community to the private sector. *[Interruption.]* That must be the 25th or 26th time that the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) has made a childish jibe from a sedentary position. If he wishes to contribute to the debate, I will give way to him.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Why had local councils left the land derelict for so long? Why does the Labour party not admit responsibility for that?

Mr. McCartney: That comment shows the ignorance of Conservative Members about the ownership of derelict land. In London and other urban areas, the overwhelming proportion of such land is owned not by local authorities but by the private sector and by other public sector bodies. The derelict land programme exists because of the work of local authorities. My local authority has the largest reclamation programme of any local authority in Europe. In the main, derelict land has been the by-product of de-industrialisation, when the private sector, having made its profit, gets out and leaves the community to cope with the resulting disaster.

Mr. Hughes: Talk to Londoners.

Mr. McCartney: It is typical of the hon. Gentleman to try to make cheap political jibes when we are trying to resolve the major problem of how derelict land can be brought back to public use for employment or environmental purposes, whether by the public or the private sector.

Mr. Morley: The derelict land in my constituency results from the massive steelworks closures brought

about by the Government. The local authority has not been able to tackle the problem because, when the land was in private ownership, there was unrestricted dumping of poisonous chemicals of all kinds on the site. No local authority has the money to tackle that scale of pollution. It requires Government money, although in fact it is the responsibility of the private company which polluted the site and then, having taken its profit, left the problem to the local authority.

Mr. McCartney: Again, my hon. Friend makes the position clear. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Harrow, West is trying to interrupt from a sedentary position again. He should quit while he is ahead. For three months he was in a privileged position to contribute to the Committee debates on these issues, but he signally failed to do so, although no doubt we shall hear more interruptions from him between now and 2.30 tomorrow afternoon. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Wigan pier?"] Wigan pier is a prime example of a local authority initiative turning private dereliction to public use. This year it was awarded the European heritage award for the best environmental improvement in Europe. It is so good that Ministers arrive almost daily to see what a wonderful job the local authority has done. If the hon. Member for Harrow, West is really interested in the refurbishment of the local economy and community through the proper use of derelict land grant and public investment, I invite him to come to Wigan—he might learn something.

Mr. George Howarth: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Government Whip to admonish a Conservative Back Bencher for having the temerity to intervene after sitting silent for so long?

Mr. Patnick: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was listening to my hon. Friend the Whip. He was complimenting my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) on his contribution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): This gives me the opportunity to point out that there are rather too many private conversations on both sides of the House. I have been tolerant because the House has been sitting for some time, but I am sure that we shall make greater progress if hon. Members will restrain themselves.

Mr. McCartney: I am grateful for your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friends were not talking among themselves—they were giving me encouragement. Since about two o'clock this morning, Conservative Members have been filibustering with childish comments and pranks. I even had to admonish one group who had obviously come in from Annabel's after a bit too much pink champagne and tried to disrupt the proceedings. The Opposition, however, will not be deflected from dealing with the issues at stake.

To return to my subject, will the money be used for benevolent community purposes to assist the poorest members of the community living within the confines of the housing action trusts? Will it be used to help families who, due to the changes in income support, can no longer claim lump sum payments for essential items such as furniture, carpets and curtains or so-called luxuries such as cookers, bedding and heating appliances? If the money is to be spent on that kind of activity to maintain the social fabric of the community, I should be the first to say that the amendment should be withdrawn, but I suspect that that is not the prime objective. The money is a slush fund to be used once the assets have been stripped from the local authority and the community, and it will find its way into the pockets of those who should never have received it.

I end with a question to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing); there is not much point in asking the Minister, as we shall get no reply. Is there not widespread disquiet about the docklands accounts and the way in which hundreds of millions of pounds of public money has been disbursed by the corporation? There should be full public knowledge of that, but the allegations are still not in the public domain because of the secrecy involved in that development.

Mr. George Howarth: As my hon. Friend may know, the Merseyside development corporation has been severely criticised by the auditors for not keeping proper financial control over its expenditure.

Mr. McCartney: I apologise to my hon. Friend for not alluding to that point. He and other hon. Members from that region are disquieted, given that the organisation was set up in a blaze of glory precisely to undercut or cut out the role of the then Merseyside county council, the Liverpool city council and other councils involved in the regeneration of Merseyside. It is a crying shame, considering the major cuts in rate support grant and housing investment programme money for authorities in Merseyside, when a non-elected quango, appointed by the Secretary of State, is not only squandering but misusing public money. Will the Secretary of State take action and seek to recover public resources in the same way as he attempted to crucify bankrupt Labour councils for simply providing new homes and refusing to cut public and social services?

6 pm

Mr. Tony Banks: I thank you for calling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Patnick: The hon. Gentleman is on the Opposition Back Benches now.

Mr. Banks: Yes, I get around as much as I can. Presenting a moving target on a day such as this is safer, and probably in the best interests of my future health and prosperity.

I trust the Under-Secretary of State. She certainly never makes a promise that she does not keep. She gets around that, of course, by never making any promises. At least that is an advance on the promises that other Ministers do not keep. It may have been a back-handed compliment, but it was still meant as a compliment.

We are suspicious of this part of clause 66. That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) moved amendment No. 313. We raised this matter in Committee on 18 February. To his credit, the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) drew particular attention to HATs giving financial assistance to any one person. We all miss the incisive contributions that were made by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor. We wish that we could pray in aid his oratory this afternoon. The answer that we got from the Government was wholly unsatisfactory. It was not an answer at all.

I shall make a brief contribution on this occasion, just to get my hand back in, as it were. I ask the Minister to be more precise about what sort of individuals the

[Mr. Banks]

Government had in mind when they framed clause 66. As the amendment rightly states, it would be far more appropriate for grant-giving powers of HATs to have been given to fund local needs through community centres, advice agencies and tenants' associations. In view of what we know is going on elsewhere, and the possibility of councils extending the principle of portable discounts to people, there might be such an element. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) might develop that point.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) said, there is a possibility that there will be a slush fund and that HATs will be used to give lump sums to individuals to tempt them to move out so that flats and houses can be sold. That is another form of winkling, and we are worried about it. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South could be moved to consider withdrawing his amendment if we were to have some more assurances from the Minister.

Picking up the point about the financial probity of the London Docklands development corporation, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South is undoubtedly the best expert in the House on the functions, activities and behaviour of the London Docklands development corporation. But Opposition Members and people in the east end are seriously worried about the financial business and doings of the LDDC, and so was the auditor. I understand that the Public Accounts Committee will interview representatives of the LDDC to see whether it can get to the bottom of the matter.

With unelected, effectively unaccountable quangos, away from the scrutiny of the ballot box, without public admission to meetings, and without printed agendas and minutes, there is always the problem of all the things that they can get up to. We shall refer to that matter when we examine the composition of HATs and the publication of their guidelines. The Minister will set a good scene for later debates if she gives us some more assurances about what this part of clause 66 means in respect of HATs giving grants to individuals.

Mrs. Roe: I have listened with amazement to some of the wild allegations that Opposition Members have made about the likely activities of HATs. It is quite untrue to suggest that the Bill gives HATs an unfettered ability to spend taxpayers' money. HATs will be able to use their power to give financial assistance only with the consent of the Secretary of State. My Department will issue a financial memorandum to HATs, setting out in detail the circumstances in which assistance may be given. As provided in amendment No. 332, which the House agreed only a little time ago, full details of all financial assistance by each HAT will be set out in annual reports submitted to Parliament.

Opposition Members are becoming obsessed with derelict land. That land may be of particular relevance to urban development corporations in Thamesmead, but it is of marginal relevance to HATs, which will be set up to improve life for people who live in run-down council housing. HATs will certainly be required to make the best possible use of derelict land in their areas, as the Secretary of State expects local authorities to do.

The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) referred to accountability. Of course HATs will not be asset-strippers. The interests of the residents in the area will be essential to HATs' interests. Despite what Opposition Members have said, I emphasise that HATs will be fully accountable to Parliament through the Secretary of State. HATs' activities will be controlled and monitored through the corporate planning system. The Secretary of State will have powers of direction over HATs, and HATs will be required to submit annual reports to Parliament. We are about to consider an amendment that was promised in Committee to allow the National Audit Office access to HATs, to carry out value-for-money audit examinations. That will ensure HATs' final financial accountability.

Mr. McCartney: I follow up the hon. Lady's commitment about HATs not being asset-strippers and about their accountability. Does that mean that, when HATs sell housing stock, whether or not they are rehabilitated at the time of transfer, the Government will not allow that stock to be transferred to absentee landlord companies? That is similar to what is happening with British Coal property. What steps will the hon. Lady take to ensure that, when it is transferred, stock will not be resold on the open market, as so many Coal Board houses have been? Even within a day of the sale of an asset in London, tenants are left not knowing who their real landlords are.

Mrs. Roe: The assurances that the hon. Gentleman is seeking were debated in Committee. He knows that the interests of residents in HAT areas are of prime importance.

It is simply nonsense to seek, as amendment No. 313 does, to restrict HATs to giving financial assistance to statutory authorities or registered charities, both of which are encompassed in the general term in clause 66, "person". Therefore, I call on hon. Members to reject the amendment.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move, That the debate be now adjourned.

I believe that it would be in the interests of the House for us to adjourn our consideration of the Bill now and not to proceed with any further business today. The Opposition undertook that, if the House debated the Housing Bill through last night, the Bill would be completed today. That undertaking was repeatedly reaffirmed. The Opposition have now indicated that they do not intend to fulfil that undertaking. The House can work only on the basis that where undertakings are given they are honoured. In the present circumstances, we shall need time to consider very carefully how we should proceed.

Mr. Allan Roberts: That is one of the most outrageous statements that I have heard the Leader of the House make. He made accusations about my right hon. and hon. Friends who have been negotiating with him, but they are not here to answer those accusations. He did not have the courtesy to tell them that he would be coming here to make those outrageous accusations——

Mr. Wakeham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Roberts: No. I will not give way. The right hon. Gentleman does not deserve that courtesy.

It is the protocol in the House that if hon. Members, whether they are Leaders of the House or not, intend to mention other hon. Members, call them liars and insult them, they should at least have the courtesy to tell them about it in advance so that they can be in the Chamber to answer the accusations.

The truth is that this Government, this Leader of the House and this Secretary of State for the Environment have treated the House with contempt. They have tabled amendments that have completely rewritten the Housing Bill and given us totally inadequate time to debate those amendments and new clauses. Government Back-Bench Members know that to be true because the Government have done the same with other legislation. The Opposition responded to the Government's treatment of the House by debating the legislation fully and properly in the interests of the nation. It is the Government who have ratted on the proper procedures. Their attitude is a disgrace.

Mr. Wakeham: All that I would say is that I informed members of the Opposition Front Bench before I made the statement.

Mr. Spearing: This is a debatable motion. I am sure that the House will wish to adjourn soon, but, in view of the terms of the statement made by the Leader of the House, I do not think that we should do so at once.

I have no knowledge of what used to be not mentioned in the House—the usual channels. I believe that the phrase was coined in the 1930s. I put it to the Leader of the House in all sincerity that whatever undertakings he may have thought were given—or may have been given, for all I know—the right hon. Gentleman is not solely relating to colleagues on his Bench. I am glad to see him nodding in response to that.

The Leader of the House has forgotten some things. He has, quite properly, interrupted the debate on my amendment No. 313. If the motion is accepted, as I suspect it will be, we shall resume the debate at a later date. But it is more important to recall business questions last Thursday. The Leader of the House announced then that the House would discuss the Housing Bill on three days this week and that it would be concluded on Wednesday. I pointed out to him that that target was unlikely to be achieved because of the importance of the Bill and the number of amendments tabled to it. With the best will in the world, I did not see how it could be attained. The Leader of the House said that he would not withdraw the statement but that he would have further discussions. I have no doubt that those further discussions took place.

6.15 pm

The Leader of the House must know from the tone of hon. Members' contributions to the debate that our difficulty has been not with the usual workings of the House but with the nature of the Bill. A difficult Bill always attracts strong feelings. A Bill that is badly drafted usually needs many amendments on Report, and many amendments have been selected by the Chair because of the contentious nature of the Bill. I should not call them difficulties. This has been Parliament doing its job and finding out what the Bill is about. The present position has more to do with the nature of the material than with the behaviour of my right hon. and hon. Friends, and certainly those on the Front Bench, during the past 24 hours.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): This is an unhappy moment. The events of the past 24 hours have proved that the Opposition are an undisciplined rabble.

Mr. Allan Roberts: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to make accusations about the behaviour of Members of Parliament during a period when he was not even present in the Chamber? Is it not a fact that the Opposition have been very organised and have destroyed the progress of this Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are debating the motion for the adjournment of the debate. We have had a long sitting and many hon. Members will be hoping that it will not be too long before they can get some sleep. I hope that we can conduct the debate quietly and responsibly.

Mr. Onslow: I have no wish to state the obvious at length, and I do not withdraw a word of what I said. The key word that I used to describe the Opposition was "undisciplined". I believe, and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House assures me that it is true, that the agreements that were entered into have been broken. Broken agreements are not a sign of good discipline. It is clear from the events that those who are supposed to control the Opposition have failed to do so.

If it is true that the Labour Whips, speaking with the authority that they have, gave an undertaking that, in return for sitting through the night, we could finish the Bill by 10 o'clock this evening, even if in the process the Killingholme Bill was killed, and that undertaking has been broken by Opposition Members, it is an act of high indiscipline.

Mr. Soley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Onslow: I will not give way. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will wish to make his own speech.

Once again, the Labour Whips, the shadow Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition have failed to exercise the authority which the House expects of them. The Leader of the Opposition is the one person who

[Mr. Onslow]

should come here, because the House may have one or two things to say to him. If he has the leadership qualities to take part in Prime Minister's Question Time——

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to make at such length accusations of indiscipline when Mr. Speaker today made a clear statement that the debate had been conducted properly and within the rules of procedure? Is he not, by making false accusations of indiscipline, trying, in an oblique manner, to criticise the Chair?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not regard anything that has been said so far, on either side of the House, as a reflection on the Chair. It is understandable that, after long hours of debate—*[Interruption.]* Order. It is understandable that, after such long hours of debate, hon. Members are getting a little tired, but the best way for us to proceed now is to conduct the debate in an orderly and quiet manner.

Mr. Onslow: I am not criticising the Chair in any way, nor am I challenging the proposition that, if hon. Members stay within the rules of order, they are obeying the discipline of the Chair. I am talking about the breach of the internal discipline of the Labour party. The well-remunerated Opposition Chief Whip undertakes——

Mr. Barron: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Onslow: No, I shall not give way. I wish to make my main point.

The Opposition Chief Whip undertakes, on behalf of his colleagues, to deliver certain acts, but they have not occurred. If the Leader of the Opposition took greater interest in discipline within his party, we might be able to see where the true responsibility lies. We know that there is no discipline within the Labour party, because there is no leadership, from the Opposition Chief Whip, from the shadow Leader of the House or from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Simon Hughes: This is a case of Opposition 3, Government 1. The Leader of the House was a bit premature. Had he waited until the next debate, he would have been moving the Adjournment halfway through the groups of amendments and new clauses selected by Mr. Speaker. We are on the 56th such group and there are 58 still to come. Perhaps the most telling point of all is that a substantial number—nearly half—of these amendments and new clauses have come from the Government. Of those remaining to be debated, 73 were tabled by the Government. Since we started debates on part III, almost exactly 12 hours ago, substantial time has been spent on Government amendments and new clauses. The Government have had to concede that their management of the business has shown that they are unable to deliver their own legislation in the time that they had planned.

The Bill was always going to be controversial. It was bound to be more controversial when the Government decided to add to it almost as much again by way of amendment. This came not in the days immediately after the Committee and the original day for Report in April, nor in the days between Committee and the revised date for Report in May, nor between the Committee and the second revision of the date for Report in early June, but between that second revision and the eventual date for Report in mid-June. By that stage, we should have had some sign of what the Government were going to propose, but it was not until the final hours available for tabling new clauses and amendments that the Government tabled this mass of proposals.

Not only that, but the substantial proposals that the Government said that they would show to the House before Report have still not been seen. The major matter of a social charter for tenants is still a matter of mystery, shrouded in confusion and followed everywhere by uncertainties.

Mr. Skinner: Has the hon. Member considered that what has really happened is that the Prime Minister has given the Leader of the House a bit of earhole powder and told him to get the matter sorted out because it looked as if, under her Administration, we were going to break this century's record for length of sitting? Furthermore, she wants to come in here with the Secretary of State for the Environment after it is all over and clear up all this litter.

Finally, does the hon. Gentleman think that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), who took part in some of these proceedings, would describe what has happened today—signing up for the homeless and fighting for the tenants—as parliamentary mugging?

Mr. Hughes: The answer to the last question is perhaps the easiest. It is no. Yet again, the procedures of the House have been used as they are entitled to be. In large measure, Back Benchers have spoken not a fiction but a fact. They have pointed out to the country that we have a Housing Bill that still does not mention the word "homeless". It is a Housing Bill, written in 1988, with 110,000 people having presented themselves as homeless, which does not treat the main issue with which it has to deal.

I do not know whether it was worked out when the Prime Minister came in for her breakfast blessing or whether it was worked out later, but the reality of the motion to adjourn is that the Goverment have had to concede that they did not allow enough time in the beginning and that they will lose some of their business in any event. There is no way out.

The only way for the Government is to admit that they have been well and truly snookered, caught and knocked off the table. Even if the Leader of the House succeeds, as I suppose he might, with his motion to adjourn—when it can be voted on is a subject for your ruling Mr. Deputy Speaker—he will have to come back to the House either for the continuation of Report stage part three, part four and part five, followed by new clauses which the Government chose to put at the end rather than at the beginning or he will have to come back with a guillotine motion. That would be yet more evidence not only that the Government cannot manage their own business but that they have to bring in a timetable to stifle the debate on housing the homeless when that is a matter which the House has shown that it is willing and able to debate and wants to debate at considerably greater length.

6.30 pm

Mr. Soley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Government need not have found themselves in this mess? The trivial argument advanced by the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) shows that he has not

understood what it is about. The mess could have been avoided if the Government had listened to what I said last week, which met with agreement by some. I forecast that the Bill would not be through on time if the Government continued to try to introduce new clauses in a way which undermined our Committee procedure.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is right. I remember what was said during business questions last Thursday. I remember the points of order on Thursday. The case was made for more time, and I remember that the Leader of the House said that that would be considered. He did not say, "No, there is no question of it." Instead, he said that the Government would consider what they could do.

The reality is that no extra time has been given. It is 24 hours since we began the third day of the Housing Bill on Report. We started three hours late. Some of us have broken sitting records before. Some of us sat through the record sitting since the war of 32 hours on 22-23 May 1984. Some of us did so with no difficulty, and to his credit the Minister for Housing and Planning was one of them. We did so because the Government were trying to abolish local government. They were trying to steamroller through the House legislation that went against the wishes of the people and local authorities. The matter deserved to be debated at length. It deserved to face the resistance of the Members of the House of Commons.

When the Leader of the House seeks to terminate this debate so that it will not, perhaps, make the record books to which it was otherwise clearly heading—that is not certain, Madam Deputy Speaker, because you and your colleagues may well decide that we should continue for some hours yet—let him understand that there are two orders to follow the consideration of the Bill on Report, as well as other matters and an Adjournment debate.

The reality is that we are prepared and are willing to debate housing and the homeless for as long as the matter remains on the political agenda. We shall do so until there are a Government in office who represent, first, the majority of the British people, which this Government do not, either politically or electorally, and, secondly, the majority of those who need protection, care and concern.

Opposition Members, perhaps occasionally supported by the rare compassionate, concerned Conservative Back Bencher, will continue to challenge the Government's steamroller. We believe that legislation must be debated properly, and debated until we get it right. If we cannot persuade the Government to change the laws that they propose, on their head be it. On their head be the political blame. We shall have none of the Housing Bill. We shall have none of the Government's housing policy. We shall have none of the authoritarian and unsympathetic attitude of the Government, who do not deal with the people who are in the greatest housing need.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I warmly welcome the motion of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. Unlike many Opposition Members who are now in their places, I have sat through the vast majority of the third day's consideration of the Housing Bill on Report. I have sat through shift changes on the Opposition Front Bench. That is hardly evidence of a sincere approach to the Bill. Opposition Front Bench spokesmen have come and they have gone. Opposition Members have been in evidence by extremely long and tedious speeches. They have failed to do justice to the serious arguments that were advanced in Committee.

In Committee, we debated the real issues. Opposition Members have been unwilling and unable to carry forward those arguments on Report. Therefore, I welcome my right hon. Friend's motion to adjourn the debate. I do not believe that the Opposition ever intended seriously to debate housing issues. I welcome the fact that we shall be returning to consideration of the Bill on Report. When we do so—perhaps with a timetable motion, but that is not a matter for me—Conservative Members will be in a position to advance the important arguments that demonstrate why the Bill is vital for the homeless. It is considered vital by all those who are concerned about the provision of housing for everyone in Britain. It will put an end to the evil empires of council housing that the Labour party controls, which have done so much damage to ordinary people who merely want a home. Opposition Members do not care about those people. Conservative Members do, and we shall make that clear when we continue the debate.

Mr. Soley: Perhaps we can now deal with some of the facts. I do not think that I have ever seen a Government in such an incredible mess. It is surely one in which they deserve to be.

Let me explain what happened. Consideration of the Bill in Committee began in December 1987 and it emerged on 15 March. What happened then? It remained behind the scenes while the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister for Housing and Planning tried to make sense of one of the most incredibly stupid measures to be brought before the House by any Government. Why is it so bad?

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have been a Member of this House for a long time and I have rarely seen a Patronage Secretary or other Government Whip behave in such an appalling way. Surely we can expect acceptable behaviour from the Patronage Secretary of a sort that you would expect from other right hon. and hon. Members, Madam Deputy Speaker. I suggest that you should consider suspending the sitting until we can get some decent behaviour from him.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I see no point at all in suspending the sitting. I have no wish to do so, nor shall I do so. I expect the very highest standards from every hon. Member, irrespective of his or her standing in the House.

Mr. Soley: I think that it would help the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, if those who sit on the Government Front Bench listened to my remarks and to those made by others who will contribute to the debate subsequently. There are many things that Conservative Back Benchers do not know about the passage of the Bill.

As I have said, the Bill emerged from Committee in March. It has been with the Government since then. Few Bills have been waiting so long for consideration on Report. Why? There is something that I want to say about the Minister for Housing and Planning that Conservative Members may wish to hear. The Minister tried hard to

[Mr. Soley]

improve the Bill. He was prepared—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman should listen to what I am saying about his Minister.

The Minister for Housing and Planning tried to improve the Bill. In Committee he made about 100 concessions, rightly and properly. He agreed to change the Bill in places, to reconsider points or to come back to us with recommendations or suggestions. He acted generously. I always claimed that the reason for that was that the Bill had been badly drafted and that the Secretary of State for the Environment had wanted a different Bill.

I then recognised that the Government were having acute difficulty in getting the Bill back to the Floor of the House. Why? Not just because of the concessions but because they needed to make other changes as well.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North) *rose—*

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman must wait; I am not giving way.

In making the other changes, the Government made the fatal error of including major changes which would affect the procedures of the House. The Minister can confirm that I was on the telephone to his office last Thursday to say that I was worried about the changes. On Friday I said that there was no way that I would co-operate on the time scale that we had agreed of three and a half days but that if he gave me an extra day to debate the new clauses, making the total time four and a half days, I would accept that. Even today I offered that again, but the offer was rejected by the Government.

If there are to be new clauses and amendments of constitutional importance, and if they are to be considered without going through Committee, is it not reasonable to ask that that period should be given on the Floor of the House to consider what would otherwise have been considered in Committee?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is important to get the timing right. What the hon. Gentleman has said is true. He asked for another day and said that if we gave him another day he would agree to speed the passage of the Bill. However, he did that some hours after agreeing that he would give us the Bill by around 10 o'clock today, and he did it in the presence of several witnesses, including the Secretary of State. I suspect that he had not told his Back Benchers about it, and I suspect that that is why he could not deliver it.

Mr. Soley: It is more complicated if we look at the timing. It is right that I accepted the timing before I read new clause 47, and before I got the tenants' charter and the guide to new clause 47, which was put in the Table Office only on Thursday, indicating that the Government had given it considerable thought. It was only after I had seen those on Friday that I said the timing was unacceptable. Until that time I had not seen the detail of new clause 47, nor had I seen the pamphlet which has been put in the Table Office. It had not been given to me as the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on housing, any more than the paper on tenants' choice was given to me. So where is the normal relationship through which Ministers give information to their opposite numbers?

Mr. Waldegrave: We should be clear. The hon. Gentleman offered the deal today, not last Thursday or Friday. I suspect that he had not told his Back Benchers, and I understand their astonishment.

Mr. Soley: I can say exactly what I said to the Minister and he can confirm it. I said, "I have no problems about you getting the Bill by 10 o'clock or 12 o'clock." I have no problems. What the Minister still does not understand is the extent of the anger, not just in the Labour party but in the Liberal party and among Scottish and Welsh Members, and for good reason.

6.45 pm

Let me take the matter further. There then came the amazing additions. You will remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I put a motion to the House last Thursday asking for the new clauses to be referred back to the Committee, because by that time I had realised that what the Government were doing was more serious. When that was not accepted, I raised a point of order. I wrote a manuscript amendment, which is still on the Table, which asked that the new clauses which had not been considered in Committee should be sent to the Committee. I told the Minister that again today. I said, "If you do not want to give me another day, do it differently. Let the new clauses which did not go to Committee be sent to the Committee and I will accept that." That also was rejected.

I want to tell Conservative Members and the public the extent of the Government's proposed additions to the Bill. New clauses 26, 25 and 29 were added without any debate in Committee. They are extensive. Two new schedules on Wales were added without having gone through Committee. There were 12 pages of typed print on the Order Paper for those alone. I ask the Government and Conservative Members to think about what that implies.

In our parliamentary democracy a Bill is read the First time and then has a Second Reading before going into Committee. Hon. Members know that it goes into Committee for detailed consideration, not because the parties disagree on some parts of it but because there are unintended consequences with legislation from any party. We send Bills to Committee so that they may have a detailed analysis to prevent difficulties arising.

The new amendments propose a housing corporation for Wales, to which neither I nor my hon. Friends object, but I have every objection to something as big, powerful and effective as that being set up without being examined in Committee. In Committee not one member of the Government, nor an Opposition Front Bench Member, spoke for Wales. There was just one Back Bencher on each side to speak for Wales.

What else was in the new proposals? If we are talking about broken promises, I have much time to deal with what the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) has tried to do to improve the Bill. Some things have not been delivered. In Committee, the Minister said:

> "On the hon. Gentleman's wider point, the next major occasion on which we shall debate what the Government have called the charter would be on Third Reading, because we have given clear assurances that we must have a much more detailed debate then, and it would be wrong if we did not." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 8 March 1988; c. 1493.]

That was on the social landlords' charter. The Under-Secretary of State also said in Committee that it should be before the House on Report. The charter has

still not been produced. It is one of the most important parts of the Bill, as every Minister has said, but no such thing exists.

Mr. Greg Knight *rose*——

Mr. Soley: I will not give way.

That is in the Committee *Hansard*. Hon. Members should read what the Minister said: that it would be ready for Third Reading. It is not ready, yet it is a central part of the Bill.

Mr. Knight *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has made it clear that he is not giving way.

Mr. Soley: I am anxious to go through this in detail, without taking up the time of other hon. Members.

Let me go on to what I found most offensive of all, new clause 47. I shall not debate it, but new clause 47 provides that local authorities can give away all their council housing lock, stock and barrel. The small print of the paper that was left in the Table Office on Thursday—so it had been thought about, printed and produced, but left there only on Thursday—says that local authorities, to meet their homelessness statutory responsibility, will be able to contract out the homeless to private landlords.

I ask Conservative Members to consider whether, even if they think that it is a good idea for a local authority to enter into a contract with private landlords and for private landlords to take the homeless people, it is a good idea to produce such a clause—without its being debated in Committee—which does not decide how long those people will be there, how much the landlords will be paid or who they pass them on to afterwards. None of that has been debated, nor would it have been had we not taken this exercise.

What happens next? New clause 47 is really offensive. It refers to the "Housing (Scotland) Act 1987". The Housing (Scotland) Bill is not yet an Act of Parliament. It is in the House of Lords at the moment. If the Government wanted to amend the Housing (Scotland) Bill, they could do so in the House of Lords. They have not done so; they have done it in a Bill that applies to England and Wales. There was not a single Scottish Member, never mind a Scottish Member from the Government Front Bench or the Opposition Front Bench, on the Committee. No wonder Scottish Members and Welsh Members feel angry about it. Why should they be treated in that way?

Then we come to the really offensive part. From time to time, the Government have chosen to lecture the people of this country on the dangers of retrospective legislation. Yet new clause 47 takes effect from 9 June 1988. It is retrospective legislation by which a local authority can get rid of all of its housing. Where is the great argument of the Government and the Tory party against retrospective legislation? It has gone. Conservative Members, the Government and the Minister must know that what they have done is deeply offensive to the methods by which the House is used to proceeding.

The next issue also concerns new clause 47. It concerns the voting system. We all know that the voting system in which local authority tenants are transferred to private tenancies is rigged. We know that people who die have their votes counted in favour of a transfer to the private landlord. We know that empty flats are counted as a vote in favour of a private landlord. That has been around for some time. Suddenly the Government have discovered that, despite that rigged voting, tenants still do not want to be transferred. Therefore, they invented new clause 47. They know that, if they squeeze local authorities enough, sufficient local authorities will do their dirty work for them and transfer the tenants under the guidelines of the voting system. Of course, there is no statutory requirement on local authorities to carry that out. It is not in the Bill, and we all know that if it is not in the Bill it is not a statutory requirement.

The Bill has been appallingly mismanaged from beginning to end. I have some sympathy for the Minister for Housing and Planning, but frankly he must ask himself how much longer he can serve under a Secretary of State who drafts a Bill for him, fights him all the way, line by line, on the changes, and then puts him through this. If the Minister wants a Secretary of State who wipes his feet on him, so be it. But that is his choice, and the House of Commons will not put up with it.

The Bill is not just about housing. Housing is central to it, but underneath rests the issue of parliamentary democracy and the way in which the House of Commons is trampling all over it.

Mr. Fallon: I rise to support my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. I wish to remind the House of the terms of the motion that my right hon. Friend moved. He made it absolutely clear that an undertaking had been given by the Opposition. He went on to emphasise that that undertaking had been reaffirmed—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is on his feet.

Mr. Tebbit: I distinctly heard, as did many hon. Members, the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) accuse my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House of being a liar. *[Interruption.]* Even with the debased standards which are common on the Opposition Front Bench, that remark ought to be withdrawn. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. With great respect to the House, I was busily engaged and I certainly did not hear it. If any hon. Member did use that word, I ask him to respect the traditions of the House and withdraw it.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I did use that word, and I withdraw it, but I hope also that the Leader of the House will withdraw the outrageous accusations that he made earlier which virtually implied that some of my hon. Friends were lying.

Mr. Max Madden: (Bradford, West): As my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) has withdrawn the remark that was challenged, will you, Madam Deputy Speaker, ask the Government Chief Whip who, as the Leader of the House was making his application for the Adjournment, pointed to the hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench and called them liars on a number of occasions. He was clearly heard by several Opposition Members. What is good enough for the gander is good enough for him. Will he also withdraw his remarks?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am prepared to accept my full responsibilities while I am in the Chair. The House will know that I was not in the Chair at the time and will understand that I cannot accept responsibility for what took place when I was not here.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. Friend made it absolutely clear to the House that an undertaking had been given. He went on to emphasise that that undertaking had been repeatedly reaffirmed. I think that I can defuse the situation. My right hon. Friend was being a little less than his usual charitable self when he implied that that undertaking could have been kept or adhered to——

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There can be no further point of order. I have dealt with all the points of order. Is it a fresh point of order?

Mr. Winnick: I wonder whether you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would rule on the following. You asked that if anyone used the word "liar" he should withdraw. My hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) has explained the position and has done so. You said that if anyone else might have used that word, that was not a matter for you because you were not in the Chair. As a large number of my hon. Friends distinctly heard the Government Chief Whip repeatedly shout out, "Liar," surely it is right and proper that the right hon. and learned Gentleman should have enough honour to stand at the Dispatch Box and withdraw what he said. He said, "Liar"; he knows that he said, "Liar," and he should withdraw it.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that I made the position clear in dealing with the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). *[Interruption.]* Order. It is incumbent upon any hon. Member in the House who uses language which is unacceptable to us to withdraw it.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

7 pm

Mr. Sedgemore: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not want to go back over old ground, but on one occasion during a Friday debate I made a remark about the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Sitting in your seat was another Deputy Speaker. I was asked to withdraw that remark on the following Monday, when Mr. Speaker was in the Chair. Therefore, I ask your Clerk to tell you that the way in which you are ruling on this allegation, which I am not in a position to judge, is not the way in which this House is run.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is a challenge to the Chair. If any hon. Member wishes to raise that matter on another occasion, he is perfectly at liberty to do so. At the moment, however, I am listening to the comments of the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon).

Mr. Fallon: As I was saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, before I was so crudely interrupted, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has made a number of claims: first that an undertaking was given; secondly, that that undertaking was repeatedly reaffirmed. His third claim was slightly unfair. He left Conservative Members with the impression that either the shadow housing spokesman or the Opposition Chief Whip were in a position to fulfil the undertakings that had been given. It is clear to Conservative Members that the Labour party is out of control. Neither the shadow housing spokesman nor the Opposition Chief Whip can control any of the rebels who have been at work during the last 24 hours.

There are a number of Opposition parties. To be charitable, some hon. Members are genuinely interested in housing, while others are more interested in the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill. They are concerned with what might happen to them when Mr. Arthur Scargill hears that they have acceded to the passing of the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill. They are concerned not so much with Shelter as with Mr. Arthur Scargill. They are concerned not so much with the implications as with their deselection for having failed to resist the passage of that private Bill.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Does my hon. Friend agree with me that it might help his argument if we were to adjourn so that we can find out whether Opposition spokesmen have made statements, not to their party leader —that does not seem to be their wont these days—but to the chief political correspondent of the Press Association?

Mr. Fallon: I think that it would be fair if we were to give the chief political correspondent of the Press Association a slightly earlier night than he has been used to during the last couple of days. He should not have to wait until one o'clock in the morning. I very much hope that my right hon. Friend's motion for that purpose will be acceded to, but let no hon. Member on this side of the House be under any illusion about what happened during the last 24 hours. We have seen an Opposition party that is totally out of control in its conduct of the Housing Bill and in its desire not to deal with the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill and other issues before the House.

Before we adjourn, there should be a statement by the Opposition Front Bench spokesman about who is in control of this rabble, whether the Labour party wishes to proceed with the Housing Bill and about its view of the conduct of business and the delivery and acceptance of undertakings through the usual channels.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. David Waddington) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division.

Mr. Tony Banks *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I apologise for addressing you in this Frankie Vaughan-type garb, especially as I am wearing a white jacket, but you probably know that I was a junior Whip—*[Interruption.]* I was also a very effective junior Whip. I resent deeply the comments that were made by the Leader of the House from the Dispatch Box. They could easily be interpreted as implying that a deal was struck with me, as the Whip, and that I then reneged on it. I want to make it quite clear that at no stage whatsoever was I ever approached by any Whip on the other side, nor did I give any assurance whatsoever with regard to any deal. I wish the debate had been allowed to continue. I resent the allegation that the Labour party is ill-disciplined. Last night——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a point of order for the Chair. It is

a matter for debate. I understand the hon. Gentleman's frustration, and that of many other hon. Members, but he has already made the point that I think he wished to make.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you could inquire into the suggestion that has been put to me, that the Leader of the House has implied to the Opposition that the Short money will be put in question unless the Opposition co-operate over the Bill. If the Leader of the House has used the Short money as a threat in an attempt to control the Opposition, I suggest to you that that is absolutely outrageous.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I shall see that the matter is referred to Mr. Speaker and that a response is given.

Mr. George Howarth *(seated and covered):* Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. If what my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has said actually happened, was it not a breach of privilege and of the rules of this House? Should it not be referred to the Privileges Committee?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have already made it quite clear that at this stage the matter ought to be referred to Mr. Speaker for him to deal with.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth) *(seated and covered):* Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not a fact that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) resigned as a Whip on the question of disciplining Opposition Members?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Resignations of Whips have nothing whatsoever to do with the Chair. We are in the middle of a Division.

The House having divided: Ayes 269, Noes 193.

Division No. 359] **[7.2 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowsell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ls)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Critchley, Julian
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fineberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*

Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Graham Allen and
Mr. Chris Smith.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Question put accordingly:—
The House divided: Ayes 278, Noes 183.

Division No. 360] **[7.20 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher

Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Critchley, Julian
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam

Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Debate adjourned accordingly.

Hospital Closures (Gwynedd)

7.31 pm

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Government Whip has just moved the motion for the Adjournment of the House, but we still have business on the Order Paper.

After the debate on the Housing Bill, there should have been a debate on air pollution from large combustion plants on a motion to take note of European Community documents Nos. 11642/83 and 5124/85. If the Government do not want to move the "take note" motion, would it be in order for me to move it so that we can debate the Government's record on acid rain, taking account of the important fact that the meeting of EC Ministers to consider the instruction from the House takes place tomorrow?

Why have the Government not moved the motion? Why are they stopping debate on acid rain? They do not want to debate housing and now they do not want to debate EC documents on an important subject. Is it in order for the Opposition to move the motion? There is plenty of time—it is only 7.31 pm

Madam Deputy Speaker: I draw the House's attention to the fact that the motion for the Adjournment of the House has been moved. The "take note" motion is in the hands of the Government. It is not for the Opposition to move it.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to take up the time available to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley)——

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not.

Mr. Spearing: Alas, the motion for the Adjournment has already been moved. The "take note" motion has been recommended to the House by the Scrutiny Committee because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) said, the matter is to be debated in Brussels tomorrow. There is every expectation, to judge from the Government's explanatory memorandum, that they want to make progress. The motion says that the Government should negotiate on the directive to

"provide for a substantial but cost-effective reduction in emissions from large combustion plants."

There is therefore every expectation that the Government will reach a compromise and make an agreement tomorrow before the matter has been debated in the House. There is no reason why the matter should not be debated tonight. In that respect, the Government are deliberately and wantonly not allowing the House to discuss the issue before the Brussels meeting tomorrow. My point of order is whether the Leader of the House can tell us whether, if any agreement is reached, it will be subject to parliamentary reserve because there has been no debate tonight.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand that that is no longer a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can I seek your guidance about

the Leader of the House's tactic in apparently threatening to withdraw Short money unless the Housing Bill is delivered? Apart from being a modern version of piracy, it may be a breach of privilege. Could you confirm that, on a written submission, Mr. Speaker would consider the matter and decide whether it is a breach of privilege? In view of the public collapse of the organisation of the Tory Whips Office and the Leader of the House using his position to threaten an established procedure—providing money for the Opposition parties—could you convey to Mr. Speaker our concern and ask for an examination of the matter? I hope that the Leader of the House does not try to threaten Mr. Speaker as well.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that Short money was introduced by the 1974-75 Labour Government to assist the Opposition of the day, the main body of which was the Tory party? Will you also confirm that at no time did Labour Members threaten or bully the Tory Opposition, which you will recall, Madam Deputy Speaker used various tactics almost every week when the Labour Government did not have a majority?

Will you also confirm that the Short money has not yet been debated by the House in this Session and that it affects other minority parties, so it is outrageous for the Leader of the House to knock on the Shadow Cabinet's door asking for the deputy leader of the Labour party to come out, and then issue threats about withdrawing Short money because the Government lost control of business in the House? This has been a great parliamentary day for the Labour party in particular, and we shall not allow the Leader of the House to spoil it in any way.

Madam Deputy Speaker: All I can do in response to the hon. Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is to repeat what I said earlier—that this matter will be referred at the earliest opportunity, and I mean the earliest opportunity, to Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Could I register——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman understands that he is taking time out of the Adjournment debate.

Mr. Hughes: I do. Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I make the strongest possible representations about the fact that, with no notice, the Government have withdrawn business which they tabled and which can be taken appropriately only tonight before the important Environment Ministers' meeting in Brussels tomorrow, at which Britain will again be accused of being the dirty man of Europe?

The Environment Select Committee report came out yesterday, but a debate tomorrow will probably be too late. Can I ask that the relevant authorities in the House ensure that the Government do not in future lead the House to believe that it is to have a debate on such an important matter and then suddenly, and at the last minute, withdraw the opportunity?

Madam Deputy Speaker: There are senior Ministers on the Treasury Bench, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's point has been noted.

7.38 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): This must be one of the most long-awaited Adjournment debates for many a year.

The debate is of considerable importance to the communities affected by Gwynedd health authority's closure proposals, which will affect six hospitals—Ysbyty Coffa Madog in Porthmadog; the cottage hospital, Caernarfon; the Druid hospital, Llangefni; Ysbyty Dewi Sant, Bangor; Groesynyd hospital, Conwy; and certain facilities, including the children's ward, at Llandudno general hospital.

The health authority decided on 25 April to go ahead with its closure proposals, and the debate is particularly well timed as the Secretary of State's period for receiving objections to the closures ended last week.

I am sure that the Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for health in Wales, to whom I am grateful for attending this short debate, will confirm that there has been an enormous mailbag of opposition to the closures. Indeed, the people of Gwynedd regard the ad hoc closure of valuable community health facilities as an act of wanton vandalism by the health authority. They cannot believe that a Government who claim that the Health Service is "safe in their hands" can possibly endorse this retrograde package.

I want to refer to the way in which the closure proposals have been formulated in general and then to deal in particular with the two hospitals in my constituency. The closure proposals were made last year after the health authority had been in some financial difficulty over recent years—indeed, ever since the new district general hospital, Ysbyty Gwynedd, opened in 1984. Because of those cash problems, the Welsh Office put in consultants, Deloitte Haskins and Sells, to report, on a narrowly specified brief, on the authority's financial position, its budgetary control system and how to get the books to balance as quickly as possible. Nowhere was Deloitte asked to make value judgments in terms of service rendered or health care minimum standards required to be maintained.

Gwynedd health authority has consistently maintained that it has been underfunded by the Welsh Office, in revenue and particularly in capital expenditure. It claims that the Welsh Office had not made available the sums needed for a coherent capital expenditure programme. The capital programme announced by the Welsh Office shows that over the next 15 years Gwynedd will get only £15·8 million, or £68 per capita, compared with Clwyd getting £54·3 million, or £136 per capita—twice the level of Gwynedd—and West Glamorgan getting £65·3 million, or £179 per capita. That is despite the inadequate standard of many buildings in Gwynedd and the fact that Gwynedd's population is projected to increase by 5·6 per cent. from now until 2001, compared with a 1·9 per cent. increase for Wales as a whole.

The Minister must explain why Gwynedd has been starved of capital. Is it because of a shortage of capital in the Welsh Office or because no adequate capital proposals have been submitted by the authority to the Welsh Office?

The Deloitte report, which was published in September 1987, made it clear that there were fundamental causes of the health authority's financial problems. The prime reason given was

"The cumulative underfunding of wage awards by approximately £2 million".

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

That, of course, was a direct result of Government policy.

The health authority's budgetary control system is supposed to highlight those areas of overspending so that management action can follow, but in 1986-87, when there was a net overspend of £1·5 million, only five of the 32 budget heads had overspending in excess of £100,000 and those five areas alone caused the £1·5 million overspend. Ysbyty Gwynedd itself gave rise to almost £700,000 of overspending.

Yet, although the budgetary control system identifies those areas of overspend, the health authority's corrective action to get its budget back into balance has not been aimed at those five areas. Instead, the authority plans to close community hospitals that have not contributed significantly to the net overspend. The absence of management by budgetary control reflects a complete lack of confidence by management in the implications of its own accounting system or in taking decisions on bases other than budgetary performance—on bases contrary to the terms of reference of the Deloitte study.

In fact, the Deloitte report was dramatically scathing in its comments on the health authority's budgetary control system, saying, in paragraph 61, for example:

"The District's revenue expenditure is based on budgets which are unrealistic".

Paragraph 126 states:

"Budgets are not currently based on activity levels as these are not produced as a part of the operational planning process."

That being so, it is hard to understand how the health authority or Deloitte had an adequate basis of financial information on which to take such far-reaching decisions.

Questions must be asked about the competence of both the Welsh Office and of the membership of the authority, in allowing the budgetary control system to continue in a state of complete shambles. The responsibility for the financial performance of the health authority lies either on the shoulders of the authority members or on the desk of the Secretary of State. It certainly does not lie with the people of Gwynedd, who do not elect the authority or have any control over it. Yet it is they who, through a real reduction in health care provision, are being asked to carry the can for the inadequacies of the authority's performance or the insufficiency of resources to sustain services.

The Welsh Office has laid down specific guidelines for the procedure to be followed when closures are proposed. It requires that the consultation document covers, first, the implications for patients, such as travel; secondly, an idea of options with relevant arguments; thirdly, alternative uses for the buildings; fourthly, alternative employment of staff; and fifthly, how the closure fits in with the area's plans.

I contend that Gwynedd health authority has treated those guidelines with a passing disinterest bordering on contempt. In none of the closure proposals is any of the five criteria adequately pursued. If the Minister takes his own guidelines seriously, he must insist that the health authority shows a greater professional integrity in undertaking its consultations.

I draw to the Minister's attention Deloitte's severe criticism of the health authority over its lack of strategic planning for the development of the hospital service, which is relevant to the fifth point that I mentioned. Deloitte commented in paragraph 86 that, in Gwynedd,

"Planning operates outside the General Management Structure."

The report adds in paragraph 91:

"Initiatives for district services were allowed to develop without any detailed operational planning and without examining the availability of any additional funding."

That is borne out by the way in which tens of thousands of pounds were spent by the health authority on upgrading the cottage hospital in Caernarfon during the past two years, making it suitable to provide services for disabled people, then deciding last autumn to close down that hospital and write off most of the spending that has added little to the market value of the building.

Deloitte states in paragraph 98:

"The Authority has not yet developed a management plan as an element of its overall strategic operational planning process."

However, Health Service planning paper 5 requires specifically that closure proposals should cover the relationship between the proposed closure and other developments in the area's plans. That has manifestly not happened in these closure proposals.

I want to raise with the Minister the inadequacy of the health authority's consultation document used as the basis of the proposed closures. There was a common element in each of the closure documents, which were, through no fault of the authority, severely dated and consequently misleading long before the expiry of the consultation period. For example, the health authority forecast in its consultation documents an overspend of £1·3 million in 1987-88. In the authority meeting of 25 April, it was admitted that the actual result was likely to be an underspend of £150,000, and that was achieved without closing the hospitals now threatened.

Secondly, the authority published the consultation document on the assumption that there would be a continuing underfunding of wage awards "on a recurring basis" and that £750,000 had to be found this year to meet that cost. But the Government have announced subsequently that the wage award is being fully funded and consequently the assumption by the health authority is incorrect. Thirdly, the authority assumed, as a justification for its closure proposals, that it would be required by the Welsh Office to transfer each year 0·5 per cent. of its budget to priority services. In fact, since the publication of the consultative document, the Welsh Office has withdrawn that requirement.

In addition, a number of factors quoted by the health authority at its meeting on 25 April were not included in the original consultation documents, such as the assertion that no capital would be available for alternative hospital provision and that the package had to be taken in its entirety, not hospital by hospital. Is such an approach correct or acceptable?

I remind the Minister that, in response to a parliamentary question of mine on 18 January, he stated that if a consultation document were found to be

"faulty, misleading or inadequate in a way that might be prejudicial to proper consultation, it is likely that further consultation would be required."—[*Official Report*, 18 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. *547*.]

I put it to the Minister, on the basis of the misleading assumptions that I have just described and because of the authority's failure to draw up consultation documents in line with the requirements of Health Service planning

paper 5, that there is now a responsibility on the Welsh Office at the very least to withdraw the present proposals and to seek consultation on the basis of correct information, against the background of a properly discussed strategic plan for hospital services in the county.

The closure of the Ysbyty Madog would leave the town of Porthmadog without a single hospital facility. Against the background of the explosion at the Coake's works in Penrhyndeudraeth yesterday, the implications must be clear. Porthmadog serves as a centre for a tourist area the population of which is increased by tens of thousands in the summer. All the health authority's plans over the past 10 years assumed that there would be a new, modern community hospital in the Porthmadog area and that the Madog would be retained until a new hospital was built. Those plans now seem to have been thrown out of the window in a policy somersault, based on an ad hoc cost-cutting decision rather than on a planned change in health care provision.

The suggested alternative for the Porthmadog people is to use the existing hospital in the village of Penrhyndeudraeth, which is separated from Porthmadog by the Cob built by William Maddocks early last century, which is one of the worst traffic bottlenecks in Wales. Porthmadog is 30 miles from the district general hospital at Bangor.

The local campaign committee has had the advice of a chartered accountant, Mr. Dan Ellis, to examine the claimed savings from closing the hospital—£237,000 a year. He has shown that the figure is not a net saving but rather the gross cost of running the Madog hospital. It makes no allowance for the cost of caring for patients elsewhere; nor is any compensation included for staff having to move to other jobs.

The health authority has acknowledged that if the Madog closes it would

"result in a substantial loss of service to the people of Eifionydd".

Furthermore, some of the patients who use the Madog for respite care—they include some EMI patients—might have to resort to private nursing home or residential home facilities if the Madog were not available. If that were to happen, the Exchequer would probably have to pay £200 a week to keep those people in private homes. The health authority admits that it has not taken that aspect into account, claiming that it is under no obligation to do so. Presumably the Welsh Office cannot pass on its responsibilities quite so easily, and the Treasury might have something to say about that.

There is real doubt whether the authority is legally entitled to sell a building that was erected by public subscription specifically as Porthmadog's memorial to the dead of the first world war.

The decision to close the Madog was taken by eight votes to seven, with the vice-chair of the authority abstaining. That is clearly an inadequate basis for such a far-reaching decision and the Secretary of State certainly should not endorse the closure proposal.

The cottage hospital in Caernarfon is an ideal ground floor building, recently modernised at a cost, according to the authority, of £45,000, although others put it at nearer £80,000. It currently provides 14 vital general practitioner beds and enables many people to recuperate or have short-term or respite care, within their own community. The hospital was adapted last year, in conjunction with the 'all-Wales strategy for mentally handicapped people', to provide dental care for disabled people, for whom doors were widened, and other facilities installed.

It was also planned that the hospital would provide a community physiotherapy service. The alternative open to GPs in Caernarfon is to refer patients to the orthopaedic consultant at Bangor, with a 38-week waiting period. It was planned that the cottage hospital would give an immediate service. Last August, a physiotherapist was appointed to serve there. But, before the appointee could take up the job, the authority decided to close the hospital. That example, together with the capital spending to which I have referred, underlines the collapse of coherent planning of services and resource allocation in Gwynedd.

The closure of the cottage hospital would mean that Caernarfon would have no casualty unit. The closure would mean that Caernarfon people have to go to Bangor for a casualty unit. In fact, the Deloitte report justified the use of the Bangor casualty unit on the basis that the road link to Bangor

"will be greatly improved with the Port Dinorwic bypass".

That road will not be open for two or three years, and, in the meantime, casualty cases would be liable to long traffic delays at Port Dinorwic, which are likely to worsen while the bypass is being built. Incidentally, the use of the cottage casualty unit is currently running 30 per cent. higher than that quoted in the consultation document.

The consultation document is also gravely misleading in its assessment of patient activity levels. It quotes the figure for 1986 as 67 per cent. for a 10-bed facility. It is outrageous that such figures should have been used. The fact is that 1986 was the year in which much building work was being undertaken at the hospital, and the beds were not all available for periods of time. Now the hospital has 14 beds and the bed occupancy for the first quarter of 1988 was 83 per cent. not the 67 per cent. on which the consultation document was based. That compares with a Welsh average of 79 per cent.

An 83 per cent. utilisation of 14 beds is a very different story from a 67 per cent. use of 10 beds. The cost per in-patient day quoted as £81 would reduce to £66 on that basis. Furthermore, the hospital is now running with a lower staff complement, with a saving of £27,000 a year. It now has 13·6 whole-time equivalent nursing staff, compared with the 16 quoted in the closure document. That brings the cost down to £58 per in-patient, which is not far from the Welsh average of £50.

The savings claimed in the consultation document amount to £260,000. However, that is also shown as the total running cost of the hospital. In other words, the authority assumes that the entire current running costs can be saved by closing the cottage hospital. That is absolute nonsense. The authority claims that there will be alternative arrangements for dental services, special needs, the orthodontic clinic service and for speech therapy. It also admits that greater pressure will be put on other hospitals, community health services and hospital day care facilities. Those alternatives will all cost something, and the savings are likely to be appreciably less than those claimed.

Furthermore, as no staff are to be made redundant, the salaries will still have to be paid. The savings will only arise when the cottage hospital staff are redeployed to replace staff who retire. Even then, there will be relocation and disturbance costs.

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

One GP at Caernarfon has estimated that as many as 20 elderly people currently receiving respite care at the cottage hospital may be forced into other institutional care, almost certainly into private sector nursing or residential homes. Overwhelmingly, those people will be paid for by social security, and that cost alone could wipe out the bulk of the savings.

At the meeting of the health authority on 25 April, one member, Mr. Alun Jones, proposed that the decisions on the Madog and cottage hospitals should be postponed because the case was far from clear-cut. However, the general manager insisted that the package should be looked at in its entirety—a stipulation that I challenged earlier. The vote to close the cottage hospital was by 10 votes to six, showing a deep division within the authority. I urge the Minister, for all the reasons I have outlined, to reject the closure proposal and to seek a strategy for hospital services at Caernarfon that will enhance rather than diminish health care in the region.

I have referred specifically to the position of the cottage hospital in Caernarfon and the Madog memorial hospital, because they are in my constituency. I know that my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) feels equally strongly about the lack of coherent planning over the closure of the Druid hospital at Llangefni and has led a deputation to see the Minister on the matter. He urges the retention of the Druid until an acceptable alternative new hospital is open and functioning at Llangefni.

None of us wants to argue that every building and facility run by Gwynedd health authority must remain inviolate for ever. We argue that there is an overwhelming case for taking those decisions as a part of a long-term strategy and not as a short-term expedient. Such a strategy may well need a capital investment programme at a significantly higher level than that currently available to the authority. If we are to have a system of modern community hospitals in Gwynedd for the 21st century, we shall almost certainly need new buildings and new facilities.

Until such projects are properly planned and scheduled, we have to maintain the existing facilities unless there is an overwhelming reason to do otherwise. That means running what we have in the most efficient manner possible and closing hospitals only when new and better facilities are on stream. To do otherwise is to accept an actual reduction in health care for our communities. That is not acceptable to the people of Gwynedd and neither should it be to a Government who claim that the Health Service is safe in their hands.

7.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales have exchanged several letters in recent months on the subject of Gwynedd health authority's proposals for the future of hospital services in its district. My right hon. Friend and I have also met the hon. Gentleman to hear his views at first hand. We have explained the procedures under which district health authorities can bring about changes in hospital service provision and the way in which the arrangements for public consultation are designed to take account of views expressed on the health authority's proposals.

However, I would have welcomed the chance to expand on this theme tonight and also to explain why, although I welcome the submission of views on the proposals, it would be inappropriate for me to make any substantive comments at this stage or, sadly, to reply to the trenchant points made, or rather repeated, by the hon. Gentleman.

The proposals have been drawn up in the light of the authority's financial problems, which it drew to the attention of Welsh Office at the beginning of last year. After discussion with the authority's chairman and senior officers, it was decided to bring in management consultants at the Welsh Office's expense to investigate the authority's financial position.

The consultants concluded that the authority's problems had their roots in 1984-85, with a developing trend of overspending on budgets in following years. The authority had managed to contain its overspending by taking advantage of non-recurrent savings—including slippage on capital schemes—and in 1986-87 by substantially increasing its creditor balances. By 1987-88, however, the position had become untenable.

The consultants attributed the authority's position to: the cumulative under-funding of pay awards; an increase in activity levels, particularly in high-cost specialties at Ysbyty Gwynedd; the failure to make recurrent savings to finance the 0·5 per cent. transfer of funds to priority groups; and the effects of incremental drift on pay. None of the factors identified as underlying the authority's financial position is unique to Gwynedd. Other authorities, less favourably resourced than Gwynedd, have managed to contain their spending in the face of similar pressures.

The consultants also concluded that insufficient management action had been taken to control activity and spending levels. Later in their report, they were critical of the authority's systems of planning, budgeting and financial control. It is vital that, as part of its programme to restore financial balance, the authority takes vigorous action to improve its arrangements for planning, budgeting and financial control.

The authority remained within its cash limit last year partly as a result of the non-recurrent supplementary funding that all authorities shared, and partly because of loan support from the Welsh Office in recognition of its cash difficulties. Provisionally it seems that the authority may have overspent in income and expenditure terms last year by some £210,000, although this will be established when the authority has submitted its annual accounts. It is apparent therefore that the authority still has underlying recurrent financial problems.

Those problems are the more serious when set against the background that the authority is shown, by both the capital and revenue formulae used to assess the relative funding position of Welsh health authorities, to be one of the best resourced in Wales. The growth in recurrent revenue resources—not including the funding of the review bodies' pay awards in 1988-89—which have been made available to the authority in the period 1978-79 to 1988-89 is some £17·5 million, or more than 43 per cent. after adjusting for actual and expected inflation. That is the second highest rate of growth of any authority in Wales, and compares favourably with the Welsh average of 36 per cent.

In the light of those figures, I cannot say that I am satisfied with the level of financial management shown by the authority. That was one of the reasons for calling in the management consultants. The consultants' recommendations bear out that decision. I expect to see a considerable improvement in the quality of financial management in Gwynedd this year, and I shall be keeping a very close watch on developments. In particular, I expect much tighter control to be exercised over budgets than has been the case in the past.

I have spent a little time on the financial position of Gwynedd health authority, but I make no apology for that, as it is central to our discussions today.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon will understand that I cannot comment on the health authority's proposals, but it may be helpful if I end by saying that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received several hundred letters of objection to the proposals. There is no set time scale for consideration of the proposals and the objections that they have attracted, but this will be done as quickly as is consistent with full and careful consideration of all the issues raised. Once a conclusion has been reached, a letter setting out my right hon. Friend's decisions and the reasons for them will be sent to the health authority and to the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon has expressed concern about aspects of the consultation procedure carried out by Gwynedd health authority. I assure him that the points that he has made today, together with those that he made earlier in writing and in meetings with me and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, will be fully and carefully considered, as will those submitted by all other interested parties, before any decision is taken.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 16 June 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SOUTHERN WATER AUTHORITY BILL

Order for Third Reading read.

Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.

Read the Third time, and passed.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (BARROW)

[Lords] (By Order)

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time on Thursday 23 June at Seven o'clock.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [10 December], That the Bill be now considered.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 23 June.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to finish this first, please. I propose to put together the Questions on Bills Nos. 1 to 5.

Miss Widdecombe *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *(By Order)*

FALMOUTH CONTAINER TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE TOWN MOOR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 23 June.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [11 May], That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 23 June at Seven o'clock.

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 23 June.

NORTH KILLINGHOLME CARGO TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Wednesday 22 June at Seven o'clock.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What is the point of order?

Mr. Redmond: Given that the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill was due to be debated on 15 June and that, so far as this House is concerned, Wednesday has not existed, and will never exist, why has the business for that day been brought back on to the Order Paper?

Mr. Speaker: It has been brought back because the Chairman of Ways and Means has named Wednesday 22 June for that debate.

Miss Widdecombe: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What is the point of order?

Miss Widdecombe: On the Southern Water Authority Bill, which you called first, I twice shouted "Object," but it appears that you did not hear me.

Mr. Speaker: I am afraid that I did not. The hon. Lady must make her objections very clearly. I did not hear the hon. Lady's objection, and I was listening carefully. My recollection is that the hon. Lady said "Object" after I had moved on to the next Bill.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Many of my hon. Friends heard my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) say "Object". I fully understand that you did not hear, but, as it is within the recollection of many Conservative Members that my hon. Friend did say "Object," would it not be possible for you to reconsider the matter?

Mr. Speaker: As a matter of chivalry, I will accept the objection, but I say to the hon. Lady and to the whole House that it is helpful to the Chair for objections to be made clearly. I shall put the Question again.

SOUTHERN WATER AUTHORITY BILL

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time upon Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Before my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) rose, I objected to the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill as well, and I ask you to take that objection into account, too.

Mr. Speaker: I am afraid that that cannot be taken into account, because that is a case of a day named by the Chairman of Ways and Means.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income and Wealth Distribution

1. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on income and wealth distribution in the light of the Church of Scotland study entitled "Just Sharing", a copy of which has been sent to him.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): The Government's policy is to create the conditions in which everybody can increase their incomes and acquire wealth.

Mr. Clarke: Is the Chancellor of the Exchequer not replying to this question himself because he knows that the facts revealed in "Just Sharing" show that there is a growing and worsening problem of poverty? Does the Minister accept that recent information has made it clear that the consequences for 300,000 children losing their school meals are quite dire? Will the Minister encourage the Chancellor of the Exchequer to set aside his complacency and respond to the pleas of the Churches and many others to give priority to the restoration of the £800 million that he raided from the social security budget, with dire consequences for the under-privileged?

Mr. Major: I cannot accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. As he is well aware, compensation for the loss of free school meals was included in family credit at the time of the reforms.

Mr. Forth: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Scots already enjoy a disproportionate amount of the wealth of the United Kingdom? Is he further aware that, for example, health expenditure in Scotland is 25 per cent. per head higher than in England? Is he also aware that the Scots enjoy the second highest average earnings in the United Kingdom, apart from London and the south-east? Will he report those facts to the Church of Scotland when making his balanced response to its report?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend makes his points entirely clearly and accurately. I am sure that the Church of Scotland will note his comments. It is the case that in its share of public expenditure and in its economic performance at the moment, Scotland is doing extremely well.

Mr. Worthington: Is it not disgraceful, given the Chancellor of the Exchequer's objectives of wanting all to share in the wealth of the country, that if someone with a wife and two children aged eight and 11 had an increase in income from £60 to £150 a week he would be able to retain only £12?

Mr. Major: As a result of my right hon. Friend's tax changes in this and previous Budgets it is undoubtedly the fact that at all levels of income there is a higher level of net disposable income than before my right hon. Friend became Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the question shows that the Opposition parties are utterly obsessed with the distribution of wealth, that they have no concern for the creation of wealth, and that all their policies are designed to destroy the creation of wealth?

Mr. Major: If one looks at the record it is clear that that has certainly been the practical effect of policies that the Opposition have put into practice when in government. The distribution of wealth is legitimately a matter for debate. It is regrettable that "Just Sharing" simply refers to the distribution of wealth, not to the creation of it.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Given the Government's complacent and so far wholly shameful response to the pleas of the Churches on poverty and social justice, will the Minister tell the Churches how he justifies a state charity social fund which transfers the responsibility or relieving poverty from Ministers to charities and voluntary organisations, while at the same time someone in the top 1 per cent. with an income above £50,000 a year has gained on average a total of £110,000 in tax cuts since 1979? Does he agree that the real motto of this Government is not, as they would like us to believe, "God helps those who help themselves", but, as Ministers know very well, "God helps those whom he has already helped" even at the expense of fairness to the rest of the community?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman is misleading in a number of his remarks. Before we can share any wealth, it must be created. It is precisely because of our success in creating wealth in this country that this year we are spending about £48½ billion on social security benefits. With regard to the distribution of wealth, it is a matter of fact that the top 1 per cent. have a noticeably smaller share of the total wealth in this country today than a few years ago.

Mr. Burns: With regard to the study by the Church of Scotland, does my right hon. Friend accept that the Church should address itself to religious matters instead of interfering in the economy? Does he also accept that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is better trained and far more successful in handling that kind of thing than is the Church?

Mr. Major: I certainly echo the points that my hon. Friend has made about the success of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is a matter of record that "Just Sharing" concentrates substantially on distribution, although, of course, I must state that it is also concerned with ethical and moral questions.

Top Incomes

2. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the gross pre-tax incomes of the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers have risen from 1978-79 to 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): Gross incomes of the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers rose by about 43 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1987-88.

Mr. Nellist: Given that the real rise in pre-tax incomes among the rest of the population was less than half that, does that not show that when the Chancellor claims that cutting the rate for the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers produces more tax, that is merely a by-product of the rich getting richer over the past nine years compared with the rest of the population? For example, a person with an income of £50,000 per year has gained tax cuts of £500 per week since 1979, whereas a couple on half average earnings of £120 a week will be paying £4 per week more after tax and national insurance are taken into account. Is that not poverty in the midst of conspicuous abundance?

Mr. Lamont: The premise of the hon. Gentleman's question is wrong. Although the share of pre-tax gross incomes among the top 5 per cent. has increased two percentage points, their contribution to the Inland Revenue tax take has increased by four percentage points, so the hon. Gentleman is wrong. He seems to believe that

there is something surprising about the fact that when one gives people incentives, their salaries increase. That is exactly what we expect and it is not in any way surprising. The hon. Gentleman may be interested to learn that 5 million taxpayers on less than half average earnings have enjoyed a 22 per cent. reduction in their tax burden as a result of the Budget.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Is not my right hon. Friend's response and the figures that he used of particular interest, because they put the final nail in the coffin of the suggestion that sky-high taxation raises extra revenue for the Exchequer?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right. The tax take from the top 5 per cent. has increased by one third in real percentage terms. That is the overall increase in the whole take of the Inland Revenue, and that result is of benefit to the whole country.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Financial Secretary to the Treasury is being unusually brazen with the House this afternoon. He says that the wealthiest 5 per cent. of people in our society have benefited to the extent of 43 per cent. in real terms over the period that this Government have been in office. I do not blame him for neglecting to explain —but I invite him to do so now—why the Government felt it necessary to give that most privileged of groups an additional £3 billion in tax cuts on top of what they have already received in this year's Budget.

Mr. Lamont: The object of tax cuts is to improve the performance of the economy. The overwhelming evidence is that they have achieved precisely that.

Mr. Boswell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there was not very much point in earning an extra £1 when one needed to earn an extra £50 to keep that pound? In those circumstances it would have been far better to go to a Socialist country, such as New Zealand, with a top tax rate of about one third, as applied under the previous Labour Administration.

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right; and he might have added that post-tax real income at all multiples of earnings in this country has increased dramatically under this Government, whereas for some people, especially the lower paid, it declined under the previous Labour Government. The Opposition may believe that there is some point in Socialism that makes people poorer, but most find that concept rather puzzling.

Exchange Rate

3. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement regarding the rise in the deutschmark-pound sterling exchange rate since the beginning of 1988 and its effects on British industry.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): The deutschmark—sterling exchange rate rose from 2·96 at the start of 1988 to a peak of 3·19 on 16 May, and has since fallen to 3·13. Over the period as a whole it has risen by a little over 5 per cent.

Mr. Martlew: Will the Chancellor return to the policy, which he held before March this year, of keeping within the DM2·80 to DM3 bracket? Does he not realise that the high value of the pound is destroying British industry's ability to export, and British tourism by reducing the number of people visiting this country? Does he recall that when a similar policy of high exchange and high interest rates was followed between 1980 and 1981 it destroyed 20 per cent. of British industry? Will the Chancellor operate an exchange rate policy in which he believes, instead of one based on the prejudice of the Prime Minister?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman is making a great deal out of a small change in the exchange rate. Over the whole of the period since 1981 our share of world trade in manufactured goods has held steady, after decades of decline. Therefore, our exporters are doing well and will continue to do well. What they want to see is a reasonable degree of stability in the exchange rate. What they do not want to see—certainly what the economy does not want —is a steady depreciation of sterling, which is the only exchange rate policy of the Opposition.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is it not true that sterling has depreciated against the deutschmark by about 20 per cent. over the past three years and by about 60 per cent. since 1980? Is it not also true that the two countries with the most steadily increasing currencies since the war—Germany and Japan—have also been the most successful industrially?

Mr. Lawson: It is true that the more successful a country's economy is, the greater is the likelihood that its exchange rate will appreciate over a period of time.

Mr. Beith: How is the Chancellor getting on with his task of advising the Prime Minister on when the time will be right for Britain to join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS? Does he update her on whether the time is right on a weekly or monthly basis? Will he tell her that industry wants the stability, particularly in relation to the deutschmark, that the EMS would provide?

Mr. Lawson: I have noted the hon. Gentleman's point, which he has made on many occasions. The Government's policy on that issue remains the policy that they have stated on many occasions.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that industry and commerce are basically in favour of stable exchange rates and that, while his skilful use of interest rate changes during the past three months has achieved a fair measure of stability, that must remain a second-best alternative to full membership of the EMS?

Mr. Lawson: Clearly, there is a strong case to be made for membership of the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS, and the Government agree that Britain should join. The question is when? The Government have not yet reached the conclusion that the right time has arrived.

On the substantive point, my hon. Friend is right in saying that swings in the exchange rate are not helpful to industry to the economy or to the battle against inflation. Nor, I am glad to say, have we seen wild swings in the exchange rate, certainly not the sterling exchange rate, over recent years.

Mr. John Smith: Why did the Chancellor not answer that part of the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) that asked for his opinion on the effect of the exchange rate on British industry? Is not the exchange rate at its present level deeply harmful to the competitive prospects of British industry, as the leaders of

industry constantly point out? Does the Chancellor recall that he once had a policy of shadowing the deutschmark at DM3 to the pound before the Prime Minister wrecked his policy? Has he seen the revision in the current account balance of payments figures, which shows that they were under-estimated for the first quarter by £900 million, showing a deficit of £2·8 billion, which, annualised, would be £11·2 billion as against a Budget prediction of £4 billion? What will he do about Britain's balance of payments crisis?

Mr. Lawson: There is no balance of payments crisis. The current account of the balance of payments inevitably fluctuates over time, and the only need for a balance is over a long period, not in any particular year. Over the previous eight years we have had a cumulative current account surplus of over £21 billion. This year I forecast a deficit of £4 billion. I have seen the revision, and there may be further revisions, as there frequently are. It is now likely that the deficit for this year will be larger—I cannot say how much larger—than I forecast at the time of the Budget, but there is no hint of a crisis, and that is fully understood by the markets and by those who are economically literate.

Labour Statistics

4. **Mr. Wolfson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the fall in long-term unemployment in the year to January 1988.

Mr. Major: Long-term unemployment fell by 234,000 in the year to January 1988, and by a further 71,000 between January and April. The fall over the last year is the largest on record, and it has happened in all regions.

Mr. Wolfson: I welcome that positive news, but will my right hon. Friend enlarge on it and tell us a little more about the reflection of those figures in the regions of most persistent and difficult long-term unemployment?

Mr. Major: One of the attractive features of the fall in unemployment over the past 22 months has been the dramatic fall in the north-west, the north, Yorkshire and Humberside. That is particularly true of long-term unemployment, which has fallen by 21·9 per cent. in the north-west, 19·1 per cent. in the north, 22·6 per cent. in Wales and 15·6 per cent. in Scotland.

Mr. Winnick: How much longer will we have to wait before unemployment is on the same scale as in May 1979?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman may be drawing a distinction between the number of people who were registered as unemployed and the number who were in jobs that genuinely did not exist when the Labour Government were in office.

Mr. William Powell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is an obvious answer to all those who want to know how unemployment has fallen? They should visit the former unemployment black spot of Corby, where unemployment has been dropping sensationally and will continue to do so.

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is entirely right. It is noticeable that although throughout the last election the Opposition claimed that unemployment was about to rise, since then it has fallen by half a million.

Department Manpower

5. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many officials of his Department are responsible for monitoring *(a)* the social security budget, and *(b)* other Department of Health and Social Security services.

Mr. Major: There are eight officials currently employed in the Treasury who deal with the social security budget, and 16 officials who deal with other Department of Health and Social Security expenditure.

Ms. Armstrong: Have those officials informed the Chancellor that Britain spends less per head of population than any other European Community country? Are they also advising him how much he will be able to put into the National Health Service? May we have an assurance that he will fight to ensure that we receive adequate and proper funding for the National Health Service in the next round?

Mr. Major: Health Service expenditure for 1988-89 is now £22½ billion, and there will be 9 per cent. more cash in the Health Service this year than last year. That is a dramatic increase.

Mr. McCrindle: Will my right hon. Friend have a word with one of the officials dealing with the health budget in an endeavour to confirm that if the Government have it in mind to bring forward additional resources for health care, one of the least efficient ways of doing so would be to introduce tax relief against private health insurance, as proposed in certain quarters? We should remember that 5 million people and their employers already hold health care policies without such an inducement.

Mr. Major: Health resources will be discussed in the public expenditure round in the autumn.

In answer to the second part of my hon. Friend's question, I have no intention of commenting on such a speculation.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Chief Secretary tell the House whether those officials have looked into the policy of health authorities that close down small hospitals on the basis that health care will be available in the private sector —albeit funded to a large extent by social security—and, when challenged, say that they have no obligation to take into account public expenditure on that social security? Will he look into the matter urgently?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman's substantive point is more a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services than for me. The primary responsibility of the officials of my Department is to discuss with, and advise, me on the level of resources that should go into the health budget.

Job Creation

6. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new jobs have been created in the economy since 1983.

Mr. Lawson: Since 1983 nearly 1¾ million new jobs have been created, more than in the whole of the rest of the European Community put together.

Mr. McLoughlin: I welcome that very encouraging news. Will my right hon. Friend comment on the

ingredients that the economy requires to create so many new jobs? Is it not a fact that more jobs have been created in the United Kingdom than in the rest of Europe put together? A job is a job, regardless of how the Opposition may denigrate them, whether part-time or full-time. Those jobs are providing employment for the people of this country.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right to be encouraged by the dynamism that the economy has shown in a number of respects, not least through the creation of new jobs, many of which have been created by the birth, in increasing numbers, of new companies. The view used to be that the only way that the economy could expand was by increasing the Budget deficit, but we have demonstrated that there can be unparalleled growth by reducing and eliminating altogether the Budget deficit. That has been the reason for the success of the enterprise culture, for tax reductions and reform, trade union law reform and all the other reforms on the so-called supply side of the economy that have enabled the economy to perform more freely and to work better.

Mr. Ashley: As it is the Government's policy to force down wages as low as possible, can the Chancellor tell us how many of these jobs attract lower wages than were previously paid, on average?

Mr. Lawson: If it were the Government's policy to force down wages as low as possible, which it is not, we are being notably unsuccessful.

Mr. Sumberg: As the north-west of England has shown one of the biggest increases in new jobs and the biggest falls in long-term unemployment, does it not prove that the old north-south divide under Labour is now a north-west success under the Conservatives? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. Despite the ignorant jeers of the Opposition, one of the most encouraging factors about the changes in unemployment and employment over the past few years is the way in which unemployment has been falling and jobs have been growing in every region of the country.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the Chancellor's statement about the large number of new jobs. Did he notice that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury did not mention Northern Ireland when he referred to the regions where there is long-term unemployment? May we be assured that we shall enjoy some of these benefits referred to, especially in the light of Northern Ireland's low-wage economy, which does not attract new jobs?

Mr. Lawson: Over the past year there has been a drop of about 5 per cent. in the number of long-term unemployed in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, I fully understand the very considerable difficulties in the Province, partly as a result of the peculiar and unsatisfactory conditions that prevail there and partly because there is still an excessive dependence on older industries. We are seeing a change in the industrial structure of Northern Ireland, which is very important for the future of new jobs there.

Wage Settlements

7. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of wage rate settlements for the last 12 months for which figures are available and what were the figures for the preceding 12 months; and what is the underlying trend.

Mr. Norman Lamont: CBI data show that settlements in manufacturing industry in the 12 months to the first quarter of this year averaged 5¼ per cent., the same as in the comparable period last year. The corresponding figures for services are 6¼ and 6 per cent.

Mr. Cran: Will my right hon. Friend say what advice he has given or that he is prepared to give now to companies and to work forces to make sure that wage negotiations do not lead to a deterioration in unit labour costs, which is a far more important concept than wage levels? Does he agree that managers are part of the work force and that we shall be looking to them for considerable powers of leadership to make sure that the snouts do not dig too deeply into the pig trough?

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for Conservative Members to pass around newspaper cuttings with a clear view to conducting a stunt in a few minutes' time?

Mr. Speaker: Order. A hypothetical stunt, I think.

Mr. Lamont: In response to my hon. Friend's question, my advice to firms is to remind them that the Government intend to pursue a firm anti-inflation policy. Obviously, it is possible for excessive wage or salary increases to result in people being priced out of jobs. It is the responsibility of management to ensure that companies can afford the deals that are done, and that they apply to all people within the company.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that, despite the figures for wage settlements that he has just mentioned, many workers still have to live on unacceptably low wages? Why do the Government not do something to ensure that those people get a fair share of the prosperity that the Government claim exists at present? Why do they not lend their support to the calls for a national minimum wage? Is it not time that we had one?

Mr. Lamont: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. I think that a national minimum wage would mean fewer jobs available for the low paid and would be counter-productive. I would take much more seriously the hon. Gentleman's concern about the lower paid if the record of the Labour party in terms of the lower paid had been better, but many of the lower paid have done far better under this Government and have had substantial increases in their take-home pay.

Mr. John Townend: To what extent has the increase in public sector pay been covered by increases in productivity? As a higher proportion of private sector pay is covered by productivity gains, particularly in manufacturing industry, does my right hon. Friend agree that this year inflationary pressures will come more from the public sector than from the private sector?

Mr. Lamont: The Government have it very much in mind that pay settlements in the public sector must reflect what is affordable. My hon. Friend may know that in

1986-87, the last year for which figures are available, earnings in the public sector rose by less than in the private sector. My hon. Friend is right to refer to the dramatic increase in productivity, because that meant that the private sector could afford more generous wage settlements. We have been very lucky with the dramatic increase in productivity in manufacturing industry.

International Monetary Fund

8. **Mr. Jim Lester:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on progress towards setting up the international monetary fund enhanced structural adjustment facility.

Mr. Lawson: The enhanced structural adjustment facility of the IMF, designed to assist economic adjustment in the poorest countries, has now been set up and the first loans should be made shortly. The United Kingdom will contribute one sixth of the total funding of the interest subsidy on enhanced structural adjustment facility lending, which is the largest contribution of any country.

Mr. Lester: I warmly endorse my right hon. Friend's significant contribution to the development of policy, but can he say any more at this stage about his hopes of decisions from the Group of Seven meeting in Toronto?

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said. Following the initiative, which I launched over a year ago in Washington on behalf of the United Kingdom to help the very poorest of the most heavily indebted countries to adjust their economies by giving some concession on their loans provided that economic policies were sound, there has in recent months and indeed, weeks, been an increasing degree of support for one variant or another of this approach. I am now hopeful that at the economic summit in Toronto, which I shall be attending early next week, we shall be able to reach an agreement on positive action.

Mr. Skinner: Will that amount of help to the poorest under-developed countries amount to £1,000 million? I use that figure because the Chancellor knows that when he assisted the banks to write off their debts against those countries that were slightly better off, that amounted to £1,000 million in tax relief. If the top four clearing banks in Britain plus Standard Chartered can get £1,000 million in tax relief, why can the Chancellor not write off £1,000 million against the debt of the poorest countries in the world?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman continues to get the wrong end of the stick. If a bank incurs bad or doubtful debts as a result of lending to anyone, whether a sovereign country or an industrial company, its profits are reduced and therefore the taxes it must pay are reduced. If, on the other hand, those debts are paid back, the profits increase and the taxes are then paid. It is as simple as that.

Economic Output

9. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of economic output over the latest 12-month period for which figures are available.

15. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of economic output over the latest 12 month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Lawson: About 4½ per cent.

Mr. Evans: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on that good news. Will he take this opportunity to thank the British people for contributing to low inflation and low unit costs? Will he also warn them that high wage awards will undermine what has already been achieved? What will economic growth for the coming year be?

Mr. Lawson: As for the last point, the forecast I made at the time of the Budget was that economic growth in 1988 would be 3 per cent. At present it looks as if it may be slightly more than that, but I have no new forecast to announce.

It is perfectly true, as my hon. Friend said—or implied—that although we have put the right economic policies in place and have stuck to them consistently year in, year out over nine years, despite everything the Opposition have said, the real credit for the dramatic success of the British economy—the economic miracle was what the *Financial Times* called it only this morning—goes to British business and industry and to the British people for their response to the economic policies and framework that we have put in place.

Dr. Twinn: Further to the congratulations that my right hon. Friend has extended to British industry and the British people, does he accept that these figures are another sign of the excellent management of the economy which he and our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister have maintained?

Mr. Lawson: I am happy, with all due modesty, to accept the tribute paid to the First Lord of the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Nellist: If, as Conservative Members who have spoken on this subject have alleged, and the Chancellor has reinforced, low wage settlements in industry are a main contributor to economic growth, why did Treasury Ministers and virtually all Tory Members who are present here today vote last summer for hon. Members to get a 20 per cent. pay rise? Would not an example have been a good idea?

Mr. Lawson: I do not think that that had a great effect on the economy as a whole, but I should set the record straight. The advice that the Government originally gave to the House was for a considerably more modest increase in Members' salaries. It was the view of the House that the increase should be greater.

Mr. Cousins: The Chancellor has predicted economic growth at 3 per cent. New credit growth was 9 per cent. in the first three months—an annual increase of 35 per cent. So we shall have 35 per cent. growth in credit and 3 per cent. growth in output. Is that just right, too much, or not enough?

Mr. Lawson: Fortunately, unlike the hon. Gentleman, I do not believe in a planned economy so I do not have to answer that question. But I take from it an implicit endorsement of the recent increase in interest rates.

Exchange Rate

10. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his policy towards the sterling exchange rate.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): The exchange rate is a major factor in the determination of overall monetary conditions in the economy, which are set out to maintain downward pressure on inflation. Increases in domestic costs will not be accommodated by exchange rate depreciation.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will my hon. Friend accept that British Aerospace, Jaguar, Pilkington—the profits of which have been announced today and are down £26 million because of the exchange rate deficit—and the CBI are not always wrong? Not allowing the pound to go too high is not accommodating inflation but accommodating manufacturing industry, which is the country's life blood, on which wealth depends.

Mr. Lilley: The improvement that all those companies, and British industry as a whole have shown in recent years has been the result of improved management, improved labour relations, gaining control of inflation and a better competitive position. It would not have been achieved or helped by competitive depreciation of the pound. Ultimately, it would have been undermined.

Mr. Chris Smith: Given that for most of last year an exchange rate of DM3 to the pound was considered unsustainable, given that the level is now DM3·13 and has been over DM3·10 for weeks, given that for the first four months of this year the balance of payments deficit was the worst ever, and given that the Chancellor has today revised his assessment of the balance of payments deficit for the rest of the year, what steps will the Government take to moderate and stabilise the exchange rate and help our exporters?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman's statement contains so many untruths and wrong facts that I should not be able to rebut them in the time available. As to the balance of payments, the policies necessary to curb inflation and maintain stability in exchange rates are precisely those that in the long term ensure equilibrium in the balance of payments.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 June.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Archer: Will the right hon. Lady spare a little time to hear about Sonia Reading, who is a young heart patient in my constituency.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes up time.

Mr. Archer: She has dissuaded her parents from raising funds for a private operation because that would be unfair to the 100 other children who are currently awaiting operations at the Birmingham children's hospital. Will the Prime Minister contrast that with her own approach—"I spend my money to go on the day I choose, at the time I choose and to the doctor I choose."? Which of those two approaches does she think is more inspired by St. Francis, who willingly embraced poverty for himself but was always mindful of the rights of others?

The Prime Minister: I wonder which the right hon. and learned Gentleman thinks is better—to help to create more wealth so that there is more to spend on those in need and far more heart operations than there used to be? He knows as well as I do that when an operation is an emergency case, that operation will take priority. I understand that this was not an emergency case. I very recently visited Papworth hospital, which is absolutely superb in the heart operations that it does and is a great credit to the Health Service, as is this Government's record.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the people of Wales are keenly looking forward to her visit tomorrow? She will find them in cheerful and buoyant mood following the package of measures announced by our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales for the regeneration of the Welsh valleys.

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend very much. I thought that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales' statement was an excellent one. It was very welcome to Wales and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's handling of the economy has done excellent things for Wales, which has a very good standard of living.

Q2. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Prime Minister tell the House whether her espousal of Victorian and, more lately, aldermanic, morality extends to the issuing of threats to Opposition parties who do not kow-tow to the Government line, to the effect that they may lose their money for research purposes to combat the politicisation of the Civil Service? Does her assertion of moral leadership over the West adapt President Kennedy's 1961 slogan to "Ich bin ein blackmailer"?

The Prime Minister: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's allegations. With regard to what is called the Short money, the arrangements were announced to the House on 24 May 1988 and the Government will honour their commitments. With regard to President Kennedy, that is not a matter for which I am responsible in any way.

Mr. Marlow: Since the majority of active IRA terrorists are known to the authorities and since, given the special nature of terrorism, the courts find it difficult to deliver them to justice, is it not time that we considered taking the players, as they are macabrely known, temporarily out of circulation? Deprivation of the liberty of the unconvicted is regrettable, but is it not a lesser evil than the slaughter of the innocents and the mourning, grief and bereavement that come after it?

The Prime Minister: I understand that my hon. Friend feels very strongly, as do all Members of the House, about the terrible atrocity in Lisburn, in Northern Ireland, yesterday, all the more since it was a charitable occasion in which families were taking part. It could have been even worse than it was. We would like to express sympathy, particularly with the bereaved families, and admiration for the armed services for the marvellous work they do, and also for the fact that they do go and help in these events in the community. My hon. Friend is asking really whether we would consider internment once again. This matter is kept under review, but I would be very, very reluctant to do so. It would be a very serious step to take. As he knows, we are constantly trying to improve all our defences against terrorism by trying to secure better co-operation from south of the border.

Mr. Kinnock: May I first agree with every single word that the Prime Minister used in that last reply?

Does the Prime Minister agree with the view of the Secretary of State for the Environment that people who believe that they should stop all development in their own areas are selfish? If she does take that view, what does she recommend as the cure for the "not in my back yard" attitude—the NIMBY syndrome—to which that same Secretary of State for the Environment now appears to have fallen victim? Does she think that the treatment should include putting him out to grass permanently?

The Prime Minister: With all the great issues in the world, the right hon. Gentleman never fails to surprise me with the smallness of some of his questions. *[Interruption.]* Of course one cannot stop development. The right hon. Gentleman is well aware of that. Development has continued and will continue. There are 1·5 million more dwelling houses now than there used to be. Yes, we do try to protect the green belt. Yes, we do try to protect some of the land in the countryside. But development, in both town and country, there has to be, for the future of this country, and the thing is to see that it is the right development and, where it is in difficult areas, that it is in keeping with the development and the architecture of the area.

Mr. Kinnock: That was a strange answer from the Prime Minister. I thought that ministerial rectitude was still in fashion. Or is it the case that the Secretary of State for the Environment, like so many other members of the Government, keeps one set of values for display and another for use?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment does his work excellently and in a very distinguished way. Neither in intellect nor in performance can the right hon. Gentleman hold a candle to him.

Mr. Kinnock: I hear what the Prime Minister says. Does she not think that, as a general matter of conduct, people in glass houses should not throw stones and that Ministers in Gloucestershire rectories should practise what they preach, or stop preaching, or stop practising?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I do believe that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman takes his own advice.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my right hon. Friend agree with me and with the citizens of Belfast, to whom I paid a visit at the weekend, that the IRA draws comfort and encouragement for its dastardly acts, such as that perpetrated yesterday, from the fact that the citizens of Ulster may not vote red or blue but only green or orange, and that by fielding candidates from the main political parties we would signal to the IRA that that part of the United Kingdom is not up for grabs?

The Prime Minister: I understand what my hon. Friend is saying, but I do not think that that would be a solution to the very deep-seated problem. We have to do every single thing we can to defend all the people of Northern Ireland and to defeat the terrorism of the IRA, which shoots and bombs to kill.

Q3. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lewis: When will the right hon. Lady address her moral crusade to the pornographic telephone services? Is she aware that I have given evidence only this week to her right hon. Friend the Home Secretary of a young girl working for one of the private telephone companies having to listen to a pervert masturbating on the telephone? Is this the sort of thing that the Prime Minister wants to ignore in the telephone service, or is the problem that it is too near to the flagship of a previous Parliament?

The Prime Minister: Of course not. There are already laws which are designed to stop that very thing. As a number of hon. Members said immediately, why not put the telephone down very quickly?

Mr. Roger King: My right hon. Friend will know that today's unemployment figures show a dramatic drop once again, with the west midlands economy top of the league in creating new jobs. Is this not further evidence that her economic policies are creating wealth, prosperity and a caring community, with over £9 billion a year raised by people for charitable works?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The unemployment figures today show another large, welcome drop, with the fall in unemployment in the north, the north-west and the west midlands being the greatest. They also give the welcome news that the increase in jobs in the calendar year 1987 was the greatest for a generation. We have a substantial increase in jobs, falling unemployment, a very good training scheme and an excellent economy.

Q4. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Salmond: Is the Prime Minister aware of the findings of last week's *Glasgow Herald* opinion poll, which showed that the political effect in Scotland of her visit to the Scottish cup final and her epistle to the Caledonians was to increase Scottish National party support to its highest level for 10 years? Will the Prime Minister demonstrate her extensive knowledge of Scottish affairs by reminding the House of the names of the Moderator of the General Assembly, which she addressed, and the captain of Celtic, to whom she presented the cup?

The Prime Minister: I had a very good day in Scotland. Whatever the hon. Gentleman tries to say, Scotland's economy and people are benefiting enormously from the way in which the Government are handling them.

Q5. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Butterfill: In a week when the Budget tax cuts will first be seen in pay packets throughout the nation, will my right hon. Friend reaffirm the Government's commitment to cut taxation still further? Will she contrast that with the Opposition's action in voting against the tax cuts recently, and their determination to reverse them?

The Prime Minister: It was an excellent Budget, the results of which will be felt in pay packets at the end of this week and this month. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said at the time, he has set a new target of a basic rate of 20p in the pound, when it is prudent to do that. It might be both prudent and wise to remind hon. Members that the Opposition voted against the cut in the basic rate from 27p to 25p and to remind people that, had the Labour regime's 33p in the pound basic rate still been in force, a man on average earnings would now be paying an extra £13 in tax every week. That is what Labour would have done—taken more out of the pockets of working people.

Football Supporters (Behaviour)

3.30 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the behaviour of certain so-called English football supporters attending the European football championships in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): With all Members of the House and the British people, I deplore the disgraceful scenes of violence in which so-called supporters of English football have been involved in West Germany this week. Over 200 hooligans from this country have been detained since Saturday.

I regret bitterly that so many German police have been needed and that the lives of people in Stuttgart, Cologne and Dusseldorf have been disrupted in this way by people from this country. The only positive aspect of this week's events has been the success of the measures taken to control the fans within the grounds at England's two matches in Stuttgart and Dusseldorf. My Department has co-operated with the football authorities and the police in both countries to bring about improvements in ground control. An estimated 5,000 England supporters are still in Germany, with tickets for Saturday's game against the Soviet Union and with travel arrangements linked to that game.

Clearly, more needs to be done to control football hooliganism, as the steps taken so far have been shown to be inadequate. A number of further measures have been proposed which the Government will look at and will discuss, where appropriate, with the football authorities. They include, as regards attendance at football matches abroad, considering whether courts might be given powers in the longer term to impose restrictions on overseas travel following conviction for an offence. At home matches, we shall consider and discuss with the football authorities the conditions for admission to football grounds, including national or club membership schemes. We shall also be considering the circumstances in which magistrates can control or restrict the sale of alcohol in the vicinity of sports grounds. We will be seeking a meeting with the football authorities within the next two weeks to discuss these matters and the future participation of national teams in international competitions.

Mr. Howell: I thank the Minister for his statement. We accept that the malaise affecting our country is extremely deep-seated. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is no good making football a scapegoat all the time? This is a law and order matter, and we hope to join the Government in doing what we can.

Is it not a fact that the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs was in Spain last week discussing hooliganism on beaches in that country? Thank goodness the Government have not yet got around to blaming that on football. It, too, is evidence of this deep-seated malaise.

If the Government are to give the courts more power to stop known troublemakers from travelling abroad and besmirching this country's name, we shall support that. Will consideration be given to making it unlawful to desecrate the national flag? No other country would stand for people misusing the national flag in the way in which the Union Jack is misused by some of these people, many with National Front connections. The racism attached to the taunting of coloured footballers is also a matter of considerable concern to us all.

We hope to discuss the importance of understanding the social purpose of sport, and I ask the Minister to appreciate that when local authorities are starved of money, when youngsters who ought to be attracted into sports centres are priced out of them, and when physical education is downgraded in the education curriculum, we are undermining the whole future of sport, as well as sport in our community.

I assure the Minister that Opposition Members want to do all they can to support the Government in a constructive approach. Finally, will he confirm that only last week the Football Association was congratulated by his Department on accepting and carrying out all the advice offered? That is an added reason why we should see this evil not as the fault of football, but rather as a social disease to which all of us must apply our minds.

Mr. Moynihan: On the right hon. Gentleman's last point, the football authorities, both the Football Association and the league, were congratulated on the work done with the police authorities and my Department to tackle problems inside the grounds in the build-up to the European championships. There is one exception to that. The Government very much regret that the FA decided to take tickets for the championships. I hope that it will decide against taking tickets for any future game in which the England team plays.

I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his offer of support on the law and order matters that he brought to the attention of the House. However, it is naive in the extreme to believe that the acts of violence in Stuttgart on Sunday and in Dusseldorf over the past 48 hours have been unrelated to the presence of the English football team in the European championships. Where England plays football overseas, criminally minded so-called supporters are besmirching our international reputation.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I assure my hon. Friend that Conservative Members' support for the action that he proposes is every bit as strong as that of Opposition Members. We are sick and tired of so-called English fans dragging the Union flag through the gutters of continental Europe. If the football authorities cannot stop that, my hon. Friend will have our full support in every action that he takes to do so.

Mr. Moynihan: I thank my right hon. Friend for that support. Suffice it to say that, while one would hope that in an ideal world the football authorities would take a very tough stance—not least in the domestic game—there has, regrettably, been much heel dragging in implementing the agreement that we reached with the football authorities in February last year. The time has now come, and, as I said, in the next two weeks all the measures that I have announced today will be considered in detail. We shall have specific discussions with the football authorities, and if necessary we shall come back to the House for its support in instituting a national membership scheme with legal backing.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Now that the Minster is aware of something that many of us have been

telling him for some time—that the hooligan thugs who besmirched this country's name in Stuttgart and Dusseldorf are not football fans but hard-nosed criminals, as the Minister himself said—does he not recognise that it is Government action, not the action of the football authorities, that is paramount? Does he also recognise that such criminal acts take place throughout Europe, as was shown last week when many Dutch and German hooligan thugs were arrested? Will he take the initiative and call together the European Sports Ministers and the European Home Ministers to find a common approach to a common law and order problem? Will he reiterate that he will take with him the football authorities in any future action if those authorities have to implement his measures?

Mr. Moynihan: It is indeed the case that the problems of football hooliganism that we are experiencing in this country are also being experienced internationally—not least in Germany, Holland and Italy. The scenes that I witnessed last night, in which more than 200 Germans were arrested, reflected that fact. It is regrettable that the problems that we are seeing with hooligan behaviour in and around football grounds cannot be divorced from the fact that the English team is playing. It remains a fact that the games are providing a target for thugs. Therefore, we must take action on two fronts: we must continue to contain the problem within the grounds and do further work, and we must pursue a range of judicial measures, which I have announced today, and which we shall discuss in a European context in the coming months.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I agree with my hon. Friend that the nation is deeply shamed by the behaviour of hooligans abroad, and I hope that we can accept the word of the football authorities that these people are truly nothing to do with the real sport of football. If that is the case, they should be isolated from the game of football. The Football League has been recommended by its advisers to put in place as soon as possible a membership scheme that will isolate people who are not true football supporters. May we have a guarantee from my hon. Friend the Minister and from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that they will press the football authorities to put in place as soon as possible a membership scheme?

Mr. Moynihan: The partial membership schemes that have been in place before and since the February 1987 agreement have not achieved the desired results expressed today by my hon. Friend. For that reason, it is essential that, as a matter of urgency, we assess whether a comprehensive national membership scheme can be put in place as soon as possible. That would be high on the agenda with the football authorities. Only then can we identify each and every person who goes to football matches, and thereby, we hope, remove membership cards from people who have caused problems. We need deterrents against hooliganism, and existing membership schemes are, regrettably, ineffective.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I have the same sense of disgust and despair as the Minister about the events in Germany over the past week. Does he accept that it is not football that is the cause of hooliganism, but football that has become a vehicle for it? Will he ensure that whatever steps the Government take they will not prejudice the rights of the millions of law-abiding citizens who watch football every week throughout the United Kingdom, who should be entitled to do so and who should certainly be entitled to follow their national teams abroad if they choose?

Mr. Moynihan: The vast majority of individuals who enjoy football in this country and abroad attend matches without any intention of causing damage or behaving like the louts that we have seen in downtown areas of West Germany during the past five days. It is a fact of life that, to deter those louts, both inside and outside the grounds, we must put in place a comprehensive package of measures that is tougher than the voluntary one so far agreed. It is the Government's intention, both domestically and internationally, to pursue that target, because it is not satisfactory simply to divorce football from the hooligan element that we have seen follow it around the continent and during the domestic season.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): While assuring my hon. Friend of our full support for any effective measures he takes to deal with football hooliganism, may I ask whether he agrees that there is a need for action not merely on two but on three fronts? Hooliganism is not restricted to football. If my hon. Friend reads the newspapers every weekend, he will realise that towns up and down the country are being desecrated by mobs of young hooligans fuelled with alcohol, that police officers are being injured and that the police service is worried about the problem. Does he agree that there is a dire need to take effective action, not to loosen the licensing laws, but to tighten them?

Mr. Moynihan: I agree with my right hon. Friend's comments. For those very reasons, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is addressing himself to a number of issues in his area of responsibility, particularly those relating to the licensing laws and the availability of drink. He mentioned these issues today at a press conference and they were emphasised in my opening statement. We are concerned, first and foremost, in this private notice question with the availability of drink, which has done so much damage around football grounds. It is interesting to note that the smallest number of incidents occurred last night, which was the only night when the town centre was kept dry for the football match.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Is the Minister aware that the inquiry into events at Stamford Bridge on 28 May after the Middlesbrough-Chelsea game is now under review by the Football Association? Will he confirm the receipt of a series of letters from my constituents to the management of Chelsea football club, alleging that there was no segregation at the ground, that alcohol was freely available and that the police had little regard for the safety of Middlesbrough supporters? Will he pass that file to the Football Association so that it can take that into account and refute or confirm the allegations?

Mr. Moynihan: A number of the points made by the hon. Gentleman and his constituents have been brought to the attention of the Football Association. I regret that the urgent report requested from the football authorities following that ugly incident at the end of the season is still not forthcoming and that the latest assessment by the football authorities has been adjourned and deferred once again. When there is a major incident such as that, that sort of heel dragging is unacceptable, and the football

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authorities need to ensure that they have a firm grip on such incidents and that they take appropriate action, which they have not done to date.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Is my hon. Friend aware that there is strong police evidence that the National Front has infiltrated English football supporters clubs and is corrupting and enticing quite a few decent supporters to undermine society? That is smearing our businesses and holiday-makers abroad. We have a Prime Minister who has made us proud to be British. Let us keep it that way. I have been ashamed to be British during the past three days, and incidents of the kind that we are discussing must be stopped.

Mr. Moynihan: I hear loud and clear my hon. Friend's strength of feeling and I recognise, as does everybody associated with the football world, that extreme political wings have been associated with much of the organised vandalism and incidents connected with football. It is abhorrent that racial abuse has been associated with that; I share the view of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) about the appalling incidents of racial abuse that have been associated with that extreme political wing. We must do everything that we can to ensure that they do not happen again.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Does the Minister accept that the main burden of his remarks relate to the behaviour of English supporters? Without in any way wanting to display a holier-than-thou attitude, I hope that he will take these comments from one who has been a football supporter for more than 50 years and has attended gatherings that were better behaved than those on the Terrace of the House of Commons at present, at Hampden park, with over 100,000 people, at Ibrox park, with over 100,000 people and at Wembley stadium, with over 100,000 people. At that time there was a great deal of social cohesion. What is wrong within society is not a problem for football. We should be fighting for the preservation of football as a spectator sport, and we should therefore all unite in condemning bad behaviour and in supporting the action of clubs and the football associations in trying to stamp that out.

Mr. Moynihan: It is important to recognise that many football clubs have taken determined action in recent years to try to stamp out the hooliganism that has been associated with the national game. It is also important to recognise that every club that drags its feet on the issue is also dragging down the national game and those who have worked so hard for it. I regret that too many have dragged their feet. Closed circuit television should have been in every ground months, if not a year, ago. I confirm that the main problem overseas has involved alleged English supporters.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his strong views on this matter and on his resolve to put it right. Düsseldorf was a disaster for the country, but we should remember the England *v.* Scotland game, and the riots at Middlesborough *v.* Chelsea, when people were appalled by what they saw. Is my hon. Friend aware of the one club that has produced a 100 per cent. membership scheme? Is he aware that three seasons ago there were 115 arrests and seven stabbings? Over the past two seasons and 80 league games there has not been one arrest or stabbing at the ground. In tennis terms, is that not 6-0, 6-0, 6-0 for the introduction of a national identity scheme, which overnight would show the Football Association and the Football league that they have abdicated responsibility for the safety of the game? No matter how reluctant the Government may be, they must accept the responsibility to preserve the national game and look after the people who live near football clubs.

Mr. Moynihan: I praise Luton Town football club for its tough and determined action on this issue and for implementing a scheme that has had undoubted success for the town and the club. It is regrettable that the Football Association and the league have not warmly welcomed the initiative taken at Luton. If they do not fast realise that the lesson learned at Luton Town, which if extended nationwide would lead to a nationwide membership scheme, is the right way forward, then the Government will have to show them the way forward.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Has the Minister seen a report this week by the Association of Chief Police Officers, which was outlined in *The Times*, which states that this is a law and order problem and that football is the victim? To say that the clubs are not doing enough to protect themselves is like saying that women do not do enough to protect themselves against rape. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that last weekend, miles from a football match, 200 drunken youths ran riot in St. Ives in Cambridgeshire, five policemen were beaten up in rural Andover, and two more were beaten up in Newbury? We have the Notting Hill carnival and new year's eve celebrations. Is he aware that 272 Britons are in gaol in Spain and that this is a law and order problem, not among deprived dole queue kids, but of the "Loadsamoney" mentality created by the Government? The Minister praises Luton Town football club, but why will he not stop the passports? That is the membership card. That would stop the fans travelling to Germany.

Mr. Moynihan: If the hon. Gentleman feels that this is in no way a football problem, he should take cognisance of those who attended the Scarborough *v.* Wolverhampton Wanderers game on 15 August last year, those who went to the QPR *v.* Chelsea game, those who saw the Arsenal *v.* Millwall game on 9 January or those who witnessed the appalling incidents inside the gates at Chelsea at the end of the season. Football clubs must take tough and determined action. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we must take action inside the grounds, which is primarily a matter for the football authorities, and outside the grounds.

It is impracticable under current circumstances to take away passports to achieve the hon. Gentleman's goal, but it may not be impractical when the computerised system is introduced within the next two years. That is why my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made his announcement earlier today, which I have repeated. As foolproof a national membership scheme as possible would also help considerably to identify potential troublemakers and ban them from grounds.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that there is now no technical or practical reason why there should not be created on a self-financing

basis in this country a proper membership system for those who attend football matches? The main reason for creating such a system is to protect the overwhelming majority of decent people who wish to go to matches in peace. As to supporters going overseas, until British football shows some real initiative in resolving the problem, should it not be made clear that its clubs are not welcome elsewhere in Europe?

Mr. Moynihan: On my hon. Friend's latter question, I was glad to note today that the FA and the league have decided to withdraw their application for English clubs to be readmitted to European competition. I agree with my hon. Friend's first point and only wish that the football authorities would do the job. They are the people who are meant to run, and ought to run, football, and it should not be left to the House and the Government to intervene. I regret that it looks as though we will have to do so.

Lisburn (Murder of Soldiers)

3.55 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the murder of six soldiers in Lisburn yesterday evening.

For the past six years the Lisburn borough council, in conjunction with the YMCA, has organised a series of charitable running events consisting of a half marathon together with shorter fun runs. This year some 4,500 people took part, more than half of them teenagers and young children.

Shortly after the end of the run, a bomb destroyed a Ford Transit van in which six soldiers were travelling. Four were killed instantly, one died on his way to hospital, and the sixth died in hospital last night. Eleven civilians, including an 80-year-old man and a two-year-old child, were injured, but all have now been released from hospital. The soldiers killed were a sergeant, two lance-corporals and a signaller from the Royal Signals; a corporal from the Green Howards; and a lance-corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. Next of kin have been informed. All six had come from Ebrington barracks in Londonderry, and were giving of their own time to help in an event which over the years has raised very many thousands of pounds for deserving charities.

I know that the House will wish to join me in expressing our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of those brutally murdered last night.

My understanding is that the soldiers concerned travelled in the Transit van from Londonderry to Lisburn, and parked it unattended in the leisure centre car park, the start and finish point of the runs. Five of the soldiers took part in the marathon, which started at 6.30 pm. One took part in the fun run. While it is not clear when they finished running, it is believed that the van left the car park at 8.50 pm, and the explosion occurred at 8.59 pm. The evidence indicates that the explosive device had been attached to the underside of the van and consisted of some 3 kg of commercial explosive.

I must tell the House that, while the murders of the soldiers are horrific enough, there could well have been fatalities and casualties on a vastly greater scale if the bomb had gone off in the car park itself, where thousands of people were milling around, including a considerable number of families with young children.

What that indicates is that the IRA has no depths to which it will not sink in its determination to kill, no occasion, whether it be a remembrance service or a charitable event, which it will not attack, nor the slightest concern as to how many people of all ages—men, women and children—it may murder and maim in its vile activities.

What we face in Northern Ireland at present is the ruthless efforts of the IRA to intensify its vicious and bloody campaign. The Chief Constable gave clear warning of that, and the evidence of the arms shipments from Libya was further confirmation of the lengths to which the terrorists will go.

If civilised society is to survive, whether in Northern Ireland alone or in the whole island of Ireland, there can be no place for terrorism. We have no choice but to do all

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in our power to thwart and ultimately to defeat the terrorist—and in thwarting the terrorist we need the maximum vigilance and alertness.

The end of terrorism has to be our aim, and while there is no short cut, we must employ all the resources that a democracy can bring to bear, the commitment of Government and Parliament, the skill and courage of the security forces, the whole-hearted support and assistance of the whole community in ensuring that the men of violence are brought to justice and, in addition, the fullest co-operation and support from the Government and people of the Irish Republic.

All those we need; and the events of last night not only in what did happen, awful as they certainly were, but also in what so easily might have happened as well, are the clearest message why we must not fail.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): It is again with sadness that I come to the Dispatch Box following a statement by the Secretary of State. Too often in the past 20 years have successive Secretaries of State and their Opposition counterparts had to respond to brutal acts of callous inhumanity. As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said on behalf of Opposition Members, the sympathies and condolences of us all, and indeed of all right-thinking people in the country, go to the families of the bereaved and injured.

The tragedy of the situation in Northern Ireland is the waste of yet more lives, this time of men who had just voluntarily given up their free time to help the local community in its charitable endeavours.

The Secretary of State has given us details of the facts of the fatal events of yesterday evening. If any solace can be found in the midst of such a terrible tragedy it must be that the devastation and loss of life was not on the scale of the Enniskillen remembrance day bomb.

But we were told that Enniskillen was a mistake. Last night was no mistake. The lives of men, women and children were coldly and deliberately put at risk. But for the grace of God it would have been another Enniskillen writ large.

The lack of warning, as well as the very act of placing the bomb, showed the men of violence for what they are —indifferent to life and devoid of any feelings of humanity. It was a deliberate act of sectarian provocation, taking place as it did in a staunchly Unionist town, which is also the garrison headquarters of the Army. Taking place, as it did, shortly before the onset of the marching season, it can only have been designed to heighten sectarian tension. We must hope that it does not lead to a spate of further tit-for-tat reprisals, for that is not the way.

A number of serious questions have to be asked about security. The Secretary of State has told us that the six young men killed were off-duty soldiers in civilian clothing in an unmarked van, beneath which was placed a bomb, the van having been parked in a public place. Until investigations are completed, we shall not know the exact type of device used. However, we are entitled to ask how any device could be placed when, in the aftermath of the killings at Andersonstown, we were told that all security personnel had been issued with warnings to be on the alert, quite apart from the normal security arrangements for personal safety.

When was the van last searched, if trained soldiers felt that it was unnecessary to look beneath it? Why was the van not parked in a more secure place, if it was owned by the military? Were any instructions given to that effect, bearing in mind that, as we now know and as the security forces probably then knew, the IRA can identify plain-clothes soldiers in unmarked vans, on this occasion trailing them all the way from Derry? What sort of surveillance is used when soldiers are taking part in civilian activities of this kind, difficult though it must be? If, as we have been told, commercial explosives were used, do we know yet whence they came?

Finally, I want to deal with the calls for action that have been made in the wake of the bombing. Some have already called for the return of internment or selective detention as a way to rid the streets of potential bombers and gunners. But, as the Prime Minister seemed to say earlier, that is precisely the response that the IRA would like. The Opposition reject those calls directly and immediately.

The recent history of internment in Northern Ireland shows that it is ineffective. It provides men of violence with propaganda and it is a fertile area for recruitment. Its return could only serve further to heighten tension, to increase social instability and to push the likelihood of any political solution that much further away.

As the Secretary of State said, there are no easy short cuts, just a long hard haul. The way forward in Northern Ireland is to support the security forces in upholding the rule of law, by strengthening the democratic constitutional structures, thus weakening the case of the gunmen, and to show that the ballot box alone is the way to achieve lasting peace on the island of Ireland.

The firm adherence of the Secretary of State to the Anglo-Irish Agreement should be supported. It should not be forgotten that the perpetrators of this outrage are as committed to the destruction of the Anglo-Irish Agreement as they were to the destruction of that of Sunningdale. The paramilitaries cannot be allowed to dictate to the House and to our country, or to Northern Ireland or to the Republic, the political agenda.

The Opposition reaffirm their support for that agreement. We reject the knee-jerk calls for the introduction of repressive measures. The defeat of men of violence can be brought about only by the support for the security forces and adherence to the rule of law, with equality before it for all. It is by those means that the forces of democracy, despite the temptation to despair and such heartbreaking setbacks as last night, will eventually prevail.

Mr. King: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks. I particularly appreciate his clear and unequivocal call for full support for the security forces in the tasks that they have to undertake. At a time like this, above all, we are conscious of the tremendous contribution they make, the tremendous strains that are undoubtedly placed upon them and the need for them at all times to demonstrate the greatest alertness and vigilance that is necessary if we are to thwart the evil acts of terrorism.

On the particularly detailed questions that the hon. Gentleman asked about the type of explosive, further information is likely to become available on that shortly, and I cannot comment further today. However, he will have noted my comment that, on the evidence available to me, that bomb could have gone off in the car park with the consequences that I described.

The hon. Gentleman paid tribute to young men who had given of their free time to make a contribution to the community in which they were serving. I am conscious that some of those same young men were people whom people in the Nationalist community were proud to praise when they turned out in the floods at Strabane to help them through their difficulties at that time when the Army did valiant work. There is no question but that the Army does much for the community in Northern Ireland, for which everybody in Northern Ireland should be grateful. But at the same time we must be concerned about procedures and their security and what is possible for them. The Army takes those matters seriously, and I know that it will be reviewing the situation.

The hon. Gentleman heard, as did the House, the clear response that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave on the introduction of selective detention, which it is important to recognise. I would only add that we have specifically retained that power within the legislation, were it thought desirable to take that course. But, as my right hon. Friend made clear, there are many considerations, many deeply difficult implications, that have to be considered in that respect. We keep the matter under review. We have no further comment to make at this stage.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Now that the mother of Parliaments has got round to moving from the subject of the stabbing of six footballers to that of the murder of six soldiers, no doubt the general public will wonder whether we have got our priorities right.

May I associate my constituents in the borough of Lisburn with the expressions of sympathy for the relatives of the dead soldiers? May I also ask, however, whether the Secretary of State understands that that sympathy will be tinged with considerable bitterness? My constituents remember the signing three years ago of an Anglo-Irish Agreement which promised peace, stability and reconciliation. Out of respect for those who have been murdered, and for those of us who are yet to be murdered, will the Secretary of State give instructions that that wholly false claim and promise should never be repeated?

Mr. King: The right hon. Gentleman may understand on reflection why, although I recognise that the outrage occurred in his constituency, I am somewhat disappointed in his contribution.

In view of the right hon. Gentleman's endless repetition of his concern about the phrase, let me say that he will have noted from my statement that in talking about "peace, stability and reconciliation" in the Province, I referred to arms shipments which we have good reason to believe came from Libya. He will know that those shipments started to come well before the signing of the Hillsborough agreement, and that this is a sign of the growing threat that the security forces are facing very bravely. I should have hoped that he would include in his remarks a tribute to all those who serve in his constituency, many of whom come from every other constituency in the land and some of whom lost their lives in the incident last night. They have gone there to support people of good will and integrity in Northern Ireland, which they are proud to do.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): It ill becomes the Secretary of State to criticise what the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) has said. The Unionist people have not only given their sympathy; they have given their support to all the security forces. Those whom the Secretary of State thought he would bring with him in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the members of the SDLP, will not call for people to join the Army today; they will not call for people to join the UDR today; they will not call for people to join the police today.

The Secretary of State must face up to the fact—as must the House, although I know that it is not a popular thing to say on this occasion—that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has not brought peace; it has not brought stability; it has not brought reconciliation. *[Interruption.]* We live there. The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) does not. He does not follow the coffins; he does not meet the widows and the orphans. He should shut his mouth until he meets the orphans, the widows, the people who sorrow.

The hon. Gentleman, sitting on his backside in his Gangway seat, has never followed a coffin in Northern Ireland. He has never put his hand on the curly head of a little girl or boy who will have no father, no mother and no succour from a father or mother. The hon. Gentleman had better recognise that it is an evil thing that we are fighting in Northern Ireland.

If the House thinks that we have to take these constant killings, let me say that we sympathise so sincerely with those who have been bereaved because we have walked that way ourselves. We have been down in the valley, and we have shed the same tears as they will be shedding. We know what this is about.

It seemed to be easy to identify the unmarked van. Will the Secretary of State start an immediate investigation into the civilian personnel who work in the Londonderry barracks? Someone there put his finger on that van, and it is the duty of the Secretary of State to find out who it was.

Furthermore, does not the right hon. Gentleman think that the vehicle ought not to have been parked in a public car park? Will he give instructions in future that such unmarked vehicles should never again be parked in a public place but must be parked under Army surveillance? When he has obtained the details, will he also take into consideration the type of bomb that was used, and warn Army personnel that that type of bomb could be used again and could bring about more murders in the Army?

The people in Northern Ireland today are incensed that members of the SDLP are continuing their talks with the godfathers of the men who planted the bomb. That is resented by the right-thinking people of Ulster.

Mr. King: I hope that the House agrees that we owe it to the memory of those who lost their lives last night to do all that we can not to spread dissension, division and bitterness in the House, but to pledge ourselves to work together with all the constitutional parties to start building some harmony and co-operation, and not always seek to exploit the resentments and difficulties.

In answer to the last point made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), I have made absolutely clear my utter abhorrence of all who espouse violence or who fail to denounce it. I wish to see the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland sitting down, without inhibition and without any preconditions, to establish whether they can play their part in starting to build a rather better and more constructive future.

The hon. Gentleman raised a specific point about the van and the issues arising in connection with the journey, the parking and the lack of attendance. I spoke to the GOC in Lisburn this morning about that. It is a matter of

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concern to the Army, which is at present reviewing its arrangements. The points that the hon. Gentleman has raised will be very much in the minds of Army personnel.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that, while I look forward to the arrest of the perpetrators of yesterday's crime, I do not think that it will stop the violence in the Province? Nor would internment. As we have just heard in the expressions of strong feelings, the problem of Northern Ireland is not just a security matter; it lies far deeper than that.

May I ask two questions? The first is about explosives. The Secretary of State has said that he will have more information later today about the nature of the explosives used. Are we satisfied that in co-operation with the South —not through the Anglo-Irish Agreement; there has been co-operation over the years—we know the source of the Semtex and the route that it takes through the Province? Are the security forces in the South aware of the problems that arise because of the movement of this high explosive?

My second question is about soldiers. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) mentioned the lack of security for off-duty soldiers. There is a feeling that there are too many non-operational soldiers in Northern Ireland, and that the guarding of those soldiers poses a problem not only for the Army but for the police.

Mr. King: The right hon. Gentleman's first point is enormously important. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and the hon. Member for Antrim, North both referred to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I entirely understand the political attitudes about it, but some can read into those comments the idea that we should not work as closely as we can in co-operation with the South.

I am glad to hear confirmation from the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) that he recognises, as any sensible person must—and as I said in my statement—that one of the four preconditions for success must be the full commitment and co-operation of the Government and people of the Republic of Ireland. In the long run—and perhaps not all that long a run either —terrorism could be as big a threat to the Republic as it now is to Northern Ireland.

It is believed that a commercial explosive was used—not Semtex, which might be defined as a military explosive. As I said in my statement, 3 kg of commercial explosive was used. Because of the additional resources that have been made available through the assistance of the Libyan Government, there is no doubt that within the island of Ireland very significant resources of weapons, ammunition and explosives are available. That is why we must have the close co-operation and commitment of the Irish Government, the security forces and the people, together with our own efforts in every possible respect, so that those weapons of evil, destruction, tragedy and death are recovered at the earliest possible opportunity.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): We welcome what has been said about this atrocity by Mr. Haughey, but do we not now have the right to expect words to be matched by deeds and a success to be made of the extradition arrangements? Although the last internment was excessive and incompetent, will my right hon. Friend and the Government at least not rule out highly selective detention before they have discussed it with the Government of the Irish Republic, with a view to simultaneous action on both sides of the border?

Mr. King: It is very important that we should have effective extradition arrangements. I have made clear my views about that. We are continually striving to improve the effectiveness of security co-operation. I know that the House would not wish to ignore the fact that we appreciate the significant arms, weapons and explosives recoveries that have been made in the South by the Garda. We are grateful for their successes as well as for the very significant successes of the security forces. It would be quite wrong not to appreciate that at this very moment the IRA is trying to intensify a vicious campaign and that there have been a number of successful efforts by the security forces that have frustrated or thwarted the IRA. I am having to report, sadly, to the House today on an occasion when the IRA was not thwarted, but it would be wrong not to pay tribute to some very real achievements in recent months by the security forces.

We do not rule out the possibility of selective detention. I said in my statement that I have kept that power available in case it is thought appropriate to use it. At the same time, I made it clear to the House that there could be very real problems. My hon. Friend referred to very selective detention. On a previous occasion he referred to selective detention as the recruting sergeant of the IRA. We have to consider responsibly those kinds of consideration and decide whether they would help or damage the fight against terrorism; but we keep these matters under review.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): In expressing my condemnation and absolute abhorrence of this act, and in expressing also my sympathy to the relatives of those who were killed, may I say without equivocation that I believe that there should be no hiding place for those who carried out this act and that anybody who has any information about it should make it available to the police so that those who perpetrated this act can be caught and brought to justice?

I ask the Secretary of State to end, please, the speculation about selective internment. Internment can never be selective. That is one of the lessons that we have learnt. It is not possible to have selective internment. Will he bear in mind that we had selective internment in the 1920s, the 1930s, the 1940s, the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s and that the problem is still with us? Since the day and hour that the Northern Irish state was formed, the empirical evidence has been that, if we want to give a fillip and an impetus to terrorism, the way to go about it is to introduce internment in any shape or form.

Mr. King: I think that some would argue with the hon. Gentleman's historical analysis. They might argue that on certain occasions selective internment was used effectively. I recall that it was used effectively not merely in Northern Ireland but also in the Republic of Ireland. However, I am conscious of the other aspect of the problem that the hon. Gentleman raised and to which I referred earlier, but I have nothing further to add on that point.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's absolutely unequivocal statement. I hope that it will be heard and listened to in the quarters where his words carry weight. It is tragic to

consider the deaths that have occurred in Northern Ireland, not just because of the number but because of the number of young lives across both communities from every sort of background. They are tragic because they are so pointless. It is tragic that lives have been lost, to the achievement of no end, by the security forces bravely defending communities and by terrorists who have achieved nothing. For all those reasons, we must bring about an end to violence in the island of Ireland.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Does my right hon. Friend share the edification that many of us feel that at least this tragedy has been condemned by Members in almost all parts of the House? We hope that the message will go out that there has been universal condemnation by this House of what happened. Does my right hon. Friend agree that now is perhaps the time to mount a propaganda or a dissemination of knowledge campaign on an international basis about the viciousness of the IRA so as to dry up the supplies of treasure and money that are coming from misguided people in other parts of the world?

Mr. King: Yes, Sir. I believe that that is an important part of the total approach that we must seek to adopt to defeat terrorism. I have already said that there is no single, quick answer to the problem, and the House understands that perfectly well. We are determined to tackle every possible aspect that we can, whether it be more accurate information or the relaunch of the confidential telephone. That is one small contribution to the fight against terrorism, but it is already making a significant contribution by enlisting the support of the community in the fight against terrorism. The new arrangements for the security forces, the changes in the legislation that we are introducing, and the impact on racketeering by trying to tackle the sources of funds for terrorism are among the issues that we are tackling right across the board in our determination steadily to tighten the net around the terrorists.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the Secretary of State note that my right hon. and hon. Friends wish to be associated with the tribute that he has paid to the men who lost their lives and with the sympathy that he has expressed for their families? Now that the IRA has turned its attention from the cenotaph to a sporting event for what must have been the first time, is it not evident that there is no innocent man, woman or child in Northern Ireland who is not potentially on its hit list and that this fact ought to be recognised around the world?

Does the Secretary of State think that the natural conclusion to draw from what has happened is that one cannot dismantle any of the mechanisms upon which could be built closer co-operation? The failure of co-operation so far, such as the chaos around the extradition arrangements, must have been music in the ears of these murderers. Does he not think that we ought to strengthen rather than weaken security co-operation?

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he has said. It is not necessarily a fact that men, women and children of all ages are now on the IRA's hit list. They are probably not on its hit list, but the IRA is so terribly callous that it could not care less if men, women and children happened to be on the hit list when it was in the process of committing other atrocities.

The hon. Gentleman also said that argument and division in this House are music to the ears of the terrorists. IRA terrorists want to exploit any resentments that can be built up between Northern Ireland and the Republic. It wants the agreement smashed and confusion to reign. Our job is to build up constructive co-operation and to stand together steadfastly against the terrorist.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Does the Secretary of State accept that those who elected me to the House unreservedly condemn the vicious and brutal murder yesterday evening of six soldiers in Lisburn? I offer my sympathy and that of my constituents to those families who are enduring great sorrow.

Does the Secretary of State also accept that we, as a United Kingdom, owe a tremendous debt to all members of the security forces who stand between us and the vicious attacks of the IRA, and that those members of the security forces deserve our unreserved support in their fight against terrorism? Is it not to be deplored that when the security forces are effective against terrorists, there seems to be a hue and cry from certain quarters, even in the House, and demands for inquiries into why the security forces have been so effective?

Will the Secretary of State address his mind to the fact that the members of the Unionist family give their support to the security forces, but is it not time that we heard from the SDLP a condemnation of this act? Will the Secretary of State ask the SDLP, and allow it to answer in the House, whether it unreservedly supports the security forces in their fight against terrorism?

Is the Secretary of State suggesting to the House that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is the price of co-operation with the South of Ireland in the fight against terrorists? Is the Secretary of State really saying that, if the Anglo-Irish Agreement had not been brought into existence, the Government of southern Ireland would not take any offensive against the IRA? That would be a condemnation of any country. The Prime Minister of that country was a former gun runner. The facts speak for themselves. I ask the Secretary of State to accept that the people of Ulster appreciate the great value of the security forces. We should give our support to any effective, aggressive measures against terrorists.

Mr. King: I had better say to the hon. Member that I hear what he says. I should have hoped that, instead of seeking to emphasise yet again his dislike, for whatever justifiable or unjustifiable reasons of the SDLP or of the Irish Government, he could have noted that on occasions I have criticised the SDLP for not being as forthright as I would wish in its public statements of support for the security forces, but the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) has made it absolutely clear today, forthrightly and without equivocation, in what he said. I welcome that and hope that the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) will welcome it. I hope that he will seek to encourage that co-operation with the Republic of Ireland, which is absolutely vital in the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): Does the Secretary of State understand that, while he welcomes the statement of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), people in Northern Ireland will see that statement in the context of the ongoing talks that the hon. Gentleman has with Sinn Fein, which, in the Secretary of

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State's own words, is indistinguishable from the people who planted the bomb under the van last night? Does the Secretary of State agree that there is not really much point in hon. Members engaging in a competition to find stronger words of condemnation or criticism of the terrorists? That is probably what they want us to do. Why does he not do all in his power to thwart terrorists? Why does he not announce today the removal of the automatic right to 50 per cent remission for people convicted of terrorist offences? That would send a stronger message to the terrorists this afternoon than all the words that we have uttered together.

Mr. King: I have made clear my views about Sinn Fein, and I do not resile from anything that I have said. The hon. Gentleman has quoted some of my remarks. I certainly believe that the talks that are taking place at present, in so far as they are now inhibiting the chance of talks between the constitutional parties, are a major disadvantage, about which I have the greatest concern.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there is no point in bandying across the Chamber words of ever greater condemnation. I hope that he will realise that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and I are engaged in the most comprehensive approach to the matters that he raised. I shall not talk about them in detail. We keep under review every aspect of ways in which we might intensify and make more effective the fight against terrorism.

Nothing is barred from that review. We have considered some of the matters which have been raised. We do not consider them appropriate at present, but I can give the hon. Gentleman an absolute assurance that we are examining every single aspect. A further step forward which may be helpful to the security forces in the matter of evidence will come before the House this evening in the Criminal Justice Bill, and I hope the House will support it.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): After this latest bombing tragedy, many of us are bound to recall that recently a suspected bomber was not extradited to Northern Ireland. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, at ministerial meetings under the Anglo-Irish Agreement, British Ministers can and do question the competence of sections of the Irish judiciary and sections of the Irish Ministry of Justice?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend, in his usual gentle way, is leading me into extremely difficult country. We certainly have made clear our full concerns about extradition. The judiciary in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland are independent and obviously must take responsibility for their decisions. However, I am most anxious, in so far as it lies within my power—and I know the absolute commitment of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General—to seek to ensure that we have effective extradition between our two countries.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I recognise the need for the ritual condemnation of violence in Northern Ireland and the tired message of the Secretary of State, who keeps coming back to the House mouthing the same old platitudes, but is it not time for a completely new political initiative? Is not one of the problems the fact that the Government are hemmed in by statements and undertakings given by the Prime Minister on successive occasions to Ulster Unionists in this Chamber? That is why we are now stuck in this logjam.

Mr. King: As the only hon. Member in this House to get up and start talking about tired old messages and the same old platitudes, the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) takes the biscuit.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): When my right hon. Friend is considering the possibility of introducing selective detention, will he take account of the fact that those who, perhaps by coincidence, are the most republican in their sympathies, are the strongest in their opposition? At the very least, there is the possibility that, had there been an effective policy of selective detention, those who perpetrated yesterday's outrage would not have been at large.

Mr. King: One of the questions is whether, had there been such a policy, there would have been more or fewer people available to commit such outrages. I heard my hon. Friend put his question about the choice to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. He asked whether, if a choice was to be made, and if it meant saving lives, that was not a choice in which a few scruples had to be buried. But is that the choice, or is the choice that that decision could lead to even more lives being lost? The history of this matter has been rehearsed, and I have already disagreed with my hon. Friend, but those are the honest considerations that have to be faced.

I say absolutely clearly, because part of what my hon. Friend said is correct, that there is clearer intelligence. There is a better understanding of some of the people who are involved in terrorism, but there is great difficulty in bringing forward the evidence which will enable convictions to be achieved. There are considerations that have to be borne in mind. I hope that it will be clear to my hon. Friend that I take clearly and seriously the points that he has made.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Secretary of State clarify what he said to his hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) about American money? Is it not true that in downtown Boston and elsewhere, and encouraged by one of the candidates in the American election campaign—at least by his attitude to Northern Ireland—more and more American money is likely to be collected?

May I gently ask whether, if there had still been national service in this country, any of us really think that the British Army would still be in Northern Ireland? How do well-intentioned, high-minded, good-willed Englishmen such as the Secretary of State think that the Army will ever solve the historic problems of Ireland?

Mr. King: I do not think that I shall go into the last part of that question. I am not sure that I agree with it, and I would need to think about it.

Although elements in the United States are still fighting the old battles and seeking to stir up all the old hatred and bitterness, many other elements there are now trying to divert the understandable loyalty and affection for Ireland into much more responsible channels. This evening in Northern Ireland I shall be meeting representatives of the American Ireland Fund, incorporating the Ireland Fund of Canada, and some hon. Members will meet them next week. In such groups responsible American leaders are

encouraging the channeling of the understandable and thoroughly praiseworthy affection for Ireland that is felt by so many people in America, Canada, New Zealand and Australia into these funds and into responsible hands, not into the hands of terrorists.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is my right hon. Friend aware that even those who believe that the Government's present Northern Ireland policy is mistaken admire his personal bearing in Lisburn this morning and the way in which he has carried out his melancholy duty here this afternoon?

Mr. King: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend, who speaks from a position of absolute principle and integrity.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Does the Secretary of State recollect his response to the leader of the Ulster Unionists? Does he acknowledge that the people of the kingdom on Armistice day have taken note that the leader of the Ulster Unionists is the only leader of a parliamentary party here wearing medals of service in Her Majesty's forces? Will he bear in mind that the sacrifices in the Ulster battle are borne primarily by the people in Northern Ireland? I acknowledge wholeheartedly the sacrifice of those who have come from Scotland, England and Wales to serve there, some of whom are my cousins. However, I deprecate the occasional implication that Ulster Unionists are criticising the security forces.

I ask the Secretary of State to give us some guidance on whether an appeal to the whole community is realistic, given that at least 10 per cent. of that community backs Sinn Fein and the IRA.

Secondly, can the right hon. Gentleman now tell us how the Government are hitting the resources of terrorism? I am not thinking specifically of aid from America, but of how terrorists milk public money and engage in robbery and other such activities.

Thirdly, is not one of the real obstacles to the implementation of the law that allows selective detention the fact that the Republic of Ireland Government are not in a position to co-operate with the British Government in the internment of Irish subjects?

Mr. King: I am not sure why not. Historically, there have been occasions when the Irish Government have pursued that policy, but I have nothing further to add to that. It is a matter for them.

In the cut and thrust of exchange across the Chamber, and in my disappointment at the contribution of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), I in no way sought to disparage his patriotism or service. I am aware that some of us have served in the armed forces in one way or another, and I recognise the right hon. Gentleman's contribution. I did not want to make disparaging comments about him.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said about the approach of the security forces, from wherever they come to fight terrorism in Northern Ireland and, as sometimes happens, in Great Britain. His words were well chosen in that respect.

The hon. Gentleman was right to say that funding comes not only from America, and that probably less derives from there than from the rackets and other activities. We are taking a number of steps to make those practices considerably less successful than they have been in recent years.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I express my heartfelt sympathy to the relatives of the six soldiers who were murdered last night, and I repeat my tribute and that of my constituents to the soldiers in the Regular Army, to the UDR and to the police who serve in Northern Ireland. On behalf of all those people I ask the House to pay tribute to them and to recognise the courage of the people of Northern Ireland who, for 20 years now, have faced atrocity after atrocity with great courage and a restraint that would not have been manifested in this country if the same mutilations and murders had taken place in England, Wales or Scotland. Is it not high time that people inside and outside this House stopped criticising the people of Ulster for not doing more, when the defeat of the IRA lies wholly in the hands of the Government? The people of Ulster have shown restraint and now expect the Government to play their part.

Mr. King: I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks. We who live among them—hon. Members who represent them and all who serve in the Government in Northern Ireland—cannot but be conscious of the courage of people in the security forces, the UDR and the police.

I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's last remark. The greatest fallacy is to say that only the Government can sort out the problem. I said in my statement that everyone has a responsibility to make a contribution—the Government, elected representatives in this House, the security forces, the Churches and the people of both communities. Many people have a contribution to make in the fight against terrorism. Not only everyone in Northern Ireland, but a friendly Government and people in the Republic, are needed in the fight against terrorism. All those components must play their part.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I endorse the condemnation by my hon. Friends of the horrible event at Lisburn last night. I, too, express my sympathy to the relatives of those who were killed and of those who suffered injury. I endorse the right hon. Gentleman's statement, and on this occasion, as I have done in the past, I ask anyone with information that will lead to the arrest or bringing to justice of the perpetrators to come forward.

Talk of internment—even though it is not acted upon—feeds the propaganda exercise of the IRA. All internment is selective, so there is no such thing as selective internment. By its very nature, it means that people are picked, not on evidence or on law, but on selection of information.

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will endorse what I am about to say. My party and I do not need and will not take lessons from any party in Northern Ireland about the absence of support for terrorism. No member of my party has ever donned a balaclava or uniform, has ever manned a barricade or carried a coffin of a leader of the Ulster Volunteer Force, or has ever created third forces or led men armed with truncheons and wearing balaclavas—as have leaders of both Unionist parties in this House in the not-too-far-off past, which actions have contributed in a major way to the creation of violence in our society in Northern Ireland.

Mr. King: I hear what the hon. Gentleman has to say and note his comments about selective detention. I am grateful for his clear commitment, which he has given before, to ensuring that those who are guilty of terrorism are brought to justice. I am also grateful for his denunciation of terrorism.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I accept that this is a United Kingdom matter, and I shall call those hon. Members who have been rising.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on drawing discussion towards the future, especially towards the wider principles. Is he aware that the way in which he spoke of American interest in Northern Ireland was not very reassuring to those who fear that concessions to the American Government have been a major cause of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the proposals for employment in Northern Ireland? Is it not possible for him, in a spirit of good will, to tell the American Government that it is not necessary to their worldwide interest to interfere in the affairs of Northern Ireland? In the end, the concessions that have been seen to be made to what many would, sadly, describe as interference can only be to their disadvantage in trying to persuade public opinion in this country?

Mr. King: If my hon. Friend is referring to the American Ireland Fund, he is reading an incredible amount into what I said. It is supportive of and interested in worthwhile causes, and I am very grateful to it. I would in no way seek to dissuade people from taking the undoubted human, family and ancestral interests which so many Americans have in Ireland. However, that interest must be channelled into responsible and worthwhile support.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that we shall never be bombed out of Northern Ireland; that each act of violence makes us all the more determined to find peaceful solutions to the problems of the Province; that each atrocity that is perpetrated by the IRA, which scars Northern Ireland, makes us more resolved to support the people of the Province, promote their prosperity and starve the IRA of support; and that the vast majority of hon. Members hold the unquenchable belief that the forces of truth will ultimately always overcome the forces of darkness?

Mr. King: I wish that I could have put that as well as my hon. Friend. I wish that anybody who has entertained the idea of violence, or those who still support it in Northern Ireland, could have listened to those words. They are precisely what I believe and precisely what I find so tragic about the campaign of violence and terrorism. It is totally counter-productive to any aim that it may seek to ascribe and causes enormous misery and suffering in the process.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that he and the Prime Minister, pursuing with great courage the correctly balanced policy in Northern Ireland, do not need the assistance of hysterical contributions, such as we heard earlier from the Benches behind me and elsewhere? Whether synthetic or genuine, such contributions will not contribute to the attainment of peace in Northern Ireland.

Does my right hon. Friend also agree that the Anglo-Irish Agreement, far from being a sham or hindrance to the attaining of peace, is a vital linchpin? Will he confirm that it is the Government's intention to reinforce that agreement as it develops with increasing ministerial meetings, and will he look favourably on the idea of a joint parliamentary commission?

Mr. King: We are having a review of the workings of the conference very shortly. I am struck by the amount of comment that is emerging. Even if people do not like the Anglo-Irish Agreement, there has been recognition that its elements and components make extremely good sense. I think that that recognition is being more widely expressed. Northern Ireland is never short of sound and fury. There are many issues about which people feel deeply and passionately. I never despise emotion, because some of the sufferings of the people of Northern Ireland are beyond description and their endurance is beyond praise. At the same time, if we are to make progress, we must learn to control that emotion and try to work in a constructive and positive way. As my hon. Friend said, I try to look to the future, not dwell on the past.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Did my right hon. Friend notice the regrettable contrast between the statement made by the mayor of Lisburn and that made by the hon. Member representing Lisburn? The mayor of Lisburn had a constructive and moderate approach to the subject, whereas the hon. Gentleman tended to suggest that this incident was the fault of the people of Northern Ireland. Has my right hon. Friend noted from newspaper reports today that it appears that southern Ireland is making insufficient attempts to track down and survey Patrick McVeigh? Does he regard that with considerable concern and does he accept that the authorities in southern Ireland should take steps to ensure that they know where he is and track him down as soon as possible?

Mr. King: I cannot comment on my hon. Friend's latter point, because I have not seen the reports. I concur with the conclusion that my hon. Friend drew and hope that every effort is being made in that respect. I shall not comment on the first question asked by my hon. Friend. I have not seen what Councillor Bleakes—the mayor of Lisburn—may have said. I am trying to build a co-operative and positive approach. We owe it to the people who lost their lives last night and to others who have lost theirs over the months and years to build on the positive and constructive work that has been done, and that is what I am determined to do.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): As the Secretary of State is aware, at the weekend, with his complete co-operation and much help, I visited Northern Ireland. It gave me an opportunity to speak to a number of people in Northern Ireland, who asked me to bring this message to him and to the House. Northern Ireland is the only part of the United Kingdom that does not elect mainstream political parties to Parliament. They feel confined to voting for sectarian red or green parties and they do not feel that they can choose——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am reluctant to stop the right hon. Lady, but I think that she has asked this question before. Today, we are discussing a specific incident.

Mrs. Gorman: Will the Secretary of State comment on whether that feeling of isolation contributes to the attitude of the IRA in perpetrating atrocities and whether Ulster people can be nudged into the Republic?

Mr. King: I congratulate my hon. Friend on her ingenuity in asking the Prime Minister and me a virtually identical question in the space of an hour. The safest thing for me to do is to give the same answer as my right hon. Friend.

Business of the House

4.57 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week.

MONDAY 20 JUNE—Completion of remaining stages of the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion relating to the Wireless Telegraphy (Broadcast Licence Charges and Exemption) (Amendment No 2) Regulations.

TUESDAY 21 JUNE—Remaining stages of the School Boards (Scotland) Bill.

Motion on financial assistance to Opposition parties.

WEDNESDAY 22 JUNE—Opposition Day (14th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "Chaos in the Government's Housing and Planning Policies".

Motion to take note of EC document on European Community telecommunications policy. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

THURSDAY 23 JUNE—Opposition Day (15th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "Deprivation and Disadvantage in Wales".

Motions on the Building Societies (Commercial Assets and Services) and (Limits on Commercial Assets) Orders.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

FRIDAY 24 JUNE—There will be a debate on policing in London on a motion for the Adjourment of the House.

MONDAY 27 JUNE—Timetable motion on the Housing Bill.

Motion on the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order.

Motion on the Church of England (Ecumenical Relations) Measure.

[*Debate on Wednesday 22 June 1988*
Relevant European Community document:
4634/88 Telecommunications services and equipment
Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee: HC 43-xx (1987-88) para 2]

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I thank the Leader of the House for his statement.

I repeat my question of last week: when are we likely to have the oft-promised debate on foreign affairs? Also, further to the question that I put to the right hon. Gentleman last week, can he tell us when we can expect to consider the Procedure Committee's proposals on short speeches?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that last Thursday both my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and I asked for more time to consider and debate the Housing Bill? Why did he and his colleagues insist on trying to rush it through this week? Apparently it is not so urgent, because it is not now included in the business for next week.

The right hon. Gentleman asserted at the end of the debate on the Housing Bill yesterday that the official Opposition had done a deal to help the Government get the Bill through, and had gone back on that deal. Will he,

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on reflection, confirm that such allegations are unfounded? Does he not, on reflection, consider that if the Government want to make such allegations in future, it would be better if the several people making the allegations made the same ones about the same time for a finish and about the same people, rather than different ones about different people and a different finish time, if only on the grounds that it would carry a little more conviction?

Is it not time that the Leader of the House recognised that the Government's business is in a mess and that there is no one to blame for it but himself and his right hon. and hon. Friends who introduced this ridiculous Housing Bill in the first place?

Before we debate the motion on financial assistance to Opposition parties on Tuesday of next week, will the Leader of the House clarify exactly what he was threatening yesterday about money for Opposition parties to my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and, both before and after that, through leaks to the press? If he now complains that he was not making threats about the funding of Opposition parties, why did he raise the subject at all, particularly as he had previously promised the Leader of the Opposition that he would help to get that motion through?

Is it not shameful that a Government with a majority of 140 over the Labour party should behave in this shoddy and unprincipled way, which is more characteristic of a banana republic? Or has Al Capone taken over from Pontius Pilate as the role model for the Prime Minister?

Finally, will the Leader of the House, before next week, still the rumours that the Government intend going even further with their threats and that, if we field a candidate in the Kensington by-election, they will vote against the Short money?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall treat that last question with the contempt that it deserves.

The hon. Gentleman asked about a foreign affairs debate. I had indicated that I was hoping to arrange a debate in the near future, and I confirm that that is the position.

With regard to the Procedure Committee report on short speeches, I very much regret that I have not been able to bring the necessary motion before the House. Most hon. Members will recognise that we have had some difficulties, which has meant that it has not been easy to find time for that debate.

With regard to the Housing Bill, I made a carefully considered statement in the House yesterday. I stand by every word that I said and I have nothing more to say until we debate the timetable motion. I shall be very happy to debate the issue with the hon. Gentleman at that time.

I told the hon. Gentleman last week that I had hoped to say something about the Short money in my next business statement. As I have announced, the debate will take place on Tuesday 21 June.

On the question of allegations in the press about a conversation with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), I do not accept for one moment the interpretation that has been placed on what is clearly a one-sided and grossly misleading account. My position is clear. I stand by the proposals that I set out in a written answer on 24 May. I made no threats with regard to financial aid to Opposition parties. I said that in categorical terms to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook at the time and I trust that on reflection his recollection of the conversation will bear that out.

What I said to the right hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* If the right hon. Gentleman is not frightened to hear the truth, he had better keep quiet. What I said at that meeting was that the task of getting the motion through the House could be made more difficult by the events of yesterday, and I had previously discussed my concern over this matter with the Leader of the Opposition. If hon. Members look back at the proceedings on the Short money debates, they will see that there have been difficulties in the past.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): May we turn from human frailty to animal disease? Will my right hon. Friend give time this coming week to debate the BSE order—the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Order—which was tabled by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 14 June, a copy of which is not yet available in the Vote Office and which comes into effect, so I am told, on 21 June? This has major effects on diseased animals going into the food chain and should, I believe, be dealt with as a matter of urgency this coming week.

Mr. Wakeham: I will certainly look into the question whether the order should be in the Vote Office and will see what I can sort out about that. I am sorry not to be able to oblige my hon. Friend, as I should very much like to do, by arranging a debate on the subject next week.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that there is growing certainty of a link between radiation and leukaemia, as shown by the official report on nuclear test veterans and the findings of the Government inquiry concerning the Dounreay nuclear power station? The Government have now announced that they do not intend to set up a compensation fund for the people who have been damaged. May we debate next week that disgraceful decision by the Government?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the concern with which the right hon. Gentleman has raised these matters several times in the House. I have said previously that there must be time for consideration of the recent report. The Government have accepted the report and are now considering how best to implement its recommendations. The report identifies a number of possible explanations for the increased incidence of leukaemia near Dounreay, but does not point to any one in particular, so further investigation is required before any meaningful debate can take place.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the order on financial assistance to Opposition parties is amendable and debatable? Does he agree that the taxpayer would demand that the House should provide financial assistance to Opposition parties in direct proportion to the extent to which those parties abuse the time of the House, abuse, therefore, the taxpayer, and abuse their general privileges? Does he further agree——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If there is a debate, the hon. Gentleman may be able to make the point. It is legitimate to ask whether the motion is amendable.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that any amendment—if he says that that is possible—would reflect the probity of the Opposition Chief Whip in the amount of money that the Labour party gets?

Mr. Wakeham: I hope to table the motion for debate later today. My understanding is that it will be amendable, but whether any amendments are acceptable and are called will be a matter for you, Mr. Speaker. I have to disappoint my hon. Friend. It is a Government motion and I shall be voting for it.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Is the Leader of the House aware that when I met Sir Peter Imbert, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, this morning I had to report that Her Majesty's loyal Opposition had been the victim of the crime of attempted blackmail yesterday and that the principal suspects were the Prime Minister, the Patronage Secretary and the Leader of the House himself? Will the Leader of the House give us an assurance that all three suspects will co-operate with the police in their inquiries?

Mr. Wakeham: I am surprised that the commissioner did not arrest the hon. Gentleman for giving misleading information to the police.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Has my right hon. Friend noted early-day motion 1228 in the names of three *Militant* readers and 15 other rising members of the Labour party, which calls for

"the judicial rehabilitation of Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek and Pyatakov, . . . Leon Trotsky, Leon Sedov"?

[That this House, in the light of the special conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in one week's time, and of the judicial rehabilitation of Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek and Pyatakov, demands that the Russian Government goes further and gives complete rehabilitation to Leon Trotsky, Leon Sedov the chief defendants in the Moscow frame-up trials, and all those innocent people murdered by the Stalin regime.]

Does my right hon. Friend consider it relevant to arrange a debate on a matter so important to the future of the British people?

Mr. Wakeham: I regret that I shall not be able to find time for a debate on that subject in the near future. The Government understand the views expressed in the motion. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has repeatedly made clear, we welcome Mr. Gorbachev's policies of reform, which include a more honest appraisal of Soviet history and Stalin's place in it.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange an early debate on city technology colleges, particularly as the Secretary of State is in Teesside today announcing such a college for Teesside, where £4·5 million of Government money is to be spent on one CTC compared with £3·6 million for capital improvements for the 238 schools in the rest of Cleveland?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that it is an important subject. I should like to find time for a debate, but I cannot promise it in the near future.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May we have a ring constructed here?

Mr. Speaker: This is a ring.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The European Court of Justice is to announce on Tuesday, 21 June its decision on whether the Government should be obliged to levy VAT on electricity, gas, water and sewerage for industry and commerce and for all new industrial and commercial buildings. Can my right hon. Friend say whether there will be a Government statement, in view of the importance of this issue to the constitution and to the Budget deficit?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's concern. I must wait until I have seen the judgment. I shall then see my right hon. Friend and find out whether he thinks a statement would be appropriate.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Can the Leader of the House tell us when the Chairman of the Committee of Selection will be in a position to add the names of Conservative Members to the names already on the Order Paper for the Scottish Select Committee? If he cannot tell us when his hon. Friend will be in a position to do that, can he arrange for a debate on the failure to have a Scottish Select Committee? Would he be prepared to give money to those Opposition Members who are willing to form a Select Committee in the absence of one appointed by the House?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot be forthcoming on the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question. With regard to the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, regrettably the proposal that I put to the Opposition parties for the establishment of the Select Committee did not prove acceptable to them. I hope to see the Chairman of the Committee of Selection shortly to discuss this. It would be helpful to have the discussion before deciding how best to proceed. I can confirm that there will be an opportunity for a debate on the setting up of the Committee.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): My right hon. Friend will recall that, on the occasion of the last perturbation in the smooth running of the usual channels, I invited him to extend the timetabling procedure to major Bills. He said then that he would prefer to soldier on with the present system. As the present system seems to have foundered because Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen cannot deliver a deal, even if they want to do so, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the debate that he has listed for Monday week on timetabling can be extended to cover other business of the House should the need arise?

Mr. Wakeham: The usual channels existed long before my hon. Friend and I came into the House, and I suspect that they will exist long after we have gone into history. They go through difficult stages from time to time. The best that all men of good will can do is try to sort them out.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Leader of the House aware that this is not the first time that threats and blackmail have been used about the Short money, as happened yesterday when he and others were using such threats? Is he aware that on the night the Firearms Bill went through, which the Government had guillotined and on which some of us played a part in forcing 100-odd Tory Members to stay so that the Government would get the Bill, in front of witnesses one of his mates told our people in the Whips Office that if they did not call off their rebellion——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is supposed to be about the business for next week.

Mr. Skinner: We want to debate the whole issue of blackmail.

Is the Leader of the House aware that the Whips were threatened to keep out of the Chamber because we were forcing the Government to do their job properly? It is high time the Government stopped the blackmail. They have blackmailed the nation and they must stop doing it here.

Mr. Wakeham: As yesterday's example of the evil to which the hon. Gentleman refers was a completely wrong analysis of the position, with absolutely untrue allegations being made, I believe that the other one is just as likely to be wrong, and I shall not pursue the matter further with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is my right hon. Friend aware that on Bastille day the Secretary of State for Transport will be publishing a report presented to him by British Rail about the need for improved rail links to the Channel tunnel? Is he further aware that this has wide implications for public transport policy in and around London and far beyond to the regions? In view of the increasing interest in the subject, will he please arrange a debate on the report as soon as it is available?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that it is an important subject and will be an important part of the success of the Channel tunnel. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to decide how best to proceed.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May we have a debate next week on the state of relations between the business managers of both parties? May I tell the Leader of the House that before he moved the Adjournment motion yesterday I was approached by a Tory Whip and was discreetly threatened, as a Labour Whip on the Housing Bill, that if we did not finish, all the things that we subsequently heard about Short money and the guillotining of future legislation would probably happen? I was also told that assurances had been given in writing. The Leader of the House has been gravely misled by the Chief Whip of his party. If there is evidence in writing, he should put up or shut up.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman bobs in and out of his Whips Office so fast that I cannot be sure whether he is a Whip at the moment. I do not recognise him as an accurate analyst of the situation.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): May we have a debate soon on Church relations, so that light may be thrown on the way in which the Archbishop of Canterbury, so much the leader of the Church militant when criticising Government measures, appears to be the head of the Church supine when visiting Moscow this week, having refused to meet the courageous Russian Orthodox clergy, who have been persecuted and imprisoned for their beliefs, on the grounds that it might irritate his generous hosts and a complacent hierarchy in the Soviet Union?

Mr. Wakeham: As my hon. Friend will have noted, I have announced a motion on the Church of England (Ecumenical Relations) Measure for debate on Monday 27 June. The Measure regularises relations at a local level between the Church of England and churches of other denominations. I should have thought that my hon. Friend, with his customary skill, would be able to make his points in that debate.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): I notice that six hours have been set down for private business next week. I accept that there are many other matters to discuss as well as private business, but is it possible to reduce the time allowed for private business to three hours and have a debate on the Third world during the other three hours? It is a long time since we debated that issue. If the right hon. Gentleman cannot allow that time, will he assure us that we will have a debate on the Third world before the recess starts in August?

Mr. Wakeham: That is a good suggestion, and I wish that I could fit it in. Unfortunately, the time for private business is not in my hands, but is entirely a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means, who has nominated that business for next week.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Bristol city council is the only local authority that intends to petition against an urban development corporation? This will cost the hard-pressed ratepayers some £140,000, delay the start by up to nine months, deny 5,000 man-years of work to an area of high unemployment, stop 3,000 houses being built and reduce the leisure facilities available in that hard-pressed area. Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on this Labour authority, which does little for Bristol and little for the area that I represent?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend has raised very important issues. I should like to find time for a debate but, unfortunately, I cannot next week. I wonder whether my hon. Friend might like to try his luck with an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): In view of the shambles of the television presentation on Tuesday morning of the types of lighting and cameras that may be introduced, would it not be a wise idea for more hon. Members to see the "plans"—if one can use such a term —for this extraordinary innovation, instead of having them shown just to a few members of the Committee and those of us who thought that we should keep an eye on the proceedings?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that most hon. Members have no idea that there are four lighting options? One, a long green lamp, makes the House look like a fish tank. Another option is to close off daylight permanently from the House, so there would be bricked up windows with lights behind them. The third and fourth options are lights so intense that many of us who looked across the chamber from the Back Bench saw only an orange blur —*[Interruption.]* There were some less attractive colours as well. There was extreme reluctance to show how far the cameras would hang down. Those of us who volunteered to stand and demonstrate with the mock-ups were not allowed to do so.

I am serious about this matter. It will be an outrage if these things are put up without most hon. Members knowing the implications. It is essential that this matter be debated. Finally, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has had a long run.

Mr. Faulds: It is a very important matter.

Mr. Speaker: One short sentence, then.

Mr. Faulds: One short sentence. As an example of how the Chamber will be treated by the television cameras, did the Leader of the House last night see "Newsnight", in which 29 hours of serious debate, with some excellent contributions by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)——

Mr. Speaker: Order. These matters would be best raised in a debate. That is more than one short sentence. I have been very generous.

Mr. Faulds: You will be the sufferer, Sir.

Mr. Wakeham: At the demonstration in the morning, I took it that the hon. Gentleman said that his difficulties with his sight and other physical problems were a result of advancing years. I do not accept for one moment that the demonstration was a shambles, but I recognise that the hon. Member contributed to efforts in that direction throughout most of the proceedings. I do not think that he succeeded.

I thought that the demonstration, which had been advertised in the all-party Whip and announced in the House in response to a question to me by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), was, in spite of the hon. Gentleman's efforts, a reasonable success in giving the Select Committee some view of the alternatives. The Select Committee will discharge the obligation put upon it by the House of Commons and will produce a report, which it will be for the House of Commons to consider.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I do not mind being an Orange blob on this side of the Chamber.

Last week I raised a serious matter about a debate on security in Northern Ireland. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman, with his experience, will agree that a statement is not adequate to deal with this important matter. There is grave alarm in the Province that representatives have not had an opportunity to put their views to the House. There is more alarm when we see that a man who is charged with the killing of one of the corporals has been given parole, whereas ordinary civilian prisoners cannot get parole on humanitarian grounds. Surely the Leader of the House should seek, at least before the summer recess, to have a debate in the House on this important matter.

Mr. Wakeham: I am grateful to the hon. Member for what he said about me personally and I recognise the strong feelings on the need for a debate. I thought that you were generous, Mr. Speaker, in the time that you allowed for the statement. I appreciate that that is not a substitute for a debate. I cannot promise an early debate, but I shall bear the hon. Member's strong representations in mind.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Will the Leader of the House seriously consider having a debate on football hooliganism? We keep getting reports which contain the information that the matter has been discussed at No. 10. They are always discussed at No. 10. What does the Prime Minister know about football? The problem gets worse and worse. We need a debate so that people can express their views, and we might then get somewhere. If we were to involve people such as Brian Clough, who is a disciplinarian on and off the field, we might get somewhere.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not for one minute accept the hon. Gentleman's comment about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who is taking these matters extremely seriously and spending much time trying to deal with these difficult problems. I recognise the hon. Gentleman's request for a debate on the subject. I cannot promise him an immediate debate, but I shall certainly bear the matter in mind.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My right hon. Friend will probably have noted that on Monday evening there is to be an Adjournment debate on council estates and security patrols. This was the beginning of the argument that many of these football hooligans learn their basic laws in gangs on council estates. We must examine this matter still further. The Home Office gave me a fairly good reply, and I should have thought that a national policy on security——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must ask for a debate, not debate the subject now.

Mr. Hill: I ask my right hon. Friend to look into the proposition that we have a debate on national policy for security, not only on council estates, but on private estates too.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's concern in this matter, and I know that it is shared by a number of our hon. Friends, but I cannot promise him an early debate on the subject.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the Leader of the House consider having a debate on the Channel tunnel proposal as it affects through trains from Europe to the north? As there have been problems with British Rail and Customs and Excise, is it not time that we cleared the matter up, because it is very important to the regeneration and economic well being of the north?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that it is an important matter. I have undertaken to refer it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, and that is the next stage.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that British Shipbuilders is being prevented from bidding for a new order from Cuba—on which the jobs of thousands of my constituents depend —by the Department of Trade and Industry, which has to give its approval to the intervention fund allowance? The deadline expires shortly, after which time the work will go to one of our rivals. Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry to make a statement and tell us exactly why he is preventing British Shipbuilders from going ahead with the bid?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. and learned Friend, and if he feels that it is appropriate to make a statement or write to the hon. Gentleman, I am sure that he will do so.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Is the Leader of the House aware that the Prime Minister recently assured us that unemployment in the Dearne valley area of south

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

Yorkshire was falling, when it is not? She also assured us that we were receiving special priority in the urban development programme, when in reality we are getting less than areas with half the unemployment and a third of the population. Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that the Prime Minister suggested that we were being greatly helped by derelict land grants, when the changes in the arrangements for such grants mean that the outlook is very grim indeed? May we therefore have a debate on the plight of necessitous areas in England, such us ours? I hope that the Prime Minister will condescend to join in a debate on that matter, even though she does not speak on anything else.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not for a moment accept the allegations made by the hon. Gentleman about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will have noted the substantially improved unemployment figures announced today, which should be welcomed by both sides of the House.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the Leader of the House consider having a debate at some time on the abuse of spending public funds on television advertising campaigns run by various Government Departments? Such campaigns are increasingly widely commented upon across the political spectrum as being nothing more than Conservative party advertising in disguise. In particular, will he address himself to reports that the Government are to spend £1 million on television advertising in an attempt to promote the poll tax? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that that is pure political propaganda rather than a proper use of public funds? Does he agree also that, in the interests of the democratic process, that practice must stop, and will he allow the House to debate it so that we may discuss the concept and the underlying principle?

Mr. Wakeham: There are clear rules about the purposes for which public money can be spent by the Government, and those purposes have to be in support of the laws of the land, not in support of policies before the House. Those rules are scrupulously obeyed by this Government, as I believe they were by previous Governments. I wish that I could say the same about some local authorities.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House tell us whether the promise to publish a White Paper on the Official Secrets Act this month is to be honoured? If it is, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that its publication would provide a good opportunity for the Prime Minister to do what she likes doing least, making a major speech in the House? Does he also agree that it would provide the right hon. Lady with an opportunity to announce an inquiry into the activities of the security services and to discuss the urgent need for democratic accountability in the security services? She would disappoint the authors of the 10 books that are being written about the security services, but please the taxpayer, if she announced that she has no plans to ban those books.

Mr. Wakeham: I shall not answer the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question. Both the Home Secretary and I have made certain statements at the Dispatch Box about the publication of a White Paper and about a debate, and I stand by those statements.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): When considering the proposed guillotine motion on the Housing Bill on Monday week, will the Leader of the House bear in mind that 58 groups of amendments have already been selected, including 73 Government amendments and new clauses? Whatever view the right hon. Gentleman takes of events so far, it is important that parts IV and V of the Bill and the new clauses are given adequate time for debate.

Will he ensure that the Government motion on the air pollution order which we should have debated last night, is reinstated at an early opportunity?

Finally, has the Leader of the House seen early-day motions 1098 and 1201?

[That this House welcomes the recent Law Lords decision in the case of Hayward v. Cammell Laird Shipbuilders Ltd, affirming the principle of equal pay for work of equal value; believes that such victories are important to the creation of a more just and equal society for all people; and further calls upon Her Majesty's Government to act to eliminate sexual discrimination in the workplace.]

[That this House notes with concern the conclusions of the Policy Studies Institute report revealing the barriers to the advancement of women doctors within the medical profession; decries the use of patronage through the old boy network to discriminate against women; agrees that the waste of such talent can only be harmful to the profession and to medical services as a whole; and calls on the Government to act immediately with the profession to stop this discrimination and ensure equal opportunity in the interests of the medical profession and its patients.]

The early-day motions deal with equal opportunities for women and the report of the Equal Opportunities Commission this week showing that the pay of women in Britain is now 26 per cent. behind that of their male colleagues—the highest in 10 years. The figure in Scotland is 28 per cent. May we have an early debate on the poor state of equal opportunities for women in this country?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall announce in due course how we propose to deal with the orders lost last night. I shall table the timetable motion for the Housing Bill as early as I can next week—certainly by the middle of the week. The hon. Gentleman will have to wait until then to find out its terms, but I shall bear in mind his remarks. He must bear in mind the amount of time that we have already spent on the Bill, but I take his point.

The hon. Gentleman asked about equal pay for work of equal value, which is dealt with in early-day motion 1098. The Government monitor closely the work of the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts to see whether they are working fairly and effectively. We shall continue to do so in the light of the important decision to which the hon. Gentleman referred and other test cases still before the courts.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): May we have a debate on the need to supply Government money to electrify British Rail's east midlands line? That is particularly important given the development of the Channel tunnel and the electrification of the east coast route, which will lead to competition with the east

midlands area, which could lead to closures in the area and to the economic decline of my constituency and many others.

Mr. Wakeham: As the hon. Gentleman knows, InterCity services do not receive grants, so there is no question of any investment grant. British Rail must decide its own investment priorities. The Government should not ask it to undertake investments against its commercial judgment.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate on Smith houses, those defective homes built in the 1950s, which councils such as Leicester city council are having to buy back from people who bought them in that defective condition? Leicester city council applied, not for a grant, but to borrow £1·7 million. The Government have provided nothing. They have refused to allow the council any such borrowing, and it is believed to be the only council——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman can deploy that case if there is a debate. Now, he should ask whether there is to be a debate.

Mr. Janner: May I ask when we are to have a debate on this matter, which is worrying many people in many parts of the country?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise a debate, but the hon. and learned Gentleman may note that we have Environment questions on Wednesday. He might question the Secretary of State then if he gets the chance.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Would it be a good idea to have a debate next week on trusting one another in the House? That would enable us to discuss early-day motions 228, 253, 272, 273, 286, 622, 627, 1142 and 1156.

[That this House notes in the book, Campaign, by Rodney Tyler, the Selling of the Prime Minister: from behind the doors of Downing Street and Conservative Central Office—A unique inside account of the Battle for Power that the author on page 1, chapter 1, paragraph 1, sentence 1, states 'It was an extraordinary turnaround in fortunes from the moment on 27th January 1986 when Mrs. Thatcher secretly confided to a close associate that she might have to resign . . .' and on page 3 that 'On the eve of the crucial Westland debate she herself felt shaky enough to doubt her future' though some around her later sought to dismiss this as late evening anxieties of the sort that had disappeared the following morning. It is certainly true that if Leon Brittan had chosen to, he could have brought her to the brink of downfall, by naming the real culprits inside Number 10. Instead, he chose to remain silent', and calls on the Prime Minister to give a full account of what transpired between 3rd January and 27th January 1986, at Number 10 Downing Street, in relation to the selectively leaked Law Office's letter concerning the Westland Affair.]

[That this House notes that the Member for Aldershot on page 136 of his book Heseltine: the unauthorised Biography, states in relation to the Westland Affair that 'John Wakeham issued an order of the day which contained the trite, if effective message, that it was time for all good men to come to the aid of the party. We did and calls on the Leader of the House, The Right Honourable Member for South Colchester and Maldon, to explain when he first knew the role of the then Trade and Industry Secretary, The Right Honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, in the matter of the disclosure of a selectively leaked Law Officer's letter.]

[That this House notes that in his book Mrs. Thatcher's Revolution, published this week by Jonathan Cape and Co., Mr. Peter Jenkins writes, on page 200 'Brittan himself refused to enlighten the Select Committee on any point of substance. However, he is reputed to have told close friends subsequently that not only has she known perfectly well what had happened but that, on the day following the leak, had expressed her satisfaction to him at the way things had been handled. However at that time, the downfall of Heseltine had not been achieved. . . . He (Mr. Brittan) might point the finger at her (Mrs. Thatcher). Potentially he now had the power to destroy her'; and calls on the Prime Minister to give the House a full account of her conversations with the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Right honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, over the period from 3rd January and 27th January 1986, in relation to the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter concerning the Westland Affair.]

[That this House notes that in The Thatcher Years—A decade of Revolution in British Politics, published by BBC Books, Mr. John Cole, on page 170, considering the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter in the Westland Affair, writes 'why did he (Sir Robert Armstrong) not give her a quick interim report when he discovered that the leak was an inside job, authorised by her office? Why did Leon Brittan not tell her? Or the private secretary concerned? Or his chief, who sits in the same room? Or her press secretary? And why did she never ask?'; and calls on the Prime Minister to inform the House of the answers to these questions.]

[That this House notes that, in the book 'Not with Honour—The Inside Story of the Westland Scandal', on page 142, Magnus Linklater and David Leigh write that 'Instead, following Haver's complaint, she spoke privately to Brittan about the leak. Although this is something the Prime Minister has failed to disclose, to widespread disbelief, the evidence comes from an authoritative source, who told us: "The Prime Minister knew about the leak. She was pleased it had been done. There was a meeting between Brittan and her after the complaint from Mayhew. Only the two of them were present . . . Brittan assumed she knew of [the leak's] origins. You must draw your own conclusions." One of Brittan's friends adds, "Nobody thought it was a problem. The complaints were out of the public domain and any inquiry was expected to be a formality. Leon wasn't worried at all about it."'; and calls on the Prime Minister to give a full account to the House of the meeting between herself and Right honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, referred to therein.]

[That this House notes that in an article by Mr. Paul Foot in the Daily Mirror, dated 28th January, a Ministry of Defence official, Mr. Paul Newbegin, is quoted as having admitted witnessing the shredding and incinerating of the log book of HMS 'Conqueror'; is concerned that if this statement is true, the Ministry of Defence is guilty of having established an entirely bogus investigation into the disappearance of the log book when the facts of its deliberate destruction were already known; further notes the parallel between this case and that of the leaked Solicitor General's letter in the Westland Affair, when a similar investigation was launched despite the availability in advance of all the salient facts; and calls upon the Secretary of State for

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

Defence to set up an immediate inquiry with the genuine purpose of furnishing Parliament with a full explanation of this bizarre series of events.]

[That this House calls for a debate on the conduct of honourable and right honourable Members of the House, considering the position of back bench members who resort to unparliamentary language and Heads of Government who misuse Law Officer's letters and then display lack of candour about what they have done.]

[That this House notes that the Guardian of Friday 20th May carried an article entitled 'Thatcher's boy in a cleft stick', which stated that according to Foreign Office sources 'Mr Charles Powell wants Washington or Paris nothing less, but he's not going to get either of them', and that Mr. Powell had been offered and turned down the post of Ambassador in Stockholm, and that the article added 'Powell has another string to his bow: he knows where the bodies are buried in the Westland Affair. He escaped appearing before a Select Committee, but not their sharpest criticism for his orchestrating rôle in the leaking of a letter from the then Solicitor General, which ultimately resulted in the then Secretary of State for Defence's resignation'; expresses its concern that knowledge of wrong-doing by the Prime Minister is alleged to put Mr. Powell in a position to obtain an Embassy more senior than his status warrants; asserts that this is not in keeping with the high moral ground claimed by the Prime Minister; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to make a statement.]

[That this House calls on Her Majesty's Government to set up an inquiry into the SAS operation in Gibraltar, to address itself to the questions as to whether the Joint Intelligence Staff, through its current intelligence groups, was responsible for preparing assessments of the situation in Spain and Gibraltar prior to the shooting, if so, as to how many assessments were made and on what days, as to whether the Joint Intelligence Committee, in any form, considered these or other assessments or reports on the matter, if so, as to when it did so and whether it was as a full committee, a sub-committee or by the chairman alone, as to to whom advice was offered by the Joint Intelligence Committee, as to whether the Permanent Secretaries' Committee on the Intelligence Services was involved in considering or formulating assessments or advice, and, if so, on what occasions, as to on what occasions advice or assessments were offered to the Prime Minister by the Permanent Secretaries' Committee on the Intelligence Services, the Joint Intelligence Committee, MI5 or Sir Colin Figures, as to who, or which committee, proposed the use of the SAS, as to whether the SAS was ordered to operate in Gibraltar under pre-existing rules of engagements, or as to whether specific Rules of Engagement were drawn up, as to on what occasions, in the 72 hours prior to the shooting, the Prime Minister was appraised of the sequence of events in Gibraltar, and on what occasions, over the same period, she issued instructions or agreed actions in relation to the events, and as to what consultation she undertook with the Overseas Policy and Defence Committee in the Cabinet.]

On the radio this morning—and he has said this in the House—the Leader of the House eloquently declared that it was necessary to have undertakings and understanding for the usual channels to work and that that depended on trust. Is it not perhaps equally true that the work of the House depends on our ability to trust the word of the most senior Ministers? That brings us back to where the rot started——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It does, indeed, bring us back to business questions.

Mr. Wakeham: It seems that I am a trusting person and the hon. Gentleman is not.

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), further considered.

New Clause 71

CROWN COURT PROCEEDINGS—ORDERS RESTRICTING OR PREVENTING REPORTS OR RESTRICTING PUBLIC ACCESS

'(1) A person aggrieved may appeal to the Court of Appeal, if that court grants leave, against—

(a) an order under section 4 or 11 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981 made in relation to a trial on indictment;

(b) any order restricting the access of the public to the whole or any part of a trial on indictment or to any proceedings ancillary to such a trial; and

(c) any order restricting the publication of any report of the whole or any part of a trial on indictment or any such ancillary proceedings,

and the decision of the Court of Appeal shall be final.

(2) Subject to Rules of Court, the jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal under this section shall be exercised by the criminal division of the Court, and references to the Court of Appeal in this section shall be construed as references to that division.

(3) On an application for leave to appeal under this section a judge shall have power to give such directions as appear to him to be appropriate and, without prejudice to the generality of this subsection, power—

(a) to order the production in court of any transcript or note of proceedings or other document;

(b) to give directions as to persons who are to be parties to the appeal or who may be parties to it if they wish and as to service of documents on any person;

and the Court of Appeal shall have the same powers as the single judge.

( ) Subject to Rules of Court made by virtue of subsection (6) below, any party to an appeal under this section may give evidence before the Court of Appeal orally or in writing.

(5) On the hearing of an appeal under this section the Court of Appeal shall have power—

(a) to stay any proceedings in any other court until after the appeal is disposed of;

(b) to confirm, reverse or vary the order complained of; and

(c) to make such order as to costs as it thinks fit.

(6) Without prejudice to the generality of section 84 of the Supreme Court Act 1981, Rules of Court may make in relation to trials satisfying specified conditions special provision as to the practice and procedure to be followed in relation to hearings in camera and appeals from orders for such hearings and may in particular, but without prejudice to the generality of this subsection, provide that subsection (4) above shall not have effect.

(7) In the application of this section to Northern Ireland—

(a) subsection (2) shall be omitted; and

(b) the reference in subsection (6) to section 84 of the Supreme Court Act 1981 shall be construed as a reference to sections 52 and 55 of the Judicature (Northern Ireland) Act 1978.'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

5.39 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 9, 10, 274, 243 and 11.

The Solicitor-General: This new clause and these amendments deal with the need identified in Committee here and in another place to provide a review of an appeals mechanism in relation to orders by the court which either restrict or prevent reports of Crown court proceedings under section 4 and 11 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981 or orders which restrict public access to the courts. As the House knows, there have been complaints that these powers have on occasions been misused and that currently no remedy exists, contrary, among other things, to our obligations under the European convention on human rights.

In Committee, the proposal provided merely for an opportunity for judicial review by means of an application for an order of certiorari in relation to orders under the Contempt of Court Act 1981, not for orders for hearings in camera. We promised to look again at this matter and to seek to provide a comprehensive and effective appeals mechanism which would meet our obligations under the European convention to provide a remedy on both these classes of orders. Several points of difficulty arise in relation to this matter, which explains why we have not come forward earlier with these proposals, but I am satisfied that the close attention that we have now given to the matter means that we have the right answer.

The major differences between the form of remedy now proposed and the one already in the Bill lie in its scope and form. The new clause will allow challenges to any order which restricts reporting of Crown court proceedings as well as any order which restricts access to those proceedings. Therefore, any aggrieved person—notably the press—can challenge the Contempt of Court Act orders, orders under section 39 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, which prohibit the identification of children involved in trials concerning decency or morality, and orders for hearings in camera. The remedy will be available only against an order, not against a general statutory prohibition or a procedure which is not activated by a specific order of the court. In particular—this is obviously right—the procedure will not be available to challenge the anonymity of rape victims under section 4 of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1976.

The other major change is that, instead of providing for a judicial review, the new clause will establish a statutory right to appeal to the Court of Appeal criminal division in place of judicial review. That is wholly appropriate. First, the problems that we are meeting have arisen in the Crown court in the course of criminal trials and it is appropriate that appeals should be heard by judges who are familiar with the context in which the grounds for appeal arise. Secondly, the use of an appeal rather than a judicial review removes the possibility of future arguments on points of jurisdictional theory. There may be arguments now about how far a court of law can make an error of law within jurisdiction without being subject to judicial review. Such difficulties do not arise on an appeal.

The House will see from subsection (1) of the new clause that the appeal will be subject to a requirement of leave. That is standard in the criminal division and may work to an appellant's advantage. Leave must be sought from the Court of Appeal rather than from the Crown court judge. The Court of Appeal's decision will be final. That is to ensure that any possible disruption to the Crown court is minimised. The Court of Appeal criminal division can deal with these appeals promptly. The same cannot be said of appeals to the House of Lords, and we have looked

[The Solicitor-General]

into that extremely carefully. In fairness to the accused and generally to the advantage of the administration of justice, we cannot risk delaying a criminal trial for long periods pending a second appeal.

Subsections (2) and (3) deal with the allocation of this business to the criminal division and provide that a criminal judge will decide questions of leave, as is usually the case, with the application for leave being renewable before a full Court of Appeal, should leave be refused.

Subsections (4), (5) and (6) give the criminal division new powers, which are important. These appeals will be structured like civil applications, as they are concerned with the assertion of rights rather than the punishment of offences. For this reason the criminal division must have a small civil code, giving it appropriate power to deal with these appeals. The single judge must have power to order that documents, particularly any transcripts of an application for a hearing in camera, should be produced to the media so that they can pursue their remedy. Further —this is an important point—he must have power to guide or determine who should be a party to the appeal and how they should be served with process.

To illustrate the importance of that, the single judge may consider it impossible for an appeal to be determined unless a witness who has benefited from the order complained of this before the court. If that witness has given or is to give evidence in camera, the press may not even know his name, let alone his address for service. Directions from the single judge, given at the leave stage, can solve these procedural problems. Subsection (4) allows for these directions to be given.

The full Court of Appeal will also need new powers as the criminal division will be asked to deal with business other than appeals against conviction or sentence. Subsection (6) gives it powers to confirm, reverse or vary decisions, or to make orders as to costs. Subsection (6) also empowers the Court of Appeal to stay other proceedings —in effect, the Crown court trial—pending an appeal. That step should be avoided wherever possible in the interests of justice. However, there may well be cases where it would be manifestly unjust to allow the Crown court trial to continue before the appeal is resolved. Therefore, it is proper to allow judges of the Court of Appeal power to do what is best in each individual case.

Subsection (5) gives the appellants the right to adduce evidence before the Court of Appeal. That is important, as the likely appellants, who are the press, will not have had any prior opportunity to put their case.

That summarises the parts of the new clause which will shape the general nature of this procedure. Rules of court will spell out specific steps. Basically, the press will launch an appeal within a short time limit of about seven days and seek leave from a single judge. The judge may grant leave immediately on seeing the papers or the press may seek an appointment to ask for the production of transcripts or, for example, directions for substituted service. If leave is granted, the appeal will be argued before a full court in the usual way. Appointments will be given as promptly as possible, and it is intended that rules of court will give appellants an express right to apply for the procedure to be expedited.

The House will see that subsection (7) makes provision for a special procedure. I should perhaps say an "exceptional" procedure, because the vast majority and possibly all the appeals brought under this new provision will follow the procedure just outlined. However, a small sub-class of cases heard in camera will involve information of high sensitivity. For example, matters of national security may arise or information may be brought out which will identify and hence put at risk a member of the security forces. The Government must protect information such as this, and any prosecutor whose evidence includes such information must be able to establish conclusively before leading any evidence that his case will be heard in camera. Orders for hearings in camera will be open to challenge in such cases, but the form of appeal will be private.

The prosecution will give public notice of an intention to apply for the hearing to be held in camera. That will be given before the start of the trial so that the time gap between public notice and the trial corresponds to the time limit for appeal. That will allow the press to consider whether it wishes to challenge the order, if it is made. The prosecution will apply for the hearing to be in camera at the very start of the criminal trial and will seek an adjournment until the next day. The press will thus have the rest of that first day in which to file and serve notice of appeal. If the press appeals, the whole process will be conducted by the Court of Appeal in private. Under that procedure an appellant will not have to specify ground for appeal, which is, of course, an advantage to the appellant, but he will not be entitled to any information to assist in the conduct of his appeal, for reasons which are self-evident, nor will he appear before the court.

The Court of Appeal, both at the leave stage and when considering the substantive appeal, will review the papers that were before the Crown court judge and any available transcripts and will inform the appellant of its decision. In that way, highly sensitive information will be protected, the press will have a remedy and we will avoid putting the prosecutor in an impossible position, as he will not have to lead any evidence until he has established that there will be no appeal or knows its result.

As I have said, no one should think that this exceptional procedure will form a large part of the appeal procedure. It is designed primarily to protect information concerning national security. It may be that the press will recognise the existence of national security issues and decline to appeal in those cases, in which case the special procedure will never be used. In any case, it will be rare for the prosecution to resort to that system.

Almost all appeals brought under this clause will concern ordinary criminal trials, the sort of trials in which it has been suggested that the court's powers have been misused in the past, and so will be determined after a full hearing in the usual way. It is, however, necessary and responsible to make provision for those new exceptional cases where our national security may be at risk.

The remainder of the new clause makes some necessary adaptations to the clause and consequential amendments to facilitate its application to Northern Ireland, together with consequential amendments to the long title.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): We begin this debate on a less controversial note than in some of the exchanges that have occurred in the House over the past few days.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Speak for yourself.

Mr. Archer: I am sincere about that, even if I do not carry all my hon. Friends with me.

We are grateful to the Solicitor-General for having responded to our representations, for the thought that he and the Lord Chancellor have obviously given to the problem and for the clear way in which he has expounded the proposals. I appreciate the difficulties when notes are passed to him, but perhaps I could have his full attention. I am sure that he will appreciate that a great deal of what he said is new to us and that we will need a little time to consider some of these matters because they are difficult matters and, as he said, they seek to strike a balance. In some circumstances, I might have been content to leave the matter there, but as today the House is not under the same time constraints as on some other occasions, he will forgive me if I press him a little and perhaps add a few of my own reflections.

I recollect that when I, the Solicitor-General and my right hon. and learned Friend for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) served on the Standing Committee on the Contempt of Court Act 1981, one matter, on which I am sure we were all agreed, was that normally the course of justice should be open. Unless there are good reasons to the contrary, the public have a right to know what is going on. That is healthy for the courts, for the judicial service, for the legal profession and certainly for those who have occasion to litigate there.

That is a principle which Opposition Members have invoked from time to time and will no doubt continue to do so, but it has emerged, particularly over the past few years, that some matters may be mentioned in court which cannot be made public because it would not be in the public interest to disclose them. Certainly, it would be oppressive to some individuals if there were no power to inhibit them, so I accept that judges must have that power.

We are indebted to the Guild of British Newspaper Editors and to the National Council for Civil Liberties for a recent survey in which they inquired of 200 newspaper editors in England and Wales about secrecy orders of various kinds that were made in their local courts. The questionnaire related to about 70 Crown courts. They discovered, for example, that in 15 courts editors had experienced use of the common law power, which we discussed in Committee and which had been rather overlooked by the Government in the early stages of the Bill.

The survey's conclusions were quite interesting. Its first conclusion commented on the extent to which Crown courts depart from the open justice principle. Its second conclusion referred to the wide use made of postponement orders. I agree with the comment muttered by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) that a postponement order can mean death for a newspaper story. It is no use reporting on Wednesday something that happened on Monday morning. There was a particular problem about that and about the use of section 39 orders under the Children and Young Persons Act 1969.

The survey came to what I thought was a surprising conclusion: that, given the number of restriction orders, it is inevitable that some appear to be inappropriate and even unlawful. I am sure that the survey was trying to be fair, but I do not accept that it is inevitable that judges will sometimes make such orders without considering whether they are lawful.

The survey also concluded that the absence of an official record of restriction orders makes it difficult to keep the orders under review. Perhaps the Solicitor-General will tell us what consideration has been given to some form of official record of restriction orders so that we know how many have been made, where they have been made and the general pattern of when and how they have been made.

The survey further concluded that there is a noticeable lack of consistency between regions in the use of restriction orders. Judges are human and justice is not administered by computer, so it is inevitable that there will not be total consistency, but there should be some attempt to achieve consistency in that matter.

The Solicitor-General mentioned that such matters will now be heard by the criminal division of the Court of Appeal, where we hope to obtain some guidance on those matters. But it may not be too much to ask also for occasional judicial conferences about the use of such orders of the kind which now exist to introduce consistency into sentencing. The survey concluded finally that there is a lack of uniformity in the manner by which courts make known the existence of restriction orders.

We should devote attention to all those matters, as they are not all met by the new clause. Mr. Keith Parker, the current president of the Guild of Newspaper Editors and editor of the Wolverhampton *Express and Star*, which you, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister of State and I hold close to our hearts, made a number of cogent comments. He said that it simply was not good enough for the Government to maintain that Crown court judges never made unlawful orders. Clearly, the Government no longer maintain that, and, to that extent, we have all relaxed.

I want to add this point as a measure of balance, and I can do this in the case of Mr. Parker simply because he and I know each other so well. It is not only judges who occasionally get these things wrong. Sometimes newspapers are not beyond criticism in the way in which they report current legal proceedings. I remember a distinguished predecessor of Mr. Parker in both the offices that Mr. Parker now holds. Mr. Clem Jones, whom we all held in great affection, in trying to establish the responsibility shown by local newspapers in reporting legal proceedings, once induced his wife, Dr. Marjorie Jones, to conduct a survey on how that had been done. If I remember correctly, that survey assisted her to gain her doctorate. She was kind enough to send me a copy of her book. Her report was a devastating indictment of the way in which many local newspapers reported legal proceedings.

6 pm

The survey showed that the prospect of proceedings being reported has very little to do with factors such as the public interest in their being known or the public thirst for serious information about what happened in those proceedings. Rather, they are reported because people were interested in the identity of people involved, whether they related to royalty, whether they were physically attractive, information about their ages and matters of that kind. I am sure that Mr. Parker will forgive me if I emphasise what the Solicitor-General properly said—that there is a genuine balance to be maintained.

As I have said, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon and I served together in Committee on the Contempt of Court Act 1981. At that time we had not considered carefully some of the problems because

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none of us believed that they existed. If I recall correctly, it emerged while the Committee was sitting that such problems did exist. There was a notorious blackmail case in which an attempt by the judge to restrict publication of the names of the complainants was disregarded, with devastating consequences for the complainants. That was a serious matter, in which the press behaved irresponsibly. Unhappily, that case emerged rather too late to be considered by the Phillimore committee which led to the Contempt of Court Act 1981. The case arose just in time for sections 4 and 11 to be added to the 1981 Act, but not early enough for us to reflect on the implications as carefully as we would have done had we had a little more time.

We hoped that the problem would be dealt with, as the Solicitor-General said, by the procedure of judicial review. However, the House will recall that in the Ponting trial it was proposed that there should be a daily television programme keeping the public abreast of the course of the trial, which would take the somewhat dramatic form of a representation of the trial with actors, whom I am certain would have been paid-up members of Equity, taking the parts of the various characters in the trial.

An order was made by the judge under section 4 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981 prohibiting the showing of that programme until after the trial had finished. It is not for me to embark on a discussion of whether that was a proper order to make, but I am bound to say that I was not surprised that the order was made. An attempt was made to have the matter reviewed by judicial review. Whatever the merits of the order, it was clearly right that someone should be able to review the decision of a judge of first instance.

It was pointed out that section 29 (3) of the Supreme Court Act 1981 prohibits a review of

"matters relating to trial on indictment".

The Court of Appeal held that the matter related to trial on indictment, and it would have been surprising if it had reached any other decision.

An earlier case involved an order being made under section 11 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981 prohibiting the naming of certain witnesses in which Lord Justice Stephen Brown, before his happy translation to further office, holding again that there was no power of judicial review, expressed sincere regret that that was the case.

Those problems confronted the Government when this Criminal Justice Bill was introduced. They responded by introducing clause 151. I suspect, as the Solicitor-General has half hinted, that they introduced that partly to keep us straight with the European convention on human rights, because they did not want to accumulate too many difficulties in Europe, but I have no doubt that they introduced it also because they genuinely believed that something of this kind should be done. I would not dispute that. Having embraced the principle, there were shortcomings, which have already been honestly and openly elaborated by the Solicitor-General.

Another problem was that the proposal did not relate to orders made under the common law power, but only to orders made under sections 4 and 11 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981. That is now rectified. But the new clause itself raises questions. I understand why what I would perhaps regard as an omission from the new clause was made. There is no appeal to the House of Lords. As I understand it, that is because the House of Lords cannot necessarily guarantee a quick appeal. I cannot believe that such an appeal would arise in many cases. Perhaps we would not be inundated with applications for leave to appeal to another place, with all the resultant problems. However, I understand the reasoning behind this.

I thought to some extent that the Solicitor-General gave part of the answer. He said that where there was a proposal for an application to be made to hear something in camera, it was hoped that that would be decided by the prosecution early, and well before the date for the trial to begin. One would hope that the same thing might be said about applications for the orders that we are discussing.

One would hope that the prosecution would consider whether it was going to apply for an order. Normally an application would come from the prosecution. If an application is to come from the defence, it is not unreasonable to hope that defence lawyers would direct their minds to that question well before the trial opens. If that happens, an application could be dealt with on directions, and whatever appeals were required could take place and the whole matter could be settled before the trial opened. I am not sure whether I understood what the Solicitor-General said would happen if for some reason that could not be done, or someone had not considered an application. One consequence of this proposal is that the Crown prosecution service would need the manpower and resources to carry out this function.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that until the Crown prosecution service achieves the right degree of professional standards, by employing legally qualified people in Crown courts, there is no hope that people who do not have the degree of knowledge required in these matters will ever get round to doing what he has suggested?

Mr. Archer: I must not embark on too long a disquisition on the Crown prosecution service. But I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend has said. Some day we may have the opportunity of a somewhat more extended debate on the CPS.

I hope that the Solicitor-General will elaborate on one point which he made, as I did not completely grasp what he said. I am sure that that is my fault, not his. I am not sure whether he said that it would not follow automatically that, because one of the orders was made, there would be an adjournment of the main proceedings until the appeal had been resolved. That is a little surprising.

I confess that when I first read new clause 71 I had not grasped the need to write something like that into it. But if there is a question whether an order has been lawfully and properly made, to proceed with the trial before that question has been resolved would destroy the whole point of raising it. There is no point in the media reporting proceedings five or six days after they have taken place. I understood the Solicitor-General to say that there will be discretion as to whether or not to proceed. I hope that it will usually be exercised in favour of open proceedings; otherwise, reporting opportunities could be totally destroyed.

I understand all the disadvantages of adjourning criminal proceedings. Any hon. Member who has been involved in them will know of the problems that arise when a date has been fixed and reserved by counsel, solicitors

and experts, and for which witnesses have been subpoenaed—and others may have postponed holidays—and someone then applies for an adjournment. But it could be equally serious if the trial proceeded before matters were resolved; and I hope that appeals will be resolved early by the Court of Appeal. A problem could arise in relation to the House of Lords, and I understand the Solicitor-General's difficulties in that respect, all though I am not sure they would be as great in practice as he foresees.

The Government have responded to our representations and have obviously given them considerable thought. It would be churlish of me if I were to do other than to thank the Solicitor-General for his comments and actions. Over a period we shall see how this provision works, and, having done so, it may be that we will reassess them later.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I associate myself with the remarks of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) and will add only two points. First, I am concerned about the time element. I understood the Solicitor-General to say that seven days would be allowed in which to lodge an appeal. What will happen to the trial meanwhile, after the appeal is lodged and before it is heard? Will there be a break in the trial, and will the jury be left to go home? Will the accused be left with misery hanging over his or her head in the knowledge that, as an accused person, he or she is presumed to be innocent?

One of the greatest of trials in all trials is waiting for a verdict and for the end of the suspense. I cannot understand why a seven-day period should be allowed. The appeal should be heard within 24 hours at the very most, if not immediately. There should preferably be no suspension of the trial and immediate access to the Court of Appeal—if necessary before that court's normal proceedings begin or immediately afterwards, or a special court should be convened for the purpose. The delay allowed cannot work in practice.

Secondly, I have for many years been concerned with the agonies of innocent people who are tried and eventually found to be innocent but who meanwhile suffer hell on earth and find, especially if they are otherwise respectable people, that their lives have collapsed into ruins around them. I have dealt in particular with hundreds of cases involving alleged shoplifters, some 50 per cent. of whom, having been charged with that offence and pleaded not guilty, have been acquitted.

For many of them, the greatest misery lies in the reporting of the proceedings. It is essential that our courts should be open to the press, but it is essential also that the press should exercise their reporting rights with discretion and occasionally with compassion. There is no way in which discretion and compassion can be imposed upon the media, nor am I seeking to find such an impossible route. Nevertheless, I impress upon the House, and through it the press, the need to act with kindness, care and sensitivity and not, as happens, alas, on many occasions, deliberately keep open or reopen wounds in cases where people have slipped from the path we would have chosen for them.

New clause 1 is necessary for the freedom of the press, but it contains inherent difficulties. I hope that the Solicitor-General will assure the House that the question of the time limit will be dealt with in another place, where it may be reconsidered, or in this House, if necessary by taking action to ensure that the workings of the clause are efficient and fair.

Mr. Bermingham: I regret missing the first few minutes of the Solicitor-General's remarks. The two points I wish to raise stem from the remarks of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), with whom I take issue.

Mr. Janner: As usual.

6.15 pm

Mr. Bermingham: If there is to be a delay before the appeal can be heard, the trial must obviously be stayed for practical purposes. If an order has been refused, the damage can be done in the period before the hearing of the appeal against that refusal, and it is that damage that we seek to limit. The Solicitor-General well knows that a considerable number of cases occur annually—although that number may vary from year to year—where publicity can have the most damning effect on the parties involved. Such publicity may even relate to trials which have yet to begin and to related matters of that kind. Therefore, it is clear that the trial itself needs to be stayed until such time as the appeal against either the refusal or the granting of an order has been heard.

An appeal could be heard in less than seven days, but practical experience from both sides of the fence suggests that to proceed within 24 hours is likely to be impracticable, bearing in mind that it is usually solicitors who will have to draw up most of the paperwork. Solicitors are often misunderstood by the Bar with regard to the amount of work that is necessary in such cases. Solicitors must be given proper time in which to draft the grounds of an appeal and complete all the necessary paperwork.

A court of appeal will take both oral and written evidence. I shall return to the words "in writing" later, because they concern me. Evidence will have to be gathered by both parties to the appeal, but much as the will is often there to proceed expeditiously, sheer practical common sense tells me that one day is not enough time in which to marshal the arguments and witnesses required, though perhaps it could be done in four or five working days. It may be that the party who seeks to appeal against an order made on a Friday will have a racing advantage in having the Saturday and Sunday to get on with matters, because the proceedings will naturally be stayed over the weekend.

I ask the Solicitor-General carefully to reconsider those aspects and the practicalities involved. If he is minded to alter the time limit, I hope he will bear in mind that those who have to prepare the paperwork need to be given reasonable time in which to do so. They need also an opportunity to locate and procure their witnesses.

I turn to the question of the witnesses themselves. In a contested matter, written evidence is extremely difficult to cross-examine, and it may often lead the court into a misunderstanding about the nature of certain matters. I am very much against appeals being heard by way of affidavits. If the written evidence of affidavit is withdrawn, the other side is given the opportunity to file a counter-affidavit. How on earth is one to know what questions to pose to a witness whose evidence is only in writing?

[Mr. Bermingham]

Perhaps the Solicitor-General will be kind enough carefully to reconsider his thoughts on "in writing"—at least, they were in the draftsman's mind—for one would hate to see develop a practice whereby the arguments made by one side or the other in such appeals degenerated into a circus-like operation of standard written letters. That is something that we have seen in the past. One tends to have the same sort of evidence time after time and, if there is no right to challenge, that can create a dangerous precedent.

I end, as I began, with a plea that any time given should be reasonable so that those who prepare the work have time in which to do it efficiently and expeditiously.

The Solicitor-General: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) for his welcome for the new clause and the amendments. He rightly mentioned the Guild of British Newspaper Editors, and we are grateful to it for its constructive criticism and ideas. It has had to live with the problem as it has developed over the years and it is common ground that it has developed rather more than we anticipated when the right hon. and learned Gentleman and I served on the Committee which considered the Contempt of Court Act 1981. May I also mention the constructive attitude of Mr. Tim Crook, who has been closely involved in the matter?

The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked whether the terms of the order were recorded and whether any central record was kept of the number of occasions on which orders of this nature were made. The terms of the orders are recorded but, as I said in Committee, there is not a central record, and until we become more computerised it will be understood that it would not only be costly but administratively burdensome, if not prohibitive, to try to keep a central record.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman urged that, through judicial conferences or other methods, steps should be taken to encourage consistency in the way that the powers under the Act and the common law powers should be used. That is a matter for the judge, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman will know that it will be open to the Court of Appeal under its new powers to give guidance through guideline cases, if it thinks it appropriate, as it does in other criminal matters. It will also be open to the Judicial Studies Board, through the conferences at Roehampton and elsewhere, to give guidance and to encourage consistency. That is a matter for the judges——

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): As a non-lawyer, I am somewhat hesitant to intervene, but, as I understand it, if there are restriction orders on reporting cases in the magistrates court, the appeal there goes to the divisional court. Here we are dealing with the Crown court and the appeal goes to the Court of Appeal. How does the Solicitor-General intend to ensure consistency there? A case could start in the magistrates court and one decision could be made there, and a later, different decision could be made when the case reached the Crown court.

The Solicitor-General: I think that the answer is that the president of the divisional court is the Lord Chief Justice and he has a close control over the Court of Appeal, criminal division. We are dealing with High Court judges who frequently move from one division to the other and they will all come together in their interests through the Judicial Studies Board. Therefore, the opportunities for consistency at a high level present no difficulties. I hope that that is of comfort.

We fully understand the importance to the press of the ability to report contemporaneously, but equally, when one comes to deal with the matter of principle, a balance needs to be struck. That balance was rightly referred to by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) who pointed out the hardship that is caused to a defendant in a criminal case by delay. There is also the public interest in the administration of criminal justice which does not brook delay without an overwhelming reason. Consequently, it would be wrong to think that there should be an adjournment in every case.

Although the ability to report contemporaneously is understood, the fundamental right that we wish to protect is the ability to report at all when an order has been given in a case where the Court of Appeal subsequently decides that it should not have been given and where currently many would argue that an order was misplaced. Consequently, it must be a matter for the courts, in weighing the circumstances of the individual cases, to decide whether there should be an adjournment.

Before I forget, I want to make a point in relation to my opening speech. When we were drawing up the new clause we made a drafting amendment which caused us to drop a technical point that was mentioned in a previous subsection (3). For the benefit of those who may read my speech in *Hansard*, it should be known that I referred to some subsections incorrectly. I draw attention to that to avoid confusion.

Mr. Archer: Before the Solicitor-General leaves the problem of the dilemma of whether to adjourn, does he agree that that dilemma could frequently be avoided with adequate foresight on the part of those who want to make the application? Will he emphasise that?

The Solicitor-General: Yes, I agree with that.

I thought that I detected the thrust of spurs into hobby horses when the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) referred to the Crown prosecution service. The service has had its problems, and still does, but they are being overcome in a way that I think is widely recognised in the courts. It will well understand the importance of seeking to make applications early, and will have that very much in mind.

We discussed the matter of time limits. I know that the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, East must leave shortly. I can see the good sense in seeking to appeal within 24 hours, but the hon. Member for St. Helens, South rightly pointed out the practical difficulties of making it a requirement. There is no problem from the point of view of the legislation, because the time limit will be dealt with by rules of court, so there is an opportunity to listen to and consider the points made in the debate. However, seven days is more realistic than 24 hours as a matter of rule, although 24 hours would be desirable as a matter of practice wherever it is possible.

Mr. Bermingham: Will the Solicitor-General undertake to bear in mind the point that I made about the dangers of written evidence?

The Solicitor-General: If I understood the hon. Gentleman's point aright, he was anxious about written evidence being forced upon people or used generally. The

opportunity to introduce written evidence must be an advantage. The requirement to do so is limited. The only case where there is no option but to make a written submission is in the special category of case, perhaps one involving high security, where obviously the appellant cannot be apprised of the reason or the purpose of holding it in camera would be overborne. But that is not so much a matter of evidence as of submission. However, I shall certainly draw his point to the attention of those involved. I commend the new clause to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 72

TORTURE

'(1) A public official or person acting in an official capacity, whatever his nationality, commits the offence of torture if in the United Kingdom or elsewhere he intentionally inflicts severe pain or suffering on another in the performance or purported performance of his official duties.

(2) A person not falling within subsection (1) above commits the offence of torture, whatever his nationality, if—

(a) in the United Kingdom or elsewhere he intentionally inflicts severe pain or suffering on another at the instigation or with the consent or acquiescence—

(i) of a public official; or

(ii) of a person acting in an official capacity; and

(b) the official or other person is performing or purporting to perform his official duties when he instigates the commission of the offence or consents to or acquiesces in it.

(3) It is immaterial whether the pain or suffering is physical or mental and whether it is caused by an act or an omission.

(4) It shall be a defence for a person charged with an offence under this section in respect of any conduct of his to prove that he had lawful authority, justification or excuse for that conduct.

(5) For the purposes of this section "lawful authority, justification or excuse" means—

(a) in relation to pain or suffering inflicted in the United Kingdom, lawful authority, justification or excuse under the law of the part of the United Kingdom where it was inflicted;

(b) in relation to pain or suffering inflicted outside the United Kingdom—

(i) if it was inflicted by a United Kingdom official acting under the law of the United Kingdom or by a person acting in an official capacity under that law, lawful authority, justification or excuse under that law;

(ii) if it was inflicted by a United Kingdom official acting under the law of any part of the United Kingdom or by a person acting in an official capacity under such law, lawful authority, justification or excuse under the law of the part of the United Kingdom under whose law he was acting; and

(iii) in any other case, lawful authority, justification or excuse under the law of the place where it was inflicted.

(6) A person who commits the offence of torture shall be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for life.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

6.30 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to take Government new clauses 73 to 76 and Government amendments Nos. 12 to 19.

Mr. Patten: The new clauses and amendments, which I believe are welcome to the Opposition, create a new offence of torture. They provide that a public official or someone acting in an official capacity—or acting with the consent or acquiescence of an official or such person—commits an offence of torture if he intentionally inflicts severe pain or suffering in the performance or purported performance of his official duties. "Pain or suffering" for the purposes of the new clauses and amendments includes both physical and mental pain or suffering.

The offence is committed whether the pain or suffering is inflicted in or outside the United Kingdom. The maximum penalty is life imprisonment. Proceedings can be taken with the consent of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. That of course is not necessary in Scotland, where procurators fiscal undertake prosecutions on behalf of the Lord Advocate. Alternatively, the person can be extradited to be tried or, if already convicted, punished abroad.

The new clauses and amendments will enable the Government to ratify the United Nations convention on torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1984. The Government have been looking for some time for an opportunity to implement the convention. We did not originally intend to do it in this Bill, but the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer)—on whose head compliments have been raining this afternoon—spotted an opportunity in it, and suggested a series of amemdments giving effect to the convention. He spoke to them in Committee, and they were welcomed then. We were delighted to find that we could move forward on a sound and firm basis of all-party support. The new clauses and amendments give effect to the commitment that I gave the Committee to consider the matter further, and to table proposals on Report.

I must make it clear to Opposition Members that neither the convention nor the new clauses and amendments will operate retrospectively. They will apply only to offences committed two months after Royal Assent. The purpose of our accession to the convention is not to instigate a sort of retrospective witch-hunt against those alleged to have committed torture in the past, and the new clauses and amendments would not make such a witch-hunt possible.

I remind the House that, as many are aware, 1988 is the 40th anniversary of the universal declaration of human rights, and it is fitting that we should try to mark that anniversary by ratifying the UN convention on torture. If the House accepts the new clause and the Bill completes its progress as we expect it to, we should be able to ratify the convention before the end of 1988.

Mr. Archer: The Minister and I will find ourselves in disfavour with our respective Whips Offices if we exchange too many compliments this evening, but we are grateful to him for responding so generously to the suggestions that we made in Committee and fulfilling the promise that he made to us then. In fact, I rather suspect that in Committee he was fulfilling a promise that he had already made to the press. It was, I am sure, no part of his intention that the reports which appeared in the press about the Government's intentions made no reference to the fact that that was in response to an invitation from the

[Mr. Archer]

Opposition. But perhaps our reward will be in the hereafter. I must not be ungenerous or ungracious, because the Minister has been the reverse of that.

Mr. John Patten: If indeed such a thing has happened, I hope that I have made it right tonight through the compliments that I have paid the right hon. and learned Gentleman in bumpers before a crowded Press Gallery.

Mr. Archer: I at once acknowledge the handsome way in which the Minister has behaved, and his great kindness to me personally.

This, as the House will know, is something of which I have dreamt for many years. In the early 1970s, when I was chairman of the British section of Amnesty International, Amnesty was appalled by the number of cases that we encountered of the most horrifying torture. It was performed not in a state of excitement by someone carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, not by some minor official ignoring instructions, but as an instrument of Government policy, and it was taking place in an alarming number of countries.

Of course, it was not usually called torture; the more squeamish countries gave it a different name. In Northern Ireland it was referred to as "interrogation procedures". The House will recall the Parker report and the minority report of Lord Gardiner, which was so compelling that it produced an immediate change in Government policy. There are, however, degrees in these matters. The context in which the events in Northern Ireland took place has unhappily been recalled by the events of yesterday and our discussions today. Certainly those "interrogation procedures" were not of the same order as some of the practices that came to light in certain countries.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledge that since the Bennett report, and the implementation of the reforms that Bennett suggested, the interrogation procedures conducted in Northern Ireland today are a model to most of the police forces in the world and can in no way be likened to torture?

Mr. Archer: This is the last occasion on which I would wish to appear ungracious or fail to acknowledge the magnificent work which the RUC normally carries out, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not tempt me too far. There is still cause for anxiety in some cases, and if he and I cannot agree on that, this may not be the time to resolve our disagreements. In general, I agree with what he has said.

Amnesty International decided that an essential part of achieving its purpose was to conduct a campaign for an express declaration by the international community that torture was in no circumstances an acceptable instrument of policy, however desirable or undesirable that policy might be. Amnesty set out to persuade the member states of the United Nations to draft and adopt an international convention which would make a clear declaration and which, even if it did not always have effective teeth, would at least try to ensure that torture was more difficult to conceal. That led to the United Nations convention on torture.

As the Minister has told us, the United Kingdom has not yet ratified the convention. I accept that that is partly because the United Kingdom does not ratify conventions lightly. It does not do so until our domestic law is in a position for us to comply, and it does not assume that the House will automatically pass that law. There is always that element of delay, whichever party is in government. That has the unfortunate effect that, unless there is a sense of urgency in all the Government Departments involved, the United Kingdom appears to be dragging its feet.

I do not believe that ratification will make much difference to the practice in this country, for some of the reasons that the Minister has given. I hope that we shall never again see practices here which are relevant to the convention, but it may help at least to reinforce the solidarity of the international community.

I do not wish to appear nit-picking this afternoon. The one matter on which I am a little hesitant about the Government's draftsmanship is the reference to

"lawful authority, justification or excuse"

for conduct that would otherwise amount to torture. There is lawful justification or authority if somebody is acting in accordance with the law of this country or the law of the country where it is taking place. By definition, we are talking about intentionally inflicting severe pain or suffering on another person. I cannot think offhand of any part of the law of the United Kingdom that would make such conduct lawful. If there were, I would be the first to move that we repeal it. I am not sure why that has been included. I hope that in his reply the Minister will say a little about it.

But I think that the new clause will greatly reinforce the unanimity of the international community. I hope that the fact that the United Kingdom is taking this step will lead to a great deal of pleasure and relief from anxiety both in this country and in all countries where torture is still a live issue and where the victims, at least, will welcome the support of the caring world.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I welcome the remarks of my hon. Friend the Minister as well as the new clause. I pay tribute to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), who has waged a campaign on this issue for many years. He must be greatly gratified that he has won his point and that the Government have introduced the new clause. I support it, but I hope that it will not be interpreted outside the House as having been placed on the statute book because it is needed in this country. It is not.

There has been no evidence of torture in Britain. It is true that from time to time police officers and members of the security forces may, through an excess of enthusiasm, have committed actions that can be complained about. However, an excess of enthusiasm can be checked and is checked by the proper application of the disciplinary code and of the criminal law. All police officers are responsible for their deeds to the criminal law and to their disciplinary code.

There is no evidence of any policy having been conducted by any Government at any time that would have permitted torture in this country. It ought to be made clear that the House will assent to the inclusion of my hon. Friend's new clause in the Bill because we accept that there should be consistency of practice internationally and that many other countries have introduced measures of this kind. I support the new clause because it enables the United Kingdom to stand with other nations. I do not in any way support it because I believe that Britain has a problem that needs to be dealt with by legislation.

There are hon. Members, perhaps a majority, including the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West, who feel that there is a case for a Bill of Rights.

Mr. Archer *rose*——

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Perhaps I do the right hon. and learned Gentleman an injustice?

Mr. Archer: Simply for the record, may I say that I am not included among that number.

6.45 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am delighted to hear it, because I am one of those who stand with the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone, in believing that a nation that needs to write a Bill of Rights into its statute law is in peril of losing its civil rights. To that extent, I slightly regret the fact that we need to state that we are opposed to torture. Had I not risen to my feet, the new clause might have suggested that we were dealing with a problem that exists in Britain. It does not exist in Britain. I welcome the new clause and support it because it allows us to take our place among the international community of nations which condemn torture whenever they can.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: On behalf of the official Opposition, I welcome the new clause. It is a tidied-up version of the new clause that was tabled in Committee by the Opposition, and we are pleased to see it on the Amendment Paper in its correct form. Therefore, it is acceptable to the Opposition.

I associate myself with the congratulations that have been offered to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). He has done a great deal of work over many years, on behalf of Amnesty International, and has ensured that the problem was constantly placed before the House. If hon. Members did not do such work, measures of this kind would not reach the statute book. My right hon. and learned Friend has made a positive contribution to our statute law.

My right hon. and learned Friend's remarks about the Minister were slightly generous. The Minister was simply responding to suggestions that were made in Committee by the Opposition, particularly by my right hon. and learned Friend. As he pointed out, we read, as usual, the Minister's press release before we received his official response. Nevertheless, we have made progress.

I am pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend discussed this matter without giving lurid details about various types of torture in many parts of the world. Had it been many other hon. Members, we might have had a debate that concentrated on colourful and horrific details. We should be grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for showing that hard work and hard persuasion in a very good cause can lead us forward. We should pay tribute to him and recognise the work that he has done.

The Government are making only a small degree of progress, but it is right that the Opposition should say where they stand. The new clause reinforces our solidarity with other countries and the general intention. It is a step forward and we are grateful to the Minister for introducing it, as he promised in Committee to do.

6.45 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): At first sight, it would surprise most people to hear that we need any such addition as this new clause to our legislative armoury. The truth is that we do not. The British criminal law already punishes torture and therefore prevents torture. Because we live in a democratic society in which, under all Governments, there is the rule of law and an honourable police force, it is almost impossible in our recent history to discover any case of torture. However, it is not superfluous to introduce this measure, particularly on the 40th anniversary of the universal declaration of human rights. This country, and particularly this Government, are in the forefront of international activity to try to create greater respect worldwide for human rights.

Whenever the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs goes abroad—I speak from experience as a member of the Committee—it always asks for a brief from Amnesty International and it always raises human rights issues in any country that it visits. The unfortunate fact is that half the nations of the world practise some form or some degree of torture. It does not seem to matter whether they are signatories of the international convention on human rights. They still practise torture but they pretend that they do not. It is for a country such as Britain, which is democratic, has a free press and a high respect for the rules of international law and human decency, to press these matters as widely as it can.

We are indebted to Amnesty International for the influence that it exerts. The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) was one of the founders in 1961 of the British branch of Amnesty International. It has a membership of about 44,000; worldwide it has a membership of 1,750,000. During the past two years, Amnesty International has doubled its membership in Britain. It has called consistently for the kind of measure that the Govenment are introducing into this Bill.

Therefore, it is also a tribute to Amnesty International and the wonderful work that it does that this Government, who of all Governments might have thought that it was superfluous for us to be expected to introduce such a measure into our law, have taken the lead of the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West and introduced it into our law. It is a signal to the rest of the world that we in Britain mean business in human rights and that we will go on trying to ensure that torture, wherever it exists throughout the world, in any country over which we have any influence, is eliminated. Because it is a good thing, and because there is nothing bad that one can say about the step that the Government are taking, I, and I expect all hon. Members, enthusiastically welcome the new clause.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I intend to emulate the brevity of the speeches that we have heard in the debate. I begin by associating myself with the remarks of the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) about the contribution of Amnesty International, recognising the assiduity with which it briefs hon. Members and the care with which it ensures that these matters are kept high in our consideration.

I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will not think I am being churlish if I challenge him on his assertion that there is such a thing as the British criminal law. Of course there is the English criminal law, of which he is an

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

eloquent exponent, and there is the Scottish criminal law, derived from an entirely different source, which shares certain characteristics with the Anglo-Saxon system, but which is by no means precisely the same. It now appears that some of the things that we have taken for granted are being adopted as a matter of novelty into the English system.

My principal purpose in intervening is to associate myself with the observations of the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) about subsection (4). Like him, I am exercised by the idea that there can be a defence to the crime of torture. Like him, I am concerned at the notion that there might be circumstances in which the infliction of torture could be regarded as being carried out with lawful authority, in circumstances which could be described as a justification or in circumstances for which there could be an excuse.

My concern is, first, at the notion that there needs to be a defence at all, and, secondly, at the particular elements of that defence, which appear to be available as alternatives—if I read the contents of subsection (5) correctly. The Minister should deal with those matters when he responds to the debate, because, for some of us at least, there are still some apprehensions as to precisely why the defence is necessary and in what circumstances the Minister conceives that the defence might legitimately be prayed in aid.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I am sorry that I cannot join in the general rush to welcome the new clause. One is bound to ask certain questions about it. For example, why, never before in the whole of our legal history, has it been necessary to make torture a crime in the law of this country? There is a very good reason why we have not yet had to do that. Normally, in this country, the acts or omissions which constitute what others would call torture are criminal, and people who conduct themselves in such a way as to come within that category are proceeded against, and have been since time immemorial. So why on earth are we now saying that we must have a separate offence of torture?

When the Minister has finished his conversation with his PPS and can pay attention to what I am saying, I should like to ask him what part of our law at the moment does not cover the evidence, facts and misconduct which new clause 72 is intended to cover.

Mr. Lawrence: That is not the point.

Mr. Stanbrook: My hon. and learned Friend says that that is not the point, but so much bad law is enacted out of a genuine attachment to abstract principles of justice, humanity and human rights that very often the point of view expressed by my hon. and learned Friend covers more than it should cover. My objection is that we should not legislate so broadly. We should consider much more carefully, not only the principle of the crime as defined, but all the ramifications included in the new clause.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Will my hon. Friend explain whether it would be possible for us to ratify the United Nations convention on torture and other degrading and inhuman acts without the new clause?

Mr. Stanbrook: That is the substance of the question that I addressed to my hon. Friend the Minister. What is there in the convention that we could not ratify, even without incorporating the terms of the convention, or something similar to it, into our domestic law? Most of the offences covered by the new clause would constitute crimes under our existing law. That is why some United Nations and other multinational conventions that Britain has ratified have not required specific legislation in this country to enable us to do so.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Has my hon. Friend considered the vast number of instances where no physical harm is caused but where something cruel or degrading, or where an omission to do something, has put someone in fear? I know that he is a lawyer. Can he think of any offence that could be commited under the existing law under those circumstances? I do not think that there is any such offence. Has he considered whether mental cruelty or torture is covered by the new clause? That is not a positive offence. It is not an offence under the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, which I know he has in mind. It is covered by the new clause, and it would be torture.

Mr. Stanbrook: With great respect to my hon. Friend and to our mutual profession, he is suffering from the idea that imprecise language will help us attain our objective. The very words "mental cruelty" are capable of many definitions and could apply to many different examples of behaviour. Not every individual case of mental cruelty that we meet in the divorce courts would constitute a crime, still less a crime capable of being punished by a life sentence of imprisonment, or capable of extradition, on proof of mental cruelty such as is established in divorce courts, for example. Should we go to that extent?

Mr. Ashby: No.

Mr. Stanbrook: My hon. Friend says no, and I entirely agree with him. That is just why we must be careful. In new clause 72 the definition of torture applies

"whether the pain and suffering is physical or mental".

That must cover a multitude of actions by individuals. Although we know precisely what we are talking about in individual cases, many of us would agree that this is nowhere near what we would consider to be serious torture such as we have now decided to embody in this formidable legislation at the behest of the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) and some of his hon. Friends. We are being led astray.

7 pm

Another example of the undesirability of tackling this problem in this way is new clause 74, which provides that we shall extradite someone to any country that has ratified this convention, whatever that country's laws and whatever its justification, based on the facts of the case. Some countries regard an offence against humanity as serious. We all agree that such offences sound serious and would justify the most serious punishment, but the notion is so ill-defined that it would be quite wrong for us to extradite a British citizen to face trial in any of the countries that operate a law such as this, which is so ill-defined and vague that it is almost a catch-all provision for any conduct of which the country disapproves.

We all agree that torture is, or should be, criminal, but when it comes to defining or changing our law to embrace that principle in the way that is proposed here, we create great problems for ourselves.

Mr. Sayeed: My hon. Friend's argument is that everything in the new clause is already covered by the criminal law, of which he is an eminent practitioner, while I am a layman. However, would torture of the sensory deprivation sort be covered by our present law?

Mr. Stanbrook: I correct my hon. Friend. I did not say what he has alleged. I asked whether the new clause covered anything new. That is precisely what I asked the Minister, who is the one who can answer the question.

We rush too quickly into adopting great declarations of principle. Ours is the country that least needs to force upon itself provisions about human rights such as this. For centuries this country of ours has led the world in the protection of human rights. The funny thing is that we are so anxious to live up to our standards—we cannot be blamed for this—that we adopt these grand declarations even when they are not necessary.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West said that, although the new clause did not apply to us, we should make it apply, for reasons of solidarity and the desirability of aligning ourselves with other states, to emphasise to them the importance of outlawing this offence. But the countries that need some sort of protection of human rights and against torture are the very ones that are the first to ratify declarations such as these, which is the nub of the problem. We shall achieve nothing, except to exhort other countries, by ratifying conventions of this kind. We can well do without instituting them in our domestic law——

Mr. Archer: The hon. Gentleman is correct to say that I said that one powerful argument for what we are doing —we are grateful to the Government for this—is that it will enable us to add our voice to what I hope will soon be international unanimity on this subject. I should not want it to be thought that the Opposition concede that there never has been any act in this country that would have been prosecuted under these provisions—or that there never could be. I make no such concession.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am glad to hear what the right hon. and learned Gentleman says, but it does not remove the basic objection to the new clause. This is one of those declarations of principle that are adopted "pour encourager les autres," and we do not need it. I accept that international solidarity in matters of this sort is desirable, but we must not mislead ourselves into thinking that by adopting this we show that our citizens need it, or that the mere ratification of this international convention by any other country will change its policies or give greater protection to its citizens. The countries that most need protection of human rights are those that have signed, or are rushing to sign, the convention. Other countries such as ours, that like to live up to standards such as these, have already done just that in the past.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Conservative Members are rather complacent to suggest that the ratification of this measure is only a matter of form to fit in with United Nations provisions, rather than something that we require to protect human rights in this country. New clause 72(3) provides:

"It is immaterial whether the pain or suffering is physical or mental".

That means that when the courts come to act on this provision, a great deal of evidence that is relevant to mental and physical torture will start to be taken into account. It is quite possible then that the evidence that is produced and the general climate of opinion among social experts and others will begin to affect the nature of the judgments that the courts make.

That is a defensive position and it ties in well with the experiences that have led the United Nations to draw up this convention. It was not just plucked out of thin air or from the worst experiences of the worst tyrannies. It deals with a problem that exists across the world, even within democratic societies—the more so as society becomes more complex and the methods used to torture people become more complex and specialised. So defences begin to be needed.

I recognise that this is still perceived as the ratification of the 1984 United Nations convention. That was adopted in December 1984, and although I welcome its inclusion in the new clause—that is the result of the views that the Labour party expressed in Committee, to which the Government have responded—the Minister should explain the delay involved. Why was not special legislation introduced at an earlier stage?

It has been said that lawful torture is still permitted. Article 1 of the convention states that it does not include "pain or suffering arising from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions".

New clause 72(4) merely elaborates that provision. However, without laws being passed to encourage torture, we should fear actions or practices that might lead to mental cruelty. I am not a solid and committed advocate of a Bill of Rights, but if we had legislation such as the convention for when pressures and difficulties arise we would have another measure to check our actions.

I should like the Minister to say why there is no retrospective element in the new clause. There were provisions in the Housing Bill, which we discussed at length, relating to consultation with housing action trusts, which could be regarded as being retrospective in character, although there is some dispute about its nature.

Mr. Ashby: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that the new clause should be retrospective. Is he suggesting that somebody should be locked up for life for an offence that did not exist at the time when he committed it? That goes against every idea of civil rights.

Mr. Barnes: The convention was adopted in 1984. Many hon. Members claimed that it is unnecessary in this country because everything in the garden is lovely. A law that allows us to delve into the past and deal with unjust and unreasonable matters may be worthy of consideration. I am not putting that forward as an amendment or suggesting definite change, but I should like the Minister to give his reaction to that suggestion.

Article 10 of the convention states:

"Each State Party shall ensure that education and information regarding the prohibition against torture are fully included in the training of law enforcement personnel, civil or military medical personnel, public officials and other persons who may be involved in the custody, interrogation or treatment of any individual subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment."

Many other articles refer to similar provisions. We are introducing a measure that the courts are expected to take into account, but at the same time we must ensure that the conditions that lead to those court cases being brought are not operating in society. Do the Government intend to introduce back-up provisions?

[Mr. Barnes]

New clause 73 requires the consent of the Attorney-General the Attorney-General of Northern Ireland before the instigation of cases. Does that fit in with the convention, which allows for procedures whereby people can more freely use the courts to challenge the use of mental and physical torture against them?

7.15 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I welcome the new clause. That makes it an all-party welcome—at least from all the parties that were represented in Committee.

We had an interesting debate in Committee on ratifying the convention and changing the law to enable us to do so. It is right to welcome the Government's initiative and to thank the Minister for carrying out the undertaking that he gave in Committee.

I place on record my thanks to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) for the tremendous work that he did to ensure that the new clause came before the House. I associate with those remarks the tremendous work done by Amnesty International.

I hope that there would be a unanimous welcome for the new clause. In fairness, I can say that it has received wide-ranging support from hon. Members. We have often criticised other countries that have used torture to obtain confessions, admissions and information. I believe that it was right to condemn such acts. It has been said that we do not need this provision, but we should not be complacent. There may have been occasions when it could have been used.

We shall be in a stronger position as a result of its being part of our criminal law, and I commend that view to the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook). We shall be in a stronger position to condemn acts of torture wherever they happen. If it is enshrined in our law and we ratify the convention, we shall have greater moral authority to condemn torture in other countries.

Congratulations are due to all those who have worked hard on this subject, and I am sure that that will be a source of tremendous pleasure to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley West.

There has been a small sub-theme to the debate, to which I do not ask the Minister to respond. We have heard that there may be no such thing as British law, but that there may be English and Scottish law. Where does that leave Wales?

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am grateful to the Minister for his indulgence. He clearly did not expect me to speak at this stage of the debate.

I should like to associate myself with the remarks made about my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), who has worked so hard for many years with Amnesty International, and who has been instrumental in the inclusion of the new clause in the Bill. It is quite a remarkable and rare achievement that hon. Members, in a single capacity, can change the law to its benefit with the consent and consensus of the whole House. My right hon. and learned Friend has joined the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), who brought about changes in the abortion law in 1967, and certain other hon. Members who have managed to change the law.

I think that it is right for me to put this on the record, because he and I shared Opposition Front-Bench responsibility on Northern Ireland for three years, and his libertarian instincts and devotion to the principles of Amnesty are salutary not only for all of us but for the international movement against torture in any of its forms. I thought that I should render homage—if I may use a French phrase translated into English—on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West.

I am also glad to be in the House with such honourable company as the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), because he and I have both spent some time on Northern Ireland affairs and on matters relating to the police. He has very strong libertarian instincts and has expressed them throughout many years in the House of Commons. One phrase in his speech that I noted and picked up was that torture does not exist in this country. That must be something for us to reflect upon in the troubled world in which we live. We see torture all around us. The IRA terrorist who was recently sentenced to 40 years' imprisonment amputated the thumbs of his kidnapped victims. That was not very far from our own shores.

I remember the early 1960s, when the Algerian war was going on with the French settlers, and torture was used against some of the fedayeen caught by the French paratroopers. That was a distasteful experience and showed the great difficulties of bringing a colonial empire to an end.

Europe, too, has known torture. We do not need to go further back than the last war to find refined torture used upon people in concentration camps. Whatever the outcome of the appeal of Mr. Demjanjuk in Israel, we have seen that torture is not far from our civilisation and is something that we have to cope with. When the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds says that torture does not exist in this country, we should be thankful.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman, in his remarks about this country, would include Northern Ireland, because some of the appalling things that the IRA do there must qualify as torture.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful for the hon. Lady's intervention. She would know, if she had spent, as I have, three years as a Front-Bench spokesman on Northern Ireland, that the first thing that one learns is that when we talk of "our country" and "this country," we are referring to the United Kingdom, which, of course, includes Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England.

The IRA has a record of death that is second to none, and all hon. Members have used the opportunities available to them to condemn that kind of degrading and inhuman treatment. Therefore, I certainly include Northern Ireland in my remarks in relation to torture.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), who has left the Chamber, mentioned that we do not need the concept in the clause because there are already provisions in British criminal law to deal with those who inflict torture or degrading punishment upon our citizens. As he also said, this is the 40th year of the universal declaration of human rights.

Nevertheless, the fact that the Government have decided to adopt the terms of the convention into our law has a great deal of significance not only for us but for the

rest of Europe and the world. We still like to think of ourselves as leaders in certain areas, such as the humanitarian and liberal spheres. The fact that we are taking this issue of the convention seriously and placing it on our statute book is a sign to the rest of the world that we in this country, and certainly in the House of Commons, condemn torture in all forms and manifestations.

We are, nevertheless, as I said, in a world where torture still exists and there have been allegations of torture within certain member states of the Council of Europe. It is a great democratic principle that we should not only recognise that torture exists in other countries, but use our moral authority to bring pressure to bear upon those countries to aspire to the very high standards of our country.

I often think of the individual victim of torture—who may be in some solitary cell in a country in the near east. Who wonders what will happen to him, who is listening to his tiny voice, feels for him and is prepared to do something for him? The fact that the House is prepared to enact this clause is a message to those in authority, those who have power over others, those who inflict torture, that, as far as this country is concerned, they cannot and will not get away with it; that we shall use all the pressure that we can bring to bear to ensure that human rights are upheld in other countries.

There is also the European Committee for the prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, under the Privileges and Immunities Order 1988. This applies to all 21 member countries of the Council of Europe and requires seven ratifications. It has so far been ratified by Turkey in February 1988 and Ireland and Malta in March 1988. That committee has created the most sophisticated surveillance system for the prevention of torture. It is a committee of independent experts on human rights, and, when the convention has been ratified by all countries, it will be empowered to visit at any time any place of civil or military detention. The committee will also be able to make recommendations to the competent authorities. Therefore, by ratifying both the European convention and the United Nations convention, Her Majesty's Government are tonight showing their commitment to outlawing torture.

It is not for me to delay the House unduly by referring to the history of the European convention on human rights, which began with the Council of Europe in 1953 and entered into force in that year. It secured from member states commitments to promote human rights and recognise that individuals had rights under international law. Subsequently, it was realised that there ought to be preventive, non-judicial machinery related to the European convention.

Article 3 of the convention states:

"no one shall be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

The committee was constituted as a result of that article, for the purpose of rooting out torture and bringing pressure to bear. We have therefore come into line with the United Nations convention and the European convention.

It is important that the treatment of torture in law keeps pace with technological advances, which can mean severe psychological suffering without any physical signs.

Turkey was the first country to ratify the convention. It is essential that the United Kingdom should play an active role in relation to the convention to ensure that, in practice, the committee lives up to the original intentions of the Council of Europe.

I understand that the Organisation of American States is interested in a convention similar to the European convention, or would be interested in adopting the United Nations convention. Opposition Members are often critical of events in Central America, and certainly Latin America, where there have been many gruelling examples of torture, over which we have had no real influence and have no real control. If the House, by accepting the new clause and getting it on to the statute book, can assist Latin American countries to deal with torture in their own countries, that will be an important and significant step forward.

7.30 pm

Mr. John Patten: I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), who has spoken so lucidly. I understand and appreciate his depth of knowledge and the care and consideration that he has given to the issues, particularly with his experience as a Front-Bench spokesman on Northern Ireland for three years.

I am glad that there has been a general though not complete welcome for the measure from the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), who spoke so generously from the Opposition Front Bench, from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), and particularly from the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones). Thanks to the hon. Gentleman and to the assiduous tutorials that I was given in Welsh pronunciation by the Welshman in Warrington, my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler), I am now able to say Ynys Môn with complete self-confidence.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) used the word "torture" when referring to Northern Ireland. The European Court of Human Rights specifically held that we were not guilty of torture. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) referred clearly to this. It was held that there had been ill-treatment. My hon. Friend made it clear that the new codes of practice have not led to any complaint being upheld.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West and the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) were concerned about the words used in the drafting. The convention refers to

"pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions".

The words used in the clause are the words which we think best fit the translation of the convention. I gave assurances to the hon. Member for Dewsbury and to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West that we would try to import into British law the convention exactly as it stands. That is what we are trying to do by the use of those words.

Perhaps I may give two brief examples, for the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West and for the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East, of where we need a "lawful authority" exemption. First, it could be argued by some, and would be argued by many, that imprisonment causes mental suffering. Undoubtedly it does cause mental suffering, but that would not mean torture in the sense intended by the convention. As a second example, a police officer might cause pain in

[Mr. John Patten]

effecting the arrest of a dangerous or violent criminal, but that policeman or policewoman would be acting lawfully and would not be exposed to the accusation of torture. It is because we are to deal with every possibility that we have used those words to bring into effect the convention.

Two important points were raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook). He was rightly concerned about extradition law and new clause 74. The countries which I might refer to in shorthand as villains, to which we would not particularly wish to return our nationals, would often be countries with which we do not have treaties. I can reassure my hon. Friend that all the protections under part I, which we debated in Committee, will be available to a fugitive. After all those protections, there is always the discretion of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State not to return a fugitive.

My hon. Friend also asked why we needed this whole apparatus. He wanted to know why we had to change the law. It is certainly true, as my hon. Friend said, that physical pain or suffering is generally covered by offences of assault in the English and Welsh law and also in the Scottish law. One reason why we need the legislation is the introduction of mental suffering. We also needed to have extraterritorial jurisdiction, which is not available for most offences. I remember well the remarks of my hon. Friend in Committee. He does not care much for the concept, but I can reassure him, if it is reassurance, that it is at least precedented in previous Acts, such as the Nuclear Materials (Offences) Act 1983.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) raised important points about education and information. I agree that these are matters of first importance should the Bill pass into law. There is no need for any further legislation on the issue. There is sufficient provision—for example, in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, in the codes of practice following that Act and in the prison rules—to deal with those issues. There is also the excellent training that is given to police officers and to prison staff.

I welcome the debate that we have had. Most of all, I welcome the fact that the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West guided us in this direction in the first instance.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 73

Requirement of Attorney General's consent for prosecutions

'Proceedings for an offence under section *[Torture]* above shall not be begun—

(a) in England and Wales, except by, or with the consent of, the Attorney General; or

(b) in Northern Ireland, except by, or with the consent of, the Attorney General for Northern Ireland.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 74

Extradition under 1870 Act

'(1) Torture shall be deemed to be included in the list of extradition crimes contained in Schedule 1 to the Extradition Act 1870.

(2) For the purposes of the Extradition Act 1870 any act or omission, wherever committed, which constitutes torture and a corresponding offence against the law of any State in the case of which the Extradition Act 1870 has been applied by an Order in Council under section 2 of that Act shall be deemed to be an offence committed within the jurisdiction of that State.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 75

Extradition under Part I

'(1) Where—

(a) no such arrangement as is mentioned in section 2 of the Extradition Act 1870 has been made with a State which is a party to the Torture Convention; and

(b) general extradition arrangements have not been made with that State under Part I of this Act,

Her Majesty may by Order in Council direct that the provisions of this Act specified in subsection (2) below shall apply as between the United Kingdom and that State, subject to the limitations, restrictions, exceptions and qualifications, if any, contained in the Order, as if the Torture Convention constituted general extradition arrangements made with that State under Part I of this Act, but only in respect of the following offences—

(i) torture;

(ii) attempted torture;

(iii) counselling, procuring, commanding, abiding or abetting torture;

and

(iv) being accessory before or after the fact to torture.

(2) The provisions of this Act mentioned in subsection (1) above are—

(a) section 1(1) to (8);

(b) sections 3 to 10 and

(c) sections 12 to 18.

(3) An Order in Council under this section may not provide that a court dealing with a person arrested for an offence mentioned in subsection (1) above shall not be under a duty to determine whether the evidence would be sufficient to warrant his trial if the offence had taken place within the jurisdiction of the court.

(4) For the purposes of the provisions of this Act specified in subsection (2) above, in their application by virtue of an Order in Council under the section as between the United Kingdom and any other State any act or omission, wherever it takes place, which constitutes—

(a) an offence mentioned in subsection (1) above; and

(b) an offence against the law of that State,

shall be deemed to be an offence committed within the territory of that State.

(5) In this section "the Torture Convention" means the United Nations Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10th December 1984.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 76

Application to Channel Islands, Isle of Man and colonies

'(1) Her Majesty may by Order in Council make provision for extending sections *[Torture]* and Requirement of Attorney General's consent for prosecution above, with such modifications and exceptions as may be specified in the Order, to any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or any colony.

(2) Sections 17 and 22 of the Extradition Act 1870 shall extend to section *[Extradition under 1870 Act]* above.

(3) Sections 19 and *[Application of general extradition arrangements to Colonies]* above shall extend to section *[Extradition under Part 1]* above.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 77

APPLICATION OF GENERAL EXTRADITION ARRANGEMENTS TO COLONIES

'(1) Upon the making of an Order in Council under section 2 above, the provisions of this Act specified in subsection (2) below shall, unless the Order otherwise provides, extend to every colony, as regards the extradition arrangements to which the Order refers, but subject—

(a) to the modifications set out in subsections (3) to (6) below;

(b) to any further modifications as to procedure prescribed by the law of the colony; and

(c) to the limitations, restrictions, exceptions and qualifications, if any, contained in the Order.

(2) the provisions of this Act mentioned in subsection (1) above are—

(a) section 1(1) to (8);

(b) sections 3 to 10;

(c) sections 12 to 18; and

(d) this section.

(3) A reference to the colony shall be substituted for any reference to the United Kingdom or Great Britain.

(4) An extradition request may be made to the governor and the governor may exercise the powers of the Secretary of State.

(5) A reference to a consular representative recognised by the governor shall be substituted for the reference in section 4(1) above to a diplomatic representative recognised by the Secretary of State.

(6) Any reference to a magistrate, judge or court shall be construed as a reference to such judicial authority as the law of the colony may provide.

(7) Her Majesty may by Order in Council direct that in any colony specified in the Order—

(a) the Extradition Act 1870 shall have effect with the amendments made by this Act; and

(b) the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967 shall have effect with the amendments and repeals so made.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Government new clause 78 and Government amendments Nos. 40 and 41.

Mr. Patten: New clause 77 ensures that the substantive law contained in the Bill can have effect with appropriate modifications in a dependent territory or dependent territories generally. It thereby ensures that new extradition arrangements made by the United Kingdom can apply to a dependent territory or dependent territories. The new clause has been introduced at this stage because, after consideration, it was thought that the earlier version, clause 20, could be improved and made clearer. A number of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington caused us to check carefully that we had got the drafting exactly right.

New clause 78 allows the ad hoc extradition procedures which are being introduced into United Kingdom law by clause 11 to be made available in the colonies by Order in Council. Its terms follow exactly the provisions of clause 11 but with some modifications so that the wording is appropriate for the colonies. The modifications reflect those already made in new clause 77 in respect of the application of general extradition arrangements to the colonies. For example, references to the United Kingdom or Great Britain will become references to the colony or colonies, and so on.

The two related amendments are entirely consequential on the new clauses.

Mr. Worthington: It seems strange that at this late stage in this elderly Bill we should still be having these changes. We wonder what pressure has come from the colonies. It would be useful if the Minister could remind us what the colonies are. I hope that this will be dealt with because during the hours that I have sat on this Bench I have found it extremely difficult to remember where the colonies are and to which territories the new clause may apply.

Colonies have two characteristics. They are under-developed in one or more respects, which includes a deficient legal system. Frequently, colonies are disputed territories, with other states laying claim to them. I am making a probing point to find out how the Minister's new proposals will operate. Two areas which might count as colonies or dependent territories are the Falkland Islands and Gibraltar. They are not seen as having full independent status. What would be the arrangements—the Minister gave cursory attention to this point—if states laying claim to those territories requested the return of their nationals? I am sure that the Minister has the answer to hand.

In Committee, the Minister referred to the wisdom that he had received from the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) and said that note had been taken of it. I remember the hon. Member for Orpington having a profound objection to the word "colony", yet it is enshrined in the Bill.

Mr. Stanbrook *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Worthington: The hon. Gentleman reveals that he does not have an objection to the word "colony". In Committee, the hon. Gentleman said—I realise that I must paraphrase and not quote directly—that the word "colony" was unfashionable and that people living in one did not like to be described as living in a colony. He said that they did not mind the description "British dependent territories" or "dependent territories". After receiving the hon. Gentleman's wisdom, the Minister undertook to ascertain whether there could be unification of the terms used in the Bill and, in particular, whether it was possible to get rid of the term "colony", if that were acceptable under the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): The hon. Gentleman suggests that the inhabitants of those few remaining possessions might object to the use of "colony" —or "Crown colony", to give the correct description. Surely that does not apply in the Crown colony of Gibraltar, where the people demand the right to remain a Crown colony. The Crown colony of Montserrat will not take independence, although it has been offered by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, because it prefers to be a Crown colony. The Falkland Islands issue is well understood.

Mr. Worthington: I am grateful for that intervention because it enables me to make it clear that I did not object to the term "colony" but that the hon. Member for

[Mr. Worthington]

Orpington thought the word should be stamped out. I accept the advice of the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) about the feelings of the citizenry of Gibraltar.

I should like the Minister to explain what are the colonies and what pressure has come from them to extend the legislation, especially with regard to those areas of the globe that are disputed territories, where there may be hostility between a colony and its neighbouring states. What is the implication of a request from a neighbouring state for extradition?

That leads me to the other imperfections in the Bill. The Opposition agree that the major imperfection is the abandonment of the prima facie rule. A fundamental principle of our system of justice—whether the English and Welsh or the Scottish system—is that a formal case should be made which is seen to have some substance, and that it should be brought before a court and deliberated upon in a judicial rather than political way before a decision is taken to extradite.

7.45 pm

If the Bill is passed, it is necessary only that a technically correct submission be put before the appropriate authorities. A case does not have to be made that a substantial act of illegality was committed so as to justify extradition. The Opposition are still uneasy about the prima facie rule being dropped, especially for colonies. I remain to be convinced by the Minister, but it is likely that the system of justice in a colony may not be as advanced as in this country. Our views are shared by eminent bodies such as the National Council for Civil Liberties, Justice and the Criminal Bar Association. In Committee, we frequently asked the Minister to give a much more substantial illustration of the extent to which Britain was a "problem" in sometimes being regarded as a haven for criminals. The Government have failed to do that, so we must take the opportunity presented by the new clause to ask for elaboration.

We are profoundly uneasy, especially after the vote a few weeks ago, about the idea that it is possible for an individual to be extradited to a country that still practises capital punishment. That issue has not been put right in the new clause. I should like to register our unease about extradition from this country and from the colonies to countries that still practise capital punishment.

Mr. Stanbrook: The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) has confused me somewhat, and I do not know whether he has confused my hon. Friends. May we have from my hon. Friend the Minister confirmation that the Government have made up their mind about dependent territories and that there is to be standardisation of terminology, in that all dependent territories are now colonies, and that that applies to the wording of the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967 as well as to the revised arrangements for the amended Extradition Act 1870?

I apologise for being somewhat mischievous in this debate and in Standing Committee in referring to other species of dependent territories which might include protectorates and condominiums, which we do not have but could acquire. I am sure that it would be helpful to the state and to me if my hon. Friend were to tell us that all the territories coming under the sovereignty of the United Kingdom are to be known henceforth as colonies, whether self-governing or not, and that the term "dependent territory" will not be used.

Mr. Bermingham: I understand that in due course the Minister will give us a list of the colonies dealt with in new clauses 77 and 78. I shall wait with fascination to hear what, if anything, we have left. I see that the civil servants are all writing away. The Minister has his classroom pals at work. Be that as it may, new clauses 77 and 78 extend the mischief that clause 8 and others seek to achieve.

There was considerable debate in Committee about the manner of extradition and the abandonment by the United Kingdom of the tried and tested formula of a prima facie case. In the old days, one had to produce a prima facie case to an English court before someone could be extradited. That caused a little embarrassment to Spain and other countries that could never meet our tests. The test is very simple: there is a case to answer.

In the new European love affair that we have had over the past few years, the Government have obviously listened to new members of the Community as well as to existing members. They have obviously decided that the time has come to make it easier for countries that have a different system of jurisdiction to secure the extradition of people from the United Kingdom. Even if one uses the other system, which is inquisitorial rather than adversarial, it is still quite simple to build up and maintain a prima facie case that will secure extradition. We do not need to change the rules.

As if that were not bad enough, new clause 78 extends what I consider to be one of the most dangerous parts of the Bill—the simplified procedure in clause 10 of the Bill as originally drafted. Clause 11 provides for special extradition arrangements. Clause 11 says:

> "Where special extradition arrangements have been made in respect of a person, extradition procedures shall be available in the case of that person, as between the United Kingdom and the foreign state with whom the arrangements have been made, subject to the limitations, restrictions, exceptions and qualifications, if any, contained in the arrangements."

Effectively, that means that special arrangements can apply in respect of John Smith or John Doe or some other politician whom a country does not like. The country might rather like him back. He may have been naughty. He may have been in opposition, for example. A private little arrangement can be entered into with that country in respect of that one person. That stinks.

The fact that in the Bill we are putting our names to such behaviour makes me want to ask some fundamental questions about what the Minister has been doing for the long months since we began considering the Bill. The Minister has taken on board some of the points made in Committee both by Conservative Members and by the Opposition. I do not mean to be unkind: to be fair, when he thinks about a point he sometimes sees that there is worth and merit in it, and many of the proposals made in Committee have gone into the Bill.

It was different when it came to extradition. The Government have a theory—and the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) lives by the theory—that extradition law needs to be changed because it is out of date. To be fair to the hon. Member for Orpington, he was saying that long before the Bill ever reached the House. Although, as he knows, I fundamentally disagree with

him, at one stage even I was convinced that the prime facie rule must go. In Committee I confessed the error of my ways. Between March 1987, when we first discussed the matter in Committee, and February 1988, when we discussed it again, I took time to think the matter through. My open admission that I had got it wrong is there in *Hansard*.

The test is simple. If somebody comes for trial in this country, the Crown must show a case before the defence is called upon to answer. In the vast number of cases it is not very hard to meet that test. What is the difference between a foreign national in this country and an ordinary citizen of this country appearing before a British court? The same test ought to apply. That is the fundamental argument.

I had hoped that, like me, the Minister would have thought again and perhaps had the courage, like me, to realise that he was wrong and that the Criminal Bar Association and the chief metropolitan stipendiary magistrate, who has considerable experience in these matters, and many other eminent bodies, are right in saying that the test in any English court must be the same. The Bill and the new clauses, which extend its provisions to the long-forgotten colonies, wherever they may be, change the ground rules.

Let us consider the simple example of two successive cases before an English court. The first is an application for extradition to Spain, whether by special procedure or ordinary method, to be heard at 10·30 am before the chief metropolitan stipendiary magistrate in London. Let us suppose that that case finishes at 12 midday. The case to be heard in the afternoon is a section 6(1) committal for trial at the same court. In those two cases the tests of the standard of proof required on the part of the prosecution will be different. For the first time in this country we shall be applying different fundamental tests in the same court and perhaps even on the same day. That is bad for British justice. It is an appalling precedent and I hope that the House will reject the new clauses.

Mr. Lawrence: As a proud member of the executive of the British branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association—at any rate until next Wednesday—I must protest most strongly at the implication by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) that we forget our colonies, our dependencies, or any part of the Commonwealth. We do no such thing in the House. There is very strong competition to join the executive of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which proves that we do not forget our colonies, our dependencies or the Commonwealth.

Mr. Worthington: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman name the colonies?

Mr. Lawrence: I shall leave that to my hon. Friend the Minister, who is about to reply.

Will my hon. Friend tell this simple soul what we are changing in the law by the new clauses? I was under the impression that section 14(1)(b) of the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967, applied the criminal offences jurisdiction to our dependencies. If I heard him correctly, my hon. Friend said that that was the purpose of the new clauses. I should be most grateful if he would set me right.

Mr. John Patten: The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) ought to be ashamed of himself for not being able to tell the House what colonies we have. It is a monstrous admission, and I shall now put him right: Anguilla, Bahamas, Bermuda, the British Antarctic Territory, the British Indian Ocean Territory, the Cayman Islands, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, Montserrat, Pitcairn Islands, St. Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the Virgin Islands. For the sake of completion I should draw the attention of the House to the fact that technically the South Sandwich Islands and South Georgia are now separate from the Falkland Islands. They used to be the Falkland Islands and dependencies.

8 pm

The Opposition Front Bench asked why it was necessary at this stage to introduce the new clause and these amendments. It is my fault. The main difficulty with clause 20, which I spotted only recently, is that the effect of section 17 of the Extradition Act 1870 was that an Order in Council under section 2 of that Act, unless it provided otherwise, applied automatically to every British possession—that is the substantive provisions of the 1870 Act with modifications and the terms of the relevant treaty as incorporated in the Order in Council. Clause 20 would enable us to extend the substantive provisions of the Bill to a colony, but it makes no corresponding provision for the incorporation of the relevant treaty into the law of the colony. Therefore, the new clause is necessary.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie and my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) rightly asked about the use of the word "colony". The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) related his remarks to colonies, and I can tell him that the unfortunate person whom he saw in Bow street at 10.30 am is protected by the full rigour of all the protections built into clause 75, and ultimately by the discretion of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that if, ultimately, it all boils down to ministerial discretion, this becomes a lottery because it depends in many ways on how much pressure is brought to bear on whether that person is or is not a political refugee? Surely there should be certainty, rather than uncertainty, in the law.

Mr. Patten: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman has fully forgotten all the other provisions introduced into the Bill by clause 75. I am sure the House will want to know that "colony" is used rather than "dependent territory" because it is defined in the Interpretation Act 1978 as:

> "Any part of Her Majesty's dominions outside the British Islands except—
>
> (a) countries having fully responsible status within the Commonwealth;
>
> (b) territories for whose external relations a country other than the United Kingdom is responsible;
>
> (c) associated states",

and there are no more associated states. All that will be beautifully crystal clear to the House when the second edition of that important and valuable volume "Stanbrook on Extradition" is published, and we are looking forward to it.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 159, Noes 70.

Division No. 361] **[8.03 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Grylls, Michael
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Ryder and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Cousins, Jim
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Janner, Greville
Leighton, Ron
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wall, Pat
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 78

SPECIAL EXTRADITION ARRANGEMENTS—COLONIES

'(1) Her Majesty may by Order in Council direct that this section shall extend to any colony specified in the Order in the case of foreign states with whom there are no general extradition arrangements, subject to the limitations, restrictions, exceptions and qualifications, if any, contained in the Order.

(2) Where arrangements have been made in respect of a person under which extradition procedures under this Part of this Act will be available as between a colony to which this section applies and a foreign state, such extraction procedures shall be available in the case of that person, as between the colony and the state with whom the arrangements have been made, subject—

(a) to the modifications of the provisions of this Act specified in subsection (2) of section *(Application of general extradition arrangements to colonies)* above set out in subsections (3) to (6) of that section;

(b) to any further modifications as to procedure prescribed by the law of the colony; and

(c) to the limitationss, restrictions, exceptions and qualifications, if any, contained in the arrangements.

(3) The provisions of this Act mentioned in section *(Application of general extradition arrangements to colonies)* (2)(a) to (c) above shall extend to the colony so far as is necessary for the purposes of the arrangements.

(4) If the governor or the Secretary of State issues a certificate—

(a) that such arrangements have been made; and
(b) that extradition procedures are available in the case of the person named in the certificate as between the colony and the foreign state to the extent specified in the certificate,

it shall be conclusive evidence of all matters stated in it.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 79

Enforcement of Northern Ireland Order in Scotland

'(1) Her Majesty may by Order in Council provide that for the purposes of any part of the law of Northern Ireland which appears to Her Majesty to correspond to this Part of this Act sections 89 to 92 above shall have effect as they have effect for the purposes of this Part subject to such modifications as may be specified in the Order.

(2) An Order in Council under this section may contain such incidental, consequential and transitional provisions as Her Majesty considers expedient.

(3) An Order in Council under this section shall not be made unless a draft of the Order has been laid before Parliament and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.'—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Patten: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 54 and 55.

8.15 pm

Mr. Patten: Hon. Members, particularly those who served on the Committee, will be aware of the provisions in part VI of the Bill which enable courts to confiscate the proceeds of crime and which have been widely welcomed. We want to ensure that confiscation orders are enforceable throughout the United Kingdom, regardless of the jurisdiction in which they were made. We propose to bring forward legislation in due course to enable confiscation orders to be made and to be enforced in Northern Ireland. Clause 93 already contains a power to enable Northern Ireland orders to be enforceable in England and Wales, but we shall need an equivalent power to enable them to be enforced in Scotland, too.

That is the simple purpose of new clause 79 and of Government amendments Nos. 54 and 55, which I commend to the House.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I thank the Minister for his helpful introduction which has answered one or two of the questions that I might otherwise have asked. However, I intervene briefly, in a fairly tentative spirit and with a touch of embarrassment because, as the Minister will recognise, I have not been involved, in even the most peripheral way, with this Bill. I regret that in a sense, because, as the House knows, we in Scotland are a little sensitive about our tangential appearances in Bills that are largely the concern of Ministries whose writ does not run north of the border. The Bill contains matters of real substance and importance which are difficult to scrutinise and do not come up in this new clause and will therefore have to remain unscrutinised.

For example, I wish to refer—I shall do so only in passing so as not to strain your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker—to clause 122 which deals with the detention of young offenders in Scotland and is a major and important reform. The Minister may not be aware of the background to that, but it is a case of Ministers eating humble pie because the first Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill, which was introduced in 1978, but failed at the general election, contained some Labour amendments very much along the lines of this clause. They were derided at the time and, when the Tories came in, they went for a different system in the Criminal Justice Bill which then reached the statute book.

If I could, I should like to spend some time speaking about such matters, but that pleasure is denied to me and the Minister on this occasion. I cannot vouch personally for the Minister's reputation, as I have never had to deal with him in an official capacity, but his reputation suggests that there might be a wide measure of agreement and that the tone might be constructive. I hope that it does not depress him to hear that I have heard good things said about him. I am not smearing him; I am simply welcoming him to the human race so far as penal matters are concerned, and I am delighted to do so.

New clause 79 is a rather odd clause in the sense that it refers to Northern Ireland and to the enforcement of a Northern Ireland order in Scotland. The provision applies to Scotland, but is introduced by the Home Secretary who has responsibility only for what happens in England and Wales. A little while ago I took the precaution of phoning the Scottish Office to ask for an explanation of the new clause. My call created a little confusion, although the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who is noted for his courtesy, came across personally with a note for me which set out in skeleton fashion the Scottish Office's understanding of the significance of the new clause. The Scottish Office is relying on the simplistic explanation that the new clause is necessary and includes enforcement provisions. The explanation does not go very much beyond that.

We are dealing with a matter with which I am totally unfamiliar. As I understand the Minister, we are considering a possible future order which may be laid extending to Northern Ireland similar powers to the provisions in the Bill for England and Wales. It is important to stress that we are talking about the enforcement of English orders. As the Minister will know from his general background and no doubt wide-ranging interest in the subject, we do not have similar orders in Scotland.

The history of this matter is interesting. The Scots looked long and hard at confiscation powers and decided that they did not want to go down that road, at least in the immediate future. We had a very odd piece of legislation which introduced heavy and punitive fines for drug trafficking in Scotland. I remember spending many happy hours in Committee trying to persuade Scottish Office Ministers to explain the criteria that the courts would apply when deciding what was appropriate in quantifying the fines.

Those measures were introduced a few years ago in the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985 on the basis that we did not want confiscation orders in Scotland. However, fashion and populism are powerful drugs. That is an unfortunate simile when we are talking about drug trafficking. Shortly after the introduction of that Act, the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987 was passed which departed from fines for drug trafficking which were meant to cream off illegal profits. It introduced

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

straight confiscation. Again, that was specifically limited to drug trafficking. The Scottish Office was careful to say that it did not, at least at that stage, intend to follow its English counterpart by introducing confiscation with regard to serious crime generally which has happened for England and Wales in this Bill. That does not apply in Scotland.

If the Minister is going to introduce a Northern Ireland order which the new clause will allow to be enforced in Scotland, there will be broader powers for confiscating the profits from serious crime in England and Wales. The same provision will apply in Northern Ireland, but those powers will not apply in Scotland, although there will be a specific exception for those who profit from the abhorrent trade of drug trafficking. That is a rather strange patchwork.

I assume that the order for Northern Ireland is imminent, although it may be naive of me to say that. I suppose that the fact that this proposal has not been included in the Bill at this late stage is a fail-safe device in case it is thought appropriate in future. I presume that the order is more than a gleam in the Minister's eye. I presume that there is at least a draft on his desk and that it will be produced in the not too distant future. No doubt the Minister will be able to say a word or two about its timing and framework.

This is apparently a single order and not a clutch of orders. My experience in Scotland is that orders come in clutches, droves and plagues under this Government. It is quite encouraging that there is only one order on this occasion.

No doubt this may be a reflection of my naivety—perhaps that is being a little unfair on myself, rather a reflection on my inexperience of Northern Ireland affairs—but, as a refugee from the legal profession, may I say that there appears to be a rather odd exhibit here. We are told that Her Majesty—I believe that that is something of a constitutional convention—must judge what appears to correspond to this part of the Act with regard to the English confiscation powers. Presumably that will apply in terms of the aim of any Northern Ireland order.

We are talking about an order that we have not seen which effectively allows the Executive to decide what corresponds in different provisions. I am not very clear about how loosely we are introducing this matter into Scottish law. I am not very clear about Orders in Council, but I will not ask the Minister to go into that. I am used to statutory instruments, regulations and variants of that kind. I understand that there are special considerations in Northern Ireland, and I accept that that must be so, given the present difficult circumstances.

I took the trouble to look out the most obvious and recent parallel to this provision. It is to be found in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 which applies English orders for drug trafficking in Scotland and allows them to be enforced in Scotland. The Minister will remember that the pertinent section of that Act is section 20. I presume that the general provisions in sections 20 to 23 are very similar to the provision in new clause 79 in terms of the Northern Ireland provision. I presume that new clause 79 is an exact parallel and the powers are the same.

I raised that point out of curiosity. I notice that section 20(4) of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 deals with the enforcement of English orders in Scotland and states:

"Nothing in this section enables any provision of an order which empowers a receiver to do anything in Scotland under section 11(3)*(a)* of this Act to have effect in the law of Scotland."

It took me a minute or two to understand that. I went back to section 11(3)*(a)*, as anyone would in the circumstances. That dealt with the realisation of property and it referred me to section 9 in the Act. As so often happens, it became something of a paper chase. Section 9 deals with the

"Charging orders in respect of land, securities etc."

I do not expect the Minister to say anything about the "etc." However, as he seemed to assent to my proposition that the machinery for enforcement in section 20 of the 1986 Act is an exact parallel to the enforcement provisions for Scotland of English confiscation orders in this Bill, and as we are making similar arrangements for Northern Ireland in this new clause, if we have a Northern Ireland order in future, I wonder whether the Minister will say a word or two about the powers in section 11(3)*(a)*. I should have thought that those powers would be available to the receiver under this Bill in the English provisions, but they were excluded in the 1986 Act. I hope he will tell us whether there are similar provisions in the clutch of clauses that we are considering at the moment.

We could spend some time on this matter if we were in Committee. I recognise that we are not in Committee and it would probably be wrong to detain the House for too long on these matters. However, we need some general assurances about the likely fate of the order. We need to know when it will appear, whether it will be exact in point or whether we will stretch the matter of correspondence. We need to know more about its similarity and comparability with existing provisions in the Bill for England. We also need to know to what extent this will be a standard provision.

8.30 pm

I am genuinely sorry that we have not been given an opportunity to examine the merits of those provisions, because I sometimes find to my chagrin that what happens in the Home Office foreshadows what happens in Scotland. Funnily enough, we are sensitive about being used as guinea pigs in respect of such matters as the poll tax, although I certainly cannot go into that.

Very often the opposite applies. We went for confiscation in drug trafficking largely on the ground that cross-border harmony is important, at the time when the Scottish Office specifically indicated that it would not be going down that road. At present, the Scottish Office is again stoutly maintaining that it has no immediate plans to introduce confiscation orders in the wider range of serious crime. However, the Scottish Law Commission is examining that matter and we await a report of its investigations.

I suspect that, whatever it may come up with, we are probably committed to going down that road simply because the Minister and his colleagues in the Home Office have already decided to do so. The Minister will recognise that we have more than a passing interest in the way in which this aspect is handled and its operation. We shall certainly watch for early signs of activity in the courts. I may be over-cynical, but some of the machinery appears complicated and clumsy, as are some of the concepts relating to confiscation. Also, some of the morality

involved in terms of third parties raises some difficult issues, which we have debated in another context and will continue to discuss at greater length on a future occasion. Perhaps the Minister owes the House a few more words about this minor but interesting new clause which he has produced for our inspection.

Mr. John Patten: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) need not fear that some of the issues that he raised were not closely examined in the Standing Committee, because we had the benefit of his hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), who lucidly pressed home many of them. I can flatter the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, because he is not in the Chamber, but I hope that it will not do him any damage with his general management committee. He was consistently impressive in probing the Government in Committee, and I hope that he will soon be on the Labour Front Bench. I understand that it is rather the thing now to have hon. Members from Scotland on the Labour Front Bench, and I am sure that it will not be long before the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie is there. For example, the point made by the hon. Member for Garscaden about young offenders was typical of those impressively made by his hon. Friend in Committee.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked many pertinent questions. The Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987 contains powers of confiscation corresponding to those enacted for England and Wales in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has asked the Scottish Law Commission to consider what powers of confiscation should be available to Scottish Courts for offences other than drug trafficking, and the commission is currently considering that matter.

The Northern Ireland order—if and when it passes through the House—will allow court orders to be made. We hope to lay that order before the House in the next Session. I hope that the hon. Member for Garscadden will be pleased to hear that an Order in Council made under new clause 79 will be subject to affirmative resolution. That assurance will provide the hon. Gentleman with an opportunity to make his further comments. Without that provision there would be a real risk—which the hon. Gentleman, as a Scotsman, would not welcome—that the proceeds of crimes committed in Northern Ireland could cross what is, after all, a narrow strip of water in some places and find a haven in Scotland. That is not a situation that we could countenance with anything like equanimity.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 80

BODY SAMPLES—NORTHERN IRELAND

'Schedule *[Body Samples—Northern Ireland]* shall have effect with respect to the taking of samples from persons in Northern Ireland in connection with the investigation of offences to which it applies.'—*[Mr. Stanley.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Stanley): I beg to move, That the Clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to consider the following: New clause 82 —*Non-intimate samples (Great Britain)*—

'The same powers shall be available to police forces in England and Wales with regard to the taking of non-intimate samples as are given to the police in Northern Ireland in section *(Body Samples—Northern Ireland)*.'.

Government amendments Nos. 68, 69, 196 and 70.

Mr. Stanley: The effect of the new clause and the related schedule and amendments will be to bring on to the statute book essentially the same provisions on the taking of body samples from those suspected of serious offences as have already been passed into law in England and Wales under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984—the so-called PACE.

I start by anticipating two questions which right hon. and hon. Members will wish to raise. The first is why it is necessary to introduce these provisions through the Criminal Justice Bill rather than through the normal Northern Ireland order-making procedure; the second is why, given that we have decided to use the Criminal Justice Bill, the amendments could not have been introduced at an earlier stage in the Bill's proceedings.

It was originally our intention to introduce the PACE provisions on body samples in the Northern Ireland draft order, in which we shall be replicating for Northern Ireland most of the PACE provisions. However, given the extensive scope and complexity of this draft order, which we shall be publishing for consultation later this year, it will not come into effect, subject to parliamentary approval, until 1989. The Criminal Justice Bill provides the possibility of bringing the statute law on the taking of body samples in Northern Ireland into line with that in England and Wales significantly earlier than would otherwise be the case. I hope the House will agree that there should be no avoidable delays in assisting the RUC to deal with serious and violent crime.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am glad that my right hon. Friend wants no avoidable delay in assisting the RUC. However, I and others suggested several years ago during the Committee stage of what is now the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, that such powers should be given to the RUC. Does my hon. Friend not think that there has been a good deal of avoidable delay between then and now?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend knows that the relevant overall legislation covered by the PACE provisions in Northern Ireland is somewhat different from that in England. We have seen the considerable process of examining the applicability of that situation in the Northern Ireland context. We shall shortly be presenting a substantial and complex order. I am not familiar with the detailed gestation over the period since the PACE legislation was passed, but I feel sure that my Department has done its utmost to press forward as quickly as possible. However, I am certain that we have this opportunity to give the RUC statutory powers that are extremely important and germane to their law enforcement responsibilities.

The present lack of statutory provisions for the taking of body samples is proving a material handicap in the circumstances of Northern Ireland. At present the RUC can act only under the common law, and this uncertainty has tended to handicap the police in the conduct of their investigations, as well as leaving suspects uncertain as to

[Mr. Stanley]

their rights. Furthermore, major advances in DNA profiling have become available to forensic scientists in recent years, making the ability to take body samples of even greater forensic value to the police than hitherto when dealing with violent crime, both terrorist and non-terrorist. For those reasons we have decided to take the opportunity presented by the Criminal Justice Bill to give the RUC the PACE powers to take samples and clarify the rights of those affected.

The reason why the amendments were not introduced earlier in the proceedings on the Bill is that our PACE order has been taking longer to finalise than was expected and it is only relatively recently that it has become apparent that there is likely to be a material time advantage in bringing the body sample provisions onto the statute book through the Criminal Justice Bill rather than through our PACE order. In addition, because of the consideration that we have been giving to the boundary between intimate and non-intimate body samples, to which I shall return, it was not possible, I am afraid, to introduce these amendments until the commencement of the Report stage of the Criminal Justice Bill.

Let me deal now with the detailed provisions of the amendments, the substantive element of which is essentially set out in the new schedule. With one modification, to which I shall come, the new schedule essentially reproduces for Northern Ireland the equivalent provisions on the taking of body samples in England and Wales as are found in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

The powers to take body samples relate only to those who are suspected of being involved in serious offences. The serious offences listed in the new schedule are the same as those in the PACE Act and include murder, rape, kidnapping, sexual offences against children and various firearms and explosive offences. In addition, the powers to take body samples under this schedule will also apply to a person arrested under section 12(1)(b) of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1984, which allows the police to arrest a person who is or has been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism.

The new schedule makes the same distinction as in the England and Wales legislation between intimate and non-intimate samples. Again, as in England and Wales, it provides that a non-intimate sample may be taken without the suspect's consent, but that an intimate sample may be taken only with the suspect's consent. With one difference, the definition of what constitutes intimate samples on the one hand, and non-intimate samples on the other, exactly follows the England and Wales legislation. The one difference is that we have included in the definition of non-intimate samples a swab taken from the suspect's mouth. A sample of saliva has also been added, because the taking of a mouth sample unavoidably results in the taking of saliva, for which a statutory basis needs, of course, to be provided.

We are making that one difference for DNA profiling reasons. As the House knows, DNA profiling has made great strides in recent years and this progress seems certain to continue. DNA profiling is already proving of increasing forensic value to the police in providing the possibility of enabling those suspected of violent crime to be positively identified by the matching of the suspect's DNA profile with the profile of DNA material found on the victim's body or clothes or at the scene of the crime. DNA profiling, it should be stressed, is proving of value in eliminating suspects as well as in confirming a suspect's involvement.

The reason why a mouth swab is being added to the list of non-intimate samples in the new schedule is this. Under the England and Wales legislation, the samples that can be guaranteed to provide sufficient DNA material for profiling purposes, blood in particular, are classified as intimate, and can therefore be taken only with the suspect's consent. In England and Wales, we understand that that consent is normally forthcoming; hence the fact that this change is being made in relation to Northern Ireland only. However, in Northern Ireland, both among terrorist organisations, and increasingly among other serious non-terrorist criminals, there is an altogether more determined and more systematic attempt to conceal and to destroy material that may be of forensic value to the police.

Relatively recently, as research on DNA profiling has progressed, it has been discovered that a mouth swab, which can be taken by rubbing the area between the lip and the gum, and without any need for the mouth, other than the lips, to be opened, will usually provide a reliable means of obtaining sufficient DNA material for profiling purposes without a need for contact with a part of the body that would generally be considered to be intimate.

8.45 pm

Last year in Northern Ireland 100 people were murdered and nearly 200 were made the victims of the barbaric practice of punishment shootings, with victims being shot through knees, ankles and elbows. We also had our share of other violent crimes such as rape and other forms of violence against the person. In the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland, highlighted once again by the horrific murder of six soldiers yesterday, it seems to us to be entirely reasonable and necessary, in the interests of protecting the law-abiding public, to give the police powers to take a mouth swab, if necessary, without the suspect's consent.

We shall at the same time be ensuring through the new schedule that the statutory rights of individuals from whom samples are requested are clarified, and I should like to spell these out.

First, no sample can be taken—intimate or non-intimate—except with the authorisation of an RUC officer of the rank of superintendent or above.

Secondly, that authorisation can be given only if the superintendent has reasonable grounds, first for suspecting the involvement of the suspect in one of the serious offences listed in the schedule, and, secondly, for believing that the sample will tend to confirm or disprove the suspect's involvement. These authorisations by the superintendent will of course all be justiciable before the courts. Thirdly, as I have said, an intimate sample may be taken only with the suspect's consent, and then, other than a sample of urine, only by a registered medical practitioner. Fourthly, we shall be publishing and making available to the House that part of our code of practice under the PACE legislation which relates to the taking of body samples before the new provisions come into effect.

The specific safeguards in relation to the taking of body samples will, of course, be additional to the standard safeguards already available to all arrested persons under

the existing judges' rules. For terrorists, the safeguards include statutory rights of access to legal advice and to having a family member or friend informed of the arrest. Indeed, it is the RUC's standard practice to give terrorist suspects a written notice setting out their rights.

I hope the House will agree that it is right that the legislation in Northern Ireland on the taking of body samples should be brought into line with that in the rest of the United Kingdom at the earliest possible opportunity. I hope the House will also agree that the potential forensic importance of the very limited addition to the ability to take non-intimate samples that we are proposing for the RUC is fully justified in relation to the unique difficulties put in the way of the police in Northern Ireland in obtaining forensic evidence, and also in relation to the compelling obligation that we have to protect the public from violent criminals in what is, sadly, still much the most violent part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Just before the recess I received a letter from the Secretary of State courteously informing me of the Government's intention to table this new clause on Report, and I am grateful for that.

The purpose behind the new clause, and the schedule involved, is one with which the House will agree. I do not think that people generally will object to the changes regarding saliva and mouth swabs which have been made specifically to meet the situation in Northern Ireland. It does not strike me as an infringement of human dignity.

It is also particularly important in the campaign against men of violence, or indeed women of violence—whether or not they are involved in terrorism—that this weapon should be added to the forensic arsenal. We cannot rule out any legitimate scientific advance in our fight against serious crime. That is equally true in Great Britain and in Northern Ireland. If they may help in finding men guilty of such outrages as we discussed earlier today, no one in his right mind should deny these methods to the police force.

DNA profiling, as the Minister has pointed out, is an important and significant scientific development. In many ways it can be a new defence for those caught up in circumstances in which they might be found guilty but scientific evidence can result in their acquittal. This is one of the instances in which the advance of science works equally well in dealing with the wrongly accused and the person who seeks a false alibi to escape conviction. It is therefore to be welcomed.

At the same time, I wonder to what extent the new developments in DNA profiling will make it continually necessary to seek intimate samples. I understand that nearly all DNA characteristics can be found in non-intimate samples. If so, much of what we are discussing today will, I hope, become obsolete. I also hope that it will mean more effective policing and police discovery of serious crimes. I hope that the Minister can advise the House whether he feels that DNA profiling will no longer necessitate the taking of some intimate body samples, granted that safeguards exist in the taking of such samples.

While I support the purpose and spirit of the Minister's proposals, I fear that I cannot support his method. I felt that his reasons for introducing the proposals on Report were rather thin. It is not as though this was new material; it has been on the statute book for four or five years, and we on the mainland are well acquainted with it. I understand the pressures from the RUC and the security forces in Northern Ireland to end the doubt and to be given such powers, but that desire existed when the Bill was first introduced. This is the second occasion on which it has been before the House. The proposal could have been included in the second Bill, if not in the first.

When the old PACE order for Northern Ireland was being drafted, it must have been clear to the Minister that the RUC would want to accelerate the introduction of parts of that legislation into the arsenal of forensic weaponry. It seems that only four, five or six weeks ago the Government thought, "We are not going to be able to do this now. Let us shove it into the Report stage," but it could have been done earlier. Many of the points that I shall make later are essentially Committee points and could have been dealt with in Committee. Those interested for reasons of civil liberty or legal procedure—or perhaps with a straightforward interest in the fight against crime—could have had the opportunity to put their ideas to the Committee. As it is, we are in the position that we were in when dealing earlier this week with the Housing Bill. We are facing the same attitude from the Government, and the same material difficulties.

We are not being given proper time to go through all the small print of this important item. It is a case of take it or leave it. Either we pass the new clause as it is, or we seek to vote against it. We have no opportunity to try to amend it constructively. Normally, in a matter affecting criminal justice, there is common ground on both sides of the House. Hon. Members should have the opportunity to contribute their thinking so that Ministers, even those at the Northern Ireland Office, can have second thoughts and come back on Report. This is scarcely the way to advance understanding and discussion of such important matters.

We should not consider Northern Ireland in such a context. We return to the question: why was it necessary to introduce the proposal in this way? Again, the Minister's arguments were very thin. It is not new legislation; it has been there for a long time. We could, if necessary, have taken the new clause and amendment No. 196 out of the proposed PACE legislation and order for Northern Ireland, produced it as a separate Order in Council and sent it round to the bodies that might want to discuss it. That might not have been the best way of dealing with the matter, but it would have given interested bodies such as the Police Federation and the Bar Association an opportunity to make their observations. We could also have discussed the matter when debating the last major Bill dealing with Northern Ireland, or in the European Parliamentary Assembly in the light of United Kingdom experience.

This casual attitude contains all sorts of problems for Northern Ireland legislation and the way in which these matters are dealt with on the Floor of the House. It is not a question of take it or leave it. People mind about that way of dealing with such questions.

The former semi-detached Leader of the House—now the detached right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen)—put it eloquently when we were dealing with the Firearms (Amendment) Bill. It was the same principle with regard to Northern Ireland. New material was introduced on Report. It was important material which in that context most hon. Members would not have regarded as particularly controversial. It is important because of what we seek to achieve in the fight against the men of

[Mr. Kevin MacNamara]

violence in Northern Ireland, but again we were asked either to accept it or to reject it. That was not the right way to deal with it.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North, speaking in the debate on the allocation of time for the Firearms (Amendment) Bill, said:

"Thirdly, the Bill now contains provisions for Northern Ireland that were introduced at a late stage. I would not anticipate the speech of the hon. Member for Londonderry (Mr. Ross) but the House knows, from its intimate concern with Northern Ireland affairs over the years, that the idea of transforming British legislation into United Kingdom legislation by making a common provision for the Province is a matter of considerable constitutional significance, which I suspect would divide the House in several directions. I shall not dwell on that this evening, except to say that one cannot introduce legislation of this character, with its implications for precedent, on some sort of side wind introduced on Report. That is not a proper use of parliamentary procedure."

9 pm

It is a matter of considerable constitutional significance. I shall not dwell on the matter at length, but the danger is there. A precedent was being set in that Bill. Various matters relating to Northern Ireland were being introduced on a side wind on Report. That is not the proper way to deal with matters that concern and are important to the people of Northern Ireland. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North referred in that debate to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross).

Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Londonderry, East did not wax so eloquent as the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North, who had cause to blaze a trail for us. Nevertheless, what he lacked in paragraphs he made up for by his succinct and direct remarks during the limited time that was available to him. He referred kindly to the speech of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North when he said:

"We have listened to a most interesting and entertaining speech from the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). He referred to the fact that the Bill was extended to Northern Ireland at the last moment, a matter which annoys Northern Ireland Members intensely. That should not become a precedent. If the Government were to pursue this course in future, time and again legislation for Northern Ireland would be introduced and we would not even know it was coming. Only a fortnight ago today, the amendment extending the Bill to Northern Ireland was tabled and it was just by chance that I happened to notice it the next morning." —[*Official Report*, 25 May 1988; Vol. 134, c. 392-93.]

Not all of us have the courtesy of letters from the Secretary of State informing us of changes or other proposals, but what the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North and the hon. Member for Londonderry, East seemed to fear was the creation of a precedent. That precedent seems to have been created, from the Firearms (Amendment) Bill to this Bill. We have to make sure that it goes no further. When the Minister replies to the debate, I hope that he will be able to give to Northern Ireland Members and to other hon. Members an undertaking that such a procedure will be avoided in future.

The deficiencies of this kind of procedure are shown by part of the Minister's speech. He said that when this provision is introduced the relevant part of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act regulations dealing with it will be published at the same time. If the Minister could produce the schedule for us, he could also produce the regulations governing the code of practice. We are arguing, debating and discussing something without knowing precisely what terms, procedures and practices are to be followed by officers of the rank of superintendent and above.

We do not know what the rights of those who are challenged will be, or how those rights are to be protected. That is all in limbo. The House will have no opportunity to discuss matters that are of the utmost importance when powers such as these are given to the police. We ought to be able to discuss the manner in which the Government are seeking to proceed with these matters at the same time as we are giving powers to the Government and to the police.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I have been following the hon. Gentleman's speech very closely. Would it not be passing strange if the guidance sent to the Royal Ulster Constabulary were materially to differ from that which is already available and used by the police in England and Wales? If that is the case, and if the guidance is going to be identical, as I trust it will be, what is the reason for not providing it now?

Mr. McNamara: I thank the hon. Gentleman for putting so eloquently what was going to be my next point —that the code is published in Great Britain. He made the point very well. It is a serious point which needs to be answered. We have to know if there will be any differences at all.

Having made a general point that should be made on Report, regrettably I must make what many would regard as a Committee stage point, but unfortunately this is the only stage at which we can discuss it. First, I wish to raise a question about the definition of an intimate sample. We are told that it means

"a sample of blood, semen, or any other tissue fluid, urine or pubic hair, or a swab taken from any of a person's bodily orifices except his mouth".

I, and I think most hon. Members, would accept the reasons for "except his mouth."

We would like to know how far the point that I made earlier, which arose from my immediate response to what the Minister said about DNA profiling, will apply to all those samples of an intimate nature. Will we reach a point where, for purposes of identification—there are other purposes; for example, a sample of urine to test for drunken driving—it will be sufficient to have a non-intimate sample? On a more flippant note, but still a serious point, what would be the attitude of a district judge in Port Laoise to a DNA profile for identity purposes? Perhaps that is trespassing on foreign jurisdiction.

An intimate sample can be taken only by appropriate consent. That provision gives protection to a person who is accused. According to the schedule,

"'appropriate consent' means—

(a) in relation to a person who has attained the age of 17 years, the consent of that person;

(b) in relation to a person who has not attained that age but has attained the age of 14 years; the consent of that person and his parent or guardian; and

(c) in relation to a person who has not attained the age of 14 years, the consent of his parent or guardian".

Under the heading, "Intimate Samples", the schedule states:

"(9) Where the appropriate consent to the taking of an intimate sample from a person was refused without good cause, in any proceedings against that person for an offence—

(a) the court, in determining—

(i) whether to commit that person for trial; or

(ii) whether there is a case to answer; and

(b) the court or jury, in determining whether that person is guilty of the offence charged,

may draw such inferences from the refusal as appear proper; and the refusal may, on the basis of such inferences, be treated as, or as capable of amounting to, corroboration of any evidence against the person in relation to which the refusal is material."

That seems good.

What is "without good cause"? As I understand it, that has not been defined. Would the nature of a person's religion constitute good cause? What sort of inference would be drawn from a person's refusing to give an intimate sample of his semen because he might regard that as the sin of Onan—a mortal sin? Would it be regarded as good cause if a Christian Scientist refused to give a sample because that represented an attack on the body? I am not asking these questions flippantly. We need definitions because people's dignity is affected as much by religious attitudes to such matters as by a dislike of physical assault. The increasing use of DNA can become of the utmost importance in establishing identity.

Section 62(8) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act provides:

"If an intimate sample is taken from a person detained at a police station, the matters required to be recorded by subsection (7) above shall be recorded in his custody record."

There appears to be no similar requirement for Northern Ireland, which has a different provision of which I heartily approve. Are there any real differences of substance between the procedures in Northern Ireland and those in the United Kingdom? Would the procedures within the RUC cover the matter contained in section 62(8) about custody records? I do not know; the House is entitled to know.

I welcome the provision:

"An intimate sample, other than a sample of urine, may only be taken from a person by a registered medical practitioner."

That is useful and proper.

The English legislation covering these matters refers to "serious arrestable offences". The schedule gives a list of precise offences; to a degree, they are already covered in the English legislation. Is anything in the Northern Ireland legislation not contained in the English, Scottish or Welsh legislation—or vice versa? In other words, are serious arrestable offences synonymous with the list in the schedule to the new clause?

The answer to my final question may be an historical one. One of the serious arrestable offences in the United Kingdom is

"incest with a girl under the age of 13".

In Northern Ireland, the age is 14. Similarly, section 5 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 governing the United Kingdom lays down that

"intercourse with a girl under the age of 13"

is such an offence. Again, in Northern Ireland, the corresponding age is 14. I take it that those are historical accidents arising from old jurisdiction.

The new clause is too important to have been introduced in this way and tacked on as a mere appendage to a piece of English legislation. There are mechanisms for introducing similar Northern Ireland legislation, for all the failings in the way in which the House treats these mattes. A debate under such mechanisms might raise different matters for discussion. We should have had an opportunity to discuss this in far more detail in Committee.

It would be helpful if the House were told whom the Government consulted. Did they merely consult the RUC? I can understand why the RUC wants this power. Why did the Government not issue a full consultative document? Why, instead of giving weak and thin excuses, did they not tell the House earlier of their proposals so that we could have dealt with the Bill in a more workmanlike manner?

9.15 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The effect of new clause 82 is to ensure that there is symmetry between the powers available to the police in Northern Ireland and those available to the police in England and Wales for the taking of non-intimate samples.

Like the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), I believe that no hon. Member could object to the application to Northern Ireland of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 powers and responsibilities for the taking of intimate and non-intimate samples to achieve successful prosecutions against the evil men who perpetrate terror or traffic in drugs.

I am very much with my hon. Friend the Minister on the principal argument about which the Government are seeking to persuade the House. My criticism is not so much that the Government are asking the House to apply those powers to Northern Ireland as that when they were asked—among others by myself—when the Police and Criminal Evidence Act was proceeding through the House for an inordinate length of time, the Government were not willing to do that and said that Northern Ireland was different. Apparently, at least in this respect, events in Northern Ireland over the past four or five years have not made Northern Ireland different. We shall apply the main body of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act requirements to the Bill, which is entirely correct.

Where I must depart from my hon. Friend is that the Bill is not simply applying the same rules that apply in England and Wales but goes a step further. He is saying, "Let us apply the Police and Criminal Evidence Act rules to intimate and non-intimate samples exactly as they are and have been in England and Wales for the past five years, but let us add one more—the ability to take the swab between the lip and gum to assist police in Northern Ireland with what is rather fancifully called DNA profiling, but which ordinary people would more easily recognise as genetic fingerprinting."

The Minister is entirely right to say that the RUC needs to be able to take swabs. They will be of material help in dealing with terrorist and drug offences. What I cannot understand is why it is right to provide powers to the RUC but deny them to the Metropolitan police and the other police forces on this side of the water which deal with the same offences.

If the House agrees to the Government's proposals—I hope that it will—a wanted terrorist or suspected drug trafficker could be stopped at Belfast airport and a swab taken between his lip and gum, which could establish that he is the wanted person or, just as important, eliminate him from the investigation. But once that same man gets across to Heathrow airport the Metropolitan police will not be able to take a swab between the lip and the gum.

As I said earlier, I am very much in favour of symmetry between the powers available and the responsibilities of the police in Northern Ireland and in England and Wales. It makes for consistency and greater public accountability.

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

It makes it easier for the public to understand what is going on if the powers of the police are the same. Parliament ought to have some very good reasons if it allows the powers and responsibilities of the Queen's police on either side of St. George's channel to be materially different.

I have had to ask myself what can be the reason why the police service in England and Wales, and as far as I know in Scotland, is to be denied powers to deal with drug trafficking and terrorism which the RUC and the Government have concluded are imperative in Northern Ireland—so imperative that they must be imported into a Bill so that it applies to Northern Ireland not merely those matters that we have fully debated in Committee but new powers that we have not debated at all.

I have to say in reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) that I do not believe that the Government are committing any grave error in importing the PACE powers into this Bill. Those powers were thoroughly discussed in the longest Committee stage that the House has ever known—indeed, they were discussed twice, because there were two Committee stages—and no sections were discussed more thoroughly than those dealing with intimate sampling.

But one power was not discussed at all, and that is the one that is being brought in tonight for Northern Ireland, and Northern Ireland alone, so that there is no opportunity to consult the people on that and no opportunity to consider whether it is relevant. I think that it is, but others may think that it is not. I believe with the hon. Gentleman that, at least on that narrow point, the Government have treated the House quite improperly.

I am very sorry that it falls again to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office to be presenting this matter. He is one of my favourite Ministers. He has been an excellent addition to the team in Northern Ireland and has done many things there that will make him highly regarded by the police service in Northern Ireland. He is, indeed, the first Northern Ireland Minister who has brought forward these powers, which we have wanted in the RUC for many years, and I thank him for that. I regret very much that, once again, as in the case of the Firearms (Amendment) Bill, he has to explain the inexplicable.

There is no ground for these powers being provided, in the case of the swab, in Northern Ireland and denied to the Metropolitan police dealing with terrorism and drugs in precisely the same fashion. His argument is that things in Northern Ireland are very much more horrendous than those in England and Wales. That is true in respect of terrorism, but not in respect of drug trafficking. Genetic fingerprinting—DNA profiling—is just as relevant to drug trafficking as to terrorism. Therefore, the case does not stand up on that count.

I must not trespass into private correspondence that has been exchanged, but I was told that the Home Office's reason for not including these powers for the Metropolitan police and the other police forces over here was that they did not ask for them. I immediately asked the police why they had not asked for them, and that was not their account of events at all. When I enquired of the Metropolitan Commissioner whether his men needed this power to take a swab to deal with a terrorist or drugs trafficker, four separate groups within the Metropolitan police—special operations, Deputy Assistant Commissioner (Crime), the forensic branch and one other dealing with specialist criminal cases—said unanimously that they needed these powers. But the Home Office said that they did not need them.

I do not believe that that is right. I believe that the Government should not discriminate between the powers and responsibilities of the police in Northern Ireland and the powers and responsibilities of the police in England and Wales. The police in England and Wales need DNA profiling and power to take the swab. I cannot understand why those powers are to be provided to the RUC but denied to the police on this side of the water.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): My hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) had occasion and good reason to complain bitterly recently about the extension of the Firearms (Amendment) Bill to Northern Ireland. The Government were wrong to extend that Bill to Northern Ireland on Report without giving proper notice or reasonable opportunity for Northern Ireland Members to consult their constituents. Large parts of this Bill can be extended to Northern Ireland by Order in Council. Obviously the Government did not adequately think through the implications, for they have yet again at a late stage brought in new clause 80 to extend this important power the Northern Ireland. However, we appreciate that the Government, through the Minister of State, wrote to the leader of the Ulster Unionist group to inform us that the intention was to table the new clause which would make it apply to Northern Ireland.

I welcome the new clause in that it would bring to the statute book in Northern Ireland essentially the same provisions for the taking of body samples of those suspected of serious crimes as have already been passed into law for England and Wales in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. I note the proposal to depart from the provisions for England and Wales in only one relatively minor respect. The Minister has outlined the reasons for this so-called minor departure which will give one additional power to the RUC to assist it in genetic fingerprinting, the term more easily understood by most people.

Our basic complaint about the Bill remains the same: that the procedure for governing Northern Irelad is still unsatisfactory. In some ways the Bill is a prime example of the unsatisfactory system of legislating for Northern Ireland. Perhaps the Minister can tell us why the sections listed in clause 160 could not be applied directly to Northern Ireland along with other legislation for the rest of the United Kingdom. Clause 164 lists the parts of the Bill which apply directly to Northern Ireland. Thus, our demand to have the same law-making process is strengthened.

I welcome steps being taken to bring the statute law in Northern Ireland on the taking of body samples into line with that in England and Wales. I trust that the new powers will increase the effectiveness of the police in their investigations into serious crimes. May I record my personal sympathy and that of my constituents to the relatives of the young soldiers who were brutally murdered last night. I hope that the new powers will assist the RUC in bringing to justice at an early date those who have hitherto escaped prosecution.

I do not intend to oppose the new clause but wish to register the desire of Ulster Unionists that legislation for

Northern Ireland should not be treated as an afterthought but included at every opportunity as part of United Kingdom legislation.

Mr. Worthington: I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), who asked why police on the mainland were not allowed to use the same techniques as are to be made available in Northern Ireland. Is the Home Office unwilling to allow the police in England, Wales and Scotland to use this technique because of their stance on immigration? People from the Indian sub-continent in particular who have sought admission to this country must prove their relationship with relatives here. This technique, which would establish the relationship and prove that they could come to this country, has been denied them. Is it possible that a consequence of extending this power to the Metropolitan police is to make it more difficult for the Home Office——

9.30 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The new clause extends powers to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Worthington: I am grateful for your guidance, Sir, but the issue was raised of the extension of those powers to England, Wales and Scotland. The House has been asked why it should not be possible to have these powers in this country, and I was putting forward a possible reason.

Mr. Harry Barnes: The Minister's explanation of why the provisions in new clause 80 should be applied to Northern Ireland and were not in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 has been described as thin. It was unsatisfactory. The explanation seemed to be that the Government had not done their homework. We can accept that people do not do their homework at various stages, so there is a need for action later. We hope that by the time action is taken the homework has been completed.

We are not given confidence by the fact that the measure has been slipped in at this late stage. It is of such significance that it is to be included in the title, through amendment No. 70. It appears to be an afterthought. Some of us who stayed during the night of the debate on the Firearms (Amendment) Bill objected strongly to Northern Ireland's treatment. I should have thought that Northern Ireland, with its vast problems and difficulties —of which we are very conscious today—should be dealt with by the House with more care than any other part of the United Kingdom and should be up front in terms of provisions.

We have just passed new clause 72, on torture. Subsection (3) states:

"It is immaterial whether the pain or suffering is physical or mental and whether it is caused by an act or an omission."

I do not think that there is a definition of intimate searches in the 1984 Act. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) gave one definition. On 1 March 1984, when Standing Committee E was dealing with the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, the definition in clause 58 was the taking of

"a sample of blood, semen or any other tissue fluid, urine, saliva or pubic hair, or a swab taken from the genital or rectal area of a person's body."

If we are discussing such provision for Northern Ireland and the control of torture, we need to link the two.

People in senior positions who are required to act under the new clause may nevertheless be subject, in highly tense situations, to taking action that may not be entirely justified. That does not necessarily lead us to reject the new clause but it means that the matter requires a great deal of thought and investigation. It cannot be that by adding provisions relating to Northern Ireland we are simply covering something that happens to have been missed, because the effect of other provisions in the Bill on Northern Ireland also needs the most serious thought. We should at least protest strongly about the cavalier way in which Northern Ireland has been dealt with.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I am very interested in new clause 80. It does not seem to me that there is any reasonable justification for distinguishing what goes on in the United Kingdom as a whole from what goes on in Northern Ireland, but perhaps my right hon. Friend will explain why he has confined the new clause to non-intimate samples. Perhaps I have missed something, but amendment No. 196, the new schedule, deals with two different types of sample, one of which is intimate and the other of which is not. On the basis of my right hon. Friend's compelling logic, I do not see why he has distinguished between the two.

It is important to ensure that we manage to apprehend people, bring them to trial and find them guilty, by using modern methods and techniques of surveillance and forensic science. We should therefore have the best possible means available to ensure that that happens. I cannot for the life of me understand why there should be a different regime in Northern Ireland from that in England for rape, murder and the other offences set out in the schedule. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will explain.

Mr. Stanley: I welcome the support of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) for the substance of the new clause and the addition of the mouth swab to the range of non-intimate samples. He asked whether advances in DNA profiling would make the taking of intimate samples unnecessary in the future. I am advised that this may eventually prove to be the case. It is difficult to predict the likely course of research but it is certainly not so at the moment and, it is unlikely that in the near future we shall be able to rest solely on non-intimate samples.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that from another point of view it is desirable to retain the statutory power to take intimate samples, as such samples can be taken only with the consent of the suspect. They are taken on an entirely voluntary basis. Some individuals may prefer voluntarily to agree to give a blood sample than to be told that their only option is to give a non-intimate sample, which can be taken compulsorily. A balance must be struck, and the House may feel that it would always be desirable to retain the option of taking an intimate sample, with the caveat of the consent of the suspect being required.

The hon. Members for Kingston upon Hull, North, for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) and for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) asked why this group of amendments was being introduced into the Bill. I sought to explain that in my opening remarks. We rightly and justifiably have been reluctant to avoid breaking up the PACE legislation for Northern Ireland if possible. All those who have been involved in the England and Wales PACE legislation will

[Mr. Stanley]

appreciate that it was introduced as an integrated balancing package. We have with reluctance decided to separate a segment of that legislation—that relating to body samples—for the reasons I explained.

It became apparent that with the complexity of the PACE order and the course that the Bill has taken there would be a material time advantage in getting these powers in the hands of the RUC. I hope the House will understand that with our real responsibilities for law and order and security in Northern Ireland it did not seem right to let pass the opportunity of putting these essential powers on to the statute book and into the hands of the RUC possibly a year earlier than would otherwise be the case.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): The Minister has not yet addressed the basic underlying principle involved. He is saying that, because of Government inefficiency the principle of democracy and consultation has been ignored. That is the point that my hon. Friends have made and I want him to deal with it.

Mr. Stanley: That is not entirely fair, because we are not introducing legislation that is completely new. We are simply replicating legislation that has gone through a detailed and extensive process of examination in the United Kingdom Parliament. I take the hon. Lady's point that we have not been able to go through a specific consultation process in the Northern Ireland context. That is a fair point. On the other hand, this is virtually a duplication of legislation that has been the subject of extensive debate and consultation over many years, and a balance must be struck. We must ask ourselves how long it is right to deny the RUC, with its crucial law enforcement responsibilities, the powers that are available to police forces elsewhere in England and Wales.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North asked whether I would give an undertaking that the Government would never again proceed by adding amendments on Report to Bills such as this to apply provisions to Northern Ireland. He will not be surprised to learn that I cannot give that blanket undertaking. We have taken this course with some reluctance, as with the Firearms (Amendment) Bill. The hon. Gentleman would be the first to acknowledge—he has already done so in his remarks and in his response to today's statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—that we face an exceptionally serious security situation in Northern Ireland. In those circumstances, it is incumbent on us to put to the House proposals that we believe are necessary to reinforce our ability and that of the RUC to deal with that serious security situation.

Mr. McNamara: I hope that I shall not be up and down like a yo-yo. If the Minister cannot give me that undertaking, can he say that when the new clause goes to the other place, Members there will be able to see the code of practice? Can he also answer the point that I raised earlier? Will "good reason" cover religious objection?

Mr. Stanley: I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's latter point in a moment. I shall do my best to put the code of practice into a form that we can give to Members of the other House. That will depend upon the time scale of the Bill, but we shall do our best to bring that forward. It will be based on the code of practice for England and Wales and will need some modifications to deal with the variations in Northern Ireland. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will rest his case on that.

9.45 pm

The hon. Gentleman's detailed point about how the courts might construe the phrase "without good cause", referred to in paragraph 7(9) of the schedule, will ultimately be a matter for the courts and they will have to interpret the legislation. I am advised that good cause could be interpreted to include religious objections or medical difficulties, but it will be for the courts to determine that. The phrase being used here is exactly the same as that used in the England and Wales legislation.

The hon. Gentleman referred to semen being taken as an intimate sample. In practice, the only way in which a specific intimate sample is likely to be taken for DNA profiling purposes would be through a blood sample.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to custody records. Very detailed custody records are retained under existing procedures by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and I understand that the practical procedures that have already been adopted amount to the same as those in England and Wales.

The hon. Gentleman also asked whether for the purpose of these amendments the definition of a serious arrestable offence is the same in Northern Ireland as in England and Wales. The definitions and types of offences deemed to be covered by the amendments are exactly the same as in England and Wales, with the one exception to which I referred—the inclusion of those arrested under section 12(1)(b) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 which, as the hon. Gentleman will understand, is relevant to, and necessary in, Northern Ireland.

The hon. Gentleman also asked for an explanation of the differences in ages in respect of sexual offences against children. I confirm that his supposition is correct and that the slight differences in ages in the schedule compared with those in England and Wales legislation relate to historical differences between Northern Ireland and England and Wales legislation.

I turn now to new clause 82. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) for his kind comments, coupled with some notes of criticism, which I took very much in the spirit that he put them forward. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) referred to the same point and asked why the provisions, particularly the extension of non-intimate samples to include mouth swabs, were not being followed in England and Wales by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. The need for a slightly wider definition of non-intimate samples in Northern Ireland arises because of the more determined and systematic attempts made by criminals in Northern Ireland, compared with those by criminals on the mainland, to withhold and conceal evidence of forensic value to the police.

Unwillingness to give consent for the taking of intimate samples is not something that has hitherto been put to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary by the police as causing particular problems in England and Wales. My hon. Friend will understand that if the police can obtain intimate samples, usually a blood sample, that will yield all the necessary material for DNA profiling to take place. I

understand that a recent study by the Home Office of 5,500 custody records did not include any instances of requests for intimate samples being refused.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary therefore did not think that he would be justified in bringing forward a proposal now for England and Wales to make mouth swabs non-intimate samples, but he is not opposed in principle to the idea of doing that. He intends to consult chief officers on whether the present classification of mouth swabs in England and Wales as intimate samples is causing difficulty. He will certainly consider the possibility of making a similar change in England and Wales at some future date.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: With respect, my right hon. Friend is not saying very much if he is saying that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is not opposed to this in principle. The Cabinet collectively put forward the proposal to bring in DNA sampling in Northern Ireland. The principle must be accepted collectively by the entire Cabinet and all the Secretaries of State. Therefore, of course my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary accepts the principle. However, I have a simple point. A man in Northern Ireland whom the police may wish to check by DNA profiling for drug trafficking or terrorist offences may be checked at Belfast airport, but if he eludes them and arrives at Heathrow, he cannot be checked there. Where is the logic in that?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend has made a perfectly reasonable point about people moving from one part of the jurisdiction to another. I am sure that that point will be made to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary when he consults the chief officers. At present my right hon. Friend does not believe that it is necessary, given the apparent ease with which intimate samples are obtained in England and Wales, which is certainly not the case in Northern Ireland, to make the small extension to mouth swabs which we feel is necessary in Northern Ireland in the definition of non-intimate samples.

I hope that I have already explained some of the distinctions between intimate and non-intimate samples to satisfy my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). The basic reason for separating them is that the procedures are different. The essential difference is that a non-intimate sample can be taken without the consent of the suspect, while an intimate sample requires the suspect's consent before it can be taken. I hope that I have responded to all the points that were raised.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 2

An Independent Review Body

'1. The Secretary of State shall establish an Independent Review Body to advise him on the annulment, cancellation or revocation of a conviction applicable to cases currently considered by himself and by the Court of Appeal.

2. The Independent Review Body shall consist of a legally qualified Chairman and up to 12 additional persons appointed by the Secretary of State.

3. Membership will include a proportion of criminal lawyers but legal experience will not be regarded as the sole qualification.

4. Casework would be distributed to a panel of up to three persons but in all cases the conclusions would be endorsed by the Review Body as a whole.

5. The Review Body would be extra-judicial but would have the widest discretion as to the procedures to be adopted in any individual case.

6. The Independent Review Body would be supplied with the relevant facts and papers relating to a case by the Home Office and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State after either

(a) an informal inquiry or

(b) a full hearing with legal representation on both sides with the ability to recommend the award of legal aid in respect of representation by Counsel.'.—*[Sir John Farr.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider amendment (a) to the new clause, to leave out

'currently considered by himself and by the Court of Appeal'

and insert

'in respect of which representations have been made to him.

(1A) The independent review body shall determine which cases, falling within subsection 1, it shall consider after consulting the Secretary of State.'.

Sir John Farr: New clause 2 puts into effect the recommendations made by the Select Committee on Home Affairs which has never been debated. The Select Committee reported in 1982 and recommended, among other things, that an independent review body of the type described in new clause 2 should be established by the House as soon as possible.

That Select Committee was an all-party committee and after exhaustive discussions there were no dissenting names to the recommendation. As the House has never debated its recommendation, now is a useful opportunity to do so. New clause 2 embodies exactly the recommendation made by that Select Committee in 1982.

Some of the hon. Members who made that decision six years ago are no longer hon. Members. The Chairman of that Committee is now in another place. However, four hon. Members are still in this place and I have notified them that I will mention them today. They are my hon. Friends the Members for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt), for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner)—who was a member of the Select Committee for only part of the time—and for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight). They shared in the unanimous recommendation, and I am sure that they may see what they can do to get the new clause on the statute book later.

Those of us who read the report will recall that the excellent Select Committee on miscarriages of justice made two other recommendations, both of which were implemented by the Government of the day. In its deliberations the Select Committee called for the establishment of a Crown prosecution service, and we now have that. It called also for a remedy to be taken in relation to ineffective sentencing; in other words, the right of appeal against a sentence considered to be too lenient. Both recommendations have been adopted. Strangely enough, hon. Members on both sides of the House think that the most important of its recommendations was for the establishment of an independent review body, but that has not been acted upon by the Government.

At the hub of the report's recommendations is the establishment of the review body. One might ask why that recommendation was made—it was a unanimous conclusion in 1982. The Select Committee heard a number of witnesses, including representatives of the Criminal Bar

[Sir John Farr]

Association, which submitted a memorandum proposing a tribunal even more elaborate than the one proposed in my new clause. The Criminal Bar Association, with its expert knowledge, proposed a tribunal with a secretariat and what one might call a full legal aid system covering all its actions.

Sir David Napley was invited to give the Law Society's views, and he supported a form of independent panel. In his letter to the clerk of July 1982, Sir David said that on a number of occasions people had expressed to him their sense of disquiet about particular cases and had pointed out that as appellate courts, either on appeal or on reference under section 17, had refused to interfere with the verdict, they felt themselves unable to intervene. Sir David went on to comment that he had no doubt that a significant number of the injustices that occur are attributable to the studied policy of the Court of Criminal Appeal and that during his professional life he found that it was its practice to avoid holding retrials.

Sir David Napley was not the only person strongly in favour of some form of independent tribunal. Nearly all the information I am giving the House comes from the recommendations of the Select Committee which considered this matter. Among the witnesses that the Select Committee heard in 1982 were representatives of Amnesty International and views were given on behalf of Lord Devlin, who, in his book, criticised the role of the Court of Appeal.

Some of the decisions that have been made by the Court of Appeal in recent years, certainly since the Select Committee sat in 1982, have caused a great deal of anxiety.

It being Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]* may be proceded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

Bill, as amended, again considered.

Sir John Farr: A number of the decisions that have been taken by the Court of Appeal since 1982 have caused a good deal of anxiety. It has been said that the Court of Appeal has increasingly taken upon itself the role of deciding cases once and for all, which has given rise to serious criticism.

The Select Committee, in its findings, pointed out that the Home Secretary has the power to set up independent tribunals without further legislation. Indeed, in the Confait case and the Timothy Evans case, that was done. However, since 1982 the power seems to have fallen into disuse.

Lord Devlin, in his book and in a lecture to All Souls college, criticised the present system. He said of the Luton murder case a few years ago, that Cooper and McMahon were sent back to the Court of Appeal four times and each time the appeal was rejected by that court.

In his book, Lord Devlin specifically argues that the Court of Appeal is no longer providing the guarantee in Britain of the right to trial by jury in cases that involve fresh evidence. Instead, as Lord Devlin said, half the evidence can be heard before one forum—the jury—and the other half, the fresh evidence that may come to light subsequently, can be heard by an entirely different forum —the Court of Appeal—many years later. Lord Devlin went on to say that in his view that violates the principle of right to trial by jury in which it is axiomatic that one forum should hear all the evidence and assess it.

In addition, the Court of Appeal's approach in, for instance, the Birmingham and Guildford cases and the four cases of Cooper and McMahon, appear to demand a different standard of proof from that dictated by the constitution. Instead of the prosecution having to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt in the above three cases and others, it seems that the defence has had to prove the innocence of the defendants beyond reasonable doubt.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Surely the Cooper and McMahon case is a clear example of the malfunctioning of our ability to review miscarriages of justice. That case was referred to the Court of Appeal on a number of occasions and was constantly refused. In the end, the Home Office decided that they should be released. The matter was deeply embarrassing because everybody knew that those men were not guilty. Surely our experience of that case shows that the present system for reviewing miscarriages of justice does not work, and if it is not changed our criminal justice system will be brought into disrepute.

Sir John Farr: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her remarks. No doubt she will be able to make her contribution later.

Another criticism that was considered by the Select Committee related to the view that was held by many people, as expressed in the Tucker and Donovan reports some years ago, that that approach by the Court of Appeal nullifies the right to a retrial provided in the Criminal Appeals Act 1968.

The Tucker and Donovan reports, dealing with youth trials in criminal cases and with the Court of Criminal Appeal, specify that new evidence should be put before a jury for retrial. The present approach of the Court of Appeal denies that, in that unless the Court of Appeal is satisfied of the innocence of the accused it will not quash the conviction and order a retrial. The Court of Appeal tends to demand instead that appellants as a first prerequisite convince three judges of their innocence.

For a number of years there has been informed criticism of the Court of Appeal. Critics have included Lord Scarman and Lord Devlin. The organisation Justice for many years expressed serious disquiet at our inability to undo clear miscarriages of justice. It could be said that if we establish an independent tribunal, a proposal that new clause 2 has extracted from the Select Committee recommendations, we shall go a considerable way towards correcting miscarriages of justice.

Sir Gerard Vaughan (Reading, East): It has always seemed quite wrong to me that the Home Secretary, when rejecting appeals, gives no reasons for his rejection. If the new clause were adopted and the tribunal set up, would the reasons for consideration and rejection be made public?

Sir John Farr: That was touched on at some length during the Select Committee hearings. All the Committee's members expressed the feeling that much of the proceedings in the present system wore an unnecessary cloak of secrecy and should be much more open, giving appellants a better chance to understand why their case had failed. That is all dealt with in the Select Committee report.

In cases such as that of the Birmingham six—there has been considerable doubt about the wisdom of the Court of Appeal's decision recently—the Home Secretary has the power to initiate a review, as was done by the then Home Secretary in the Timothy Evans and Confait cases. In addition, the Home Secretary could act as my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Whitelaw did. He released Cooper and McMahon after three unsuccessful references by three different Home Secretaries to the Court of Appeal. That approach, however, is not altogether satisfactory because it still leaves convicted murderers who have no right to compensation or to have their names cleared. Some of us feel that much the best thing to do is to establish the additional tribunal of inquiry as the Select Committee recommended.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is my hon. Friend aware that what he is recommending is an additional tier within our judicial system—and, what is more, a court that would not necessarily be composed of judges or people of long judicial experience, yet would have the power to overrule all our courts, without the slightest real qualification to overrule what has served the country for at least 100 years and served it well?

Sir John Farr: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, whose expertise in legal matters we all recognise. I ask him to look at the Select Committee's recommendations in paragraph 32, on page viii. After several days of consideration, and having examined many expert witnesses, the Select Committee said:

"We conclude by summing up the general effect of our recommendations. We would wish to see a revised procedure for the handling of alleged miscarriages of justice which would operate as follows. Petitions from convicted persons would continue to be directed to the Home Office and would be examined in the first instance by officials. If it appeared to them that new evidence, defined in the way we suggest, had emerged since the trial, the case would be referred to an independent review body whose Chairman would allocate it to one or more of its members for consideration, or submit it to a formal hearing if necessary. The review body would then advise the Home Secretary either not to intervene or to invoke the Royal Prerogative in order to remit the sentence or to set aside the conviction."

That unanimous recommendation has never been discussed in the House. If new clause 2 were to be adopted, the establishment of this body would achieve a fairer system for dealing with legal affairs than is the case at the moment.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I rise to offer the Opposition's support for the new clause and to add that, if the measure is too radical for the Government, our amendment would be a fallback. We do not regard that as desirable; we should prefer the new clause to be passed into law as it stands. Nevertheless, we offer the amendment as a possible escape route if the Government regard the new clause, modest though it is, as too extreme to adopt. It is a hypothesis that the Government regard the new clause as too extreme. No reasonable person could so describe it. It was the unanimous recommendation of the Select Committee, one of whose Members was the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight).

The hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) has proposed a modest and, in our view, necessary change to the law. Let me explain why I regard it as a modest change. I do not believe that it would add another tier to the judicial system. In a sense, that additional tier is there. The Home Secretary could recommend a review.

Ms. Short: The additional tier is not really the Home Secretary, but a section of the Home Office. A number of officials review cases and make recommendations to the Home Secretary. The additional tier is inundated with files. It consists of efficient, or inefficient, civil servants who are never called upon to answer for their recommendations. The Select Committee has recommended a much more efficient and open system for conducting reviews.

Mr. Hattersley: The theoretical tier is Home Office civil servants who prepare papers and make recommendations to the Home Secretary, on the basis of which he has to form a judgment. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), with her special and, dare I say, inside knowledge of these events, is right to draw the House's attention to the fact that the tribunal replaces what is not essentially the established Civil Service making recommendations on these matters. I regard civil servants as wholly inappropriate for that task, not because I am suggesting that they are corrupt or partial, but because they are unqualified, and by their nature they are likely to perform the task badly.

As I understand it, the new clause is in no way an attack on the Home Secretary's judgment or integrity. It is simply an assertion that he is incapable of carrying such a burden, and it is intolerable to ask him to carry it. Therefore, something rather more appropriate should be put in its place.

10.15 pm

The hon. Member for Harborough was right to say that it was not possible to move the new clause tonight without thinking about some of the occasions when a judicial review would seem or might have seemed appropriate. All hon. Members who have taken part in the debate, and certainly all hon. Members who vote in the Division, will think of the Guildford bombing, the Birmingham bombing and Maguire, and will consider that on other occasions the operation of such a review system at the very least would have reduced genuine, understandable and legitimate public disquiet. The review might even have changed verdicts, certainly when it was examining verdicts which in my view were over-reliant on evidence obtained through confession of the convicted parties. Even if it were not to have that result, it would have the advantage of reducing the very genuine concern that is felt about many cases in which a miscarriage of justice is either suspected or alleged.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Is the intention behind the new clause that evidence which would not normally be admissible in the criminal courts should be considered by the tribunal?

Mr. Hattersley: Of course. One concern is that when matters go to the Court of Appeal, the Court of Appeal considers the case on what I will call, without wanting to be dismissive or offensive, legal technicalities. The Court of Appeal is inclined to say, or perhaps is required to say, not, "Is this man innocent or guilty?" but, "Have the regularities of the law been observed?" We are aiming for a tier—if the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) cares to put it that way—or an institution, if one wants to describe it in other terms, which will not necessarily come

[Mr. Hattersley]

to an adjudication, but will consider whether the new merits of the case require a further fundamental examination, not whether previous legal technicalities have been observed.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I can see that the hon. Gentlemen are burgeoning, but, before either of them blossom, let me make another point.

The description that I have given of our reservations about the Court of Appeal's commitment to the technicalities is not necessarily a criticism of that tier of the law. That is its function; that is what it is supposed to do. We are not saying that it should be doing something different; we are saying that, by its nature, it is prevented from doing something different, and therefore something else has to be put in its place. We are all conscious that very senior and distinguished judges from time to time have said that the stability of the legal system—the reputation of the courts—sometimes requires avoiding admitting a mistake, even when one has occurred, rather than admitting the mistake and seeing that new justice is done. The idea of an independent body prevents that inbred feeling that the continuation of a proper reputation requires that mistakes should be overlooked rather than exposed.

Mr. Hind: Presumably the right hon. Gentleman envisages that the Court of Appeal will still hear the case. How does he see the relationship between the independent review body and the Court of Appeal and how the Court of Appeal would consider the recommendations and examinations of the review body? What weight would it place on those deliberations?

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman is wrong to think of the final verdict being taken by the Court of Appeal. Were I a prudent Member, I should say that he should address his question to the hon. Member for Harborough, but I am rash enough to give my own answer. I see the body fulfilling a function which is or is not fulfilled by the Home Secretary and his civil servants. It is the trigger mechanism that starts off the inquiry. The judicial review that follows may be formed in a number of ways. It is essentially the process by which it is determined that a new investigation should be mounted. After that, some judicial body will examine it.

I emphasise that the Opposition want the new clause to be accepted, but we understand that for that to happen the tribunal might be involved in the examination of 2,000 or more cases a year. In the name of justice, that is a burden worth carrying by the Home Office; but if the Minister says that for some practical reason—such as that which requires the Home Office to cut down the number of civil servants dealing with immigration, but does not require the Treasury to reduce the number of civil servants dealing with minor fraud—it is not possible to deal with 2,000 cases a year, there is an amendment that prevents the Government from saying that such a practicality invalidates the entire principle. We should prefer the whole new clause to be passed, but there is a fallback position if the Government are doubtful about it.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: The Select Committee said that there would be about 2,500 cases, but pointed out that 90 per cent. of them were routine motoring offences, and cases of that sort. Only a small number of cases would go to the new body

Mr. Hattersley: I do not want the hon. Gentleman—still less the Minister—to believe for a moment that I am arguing that the new clause is unworkable. I am merely trying to prevent the Minister from saying that he will not accept it because it is unworkable. If that is his excuse, I hope that we have blocked it by providing a less satisfactory alternative that stops him saying that he likes the idea in principle but cannot afford it in practice. I hope that he likes it in principle and in practice and will accept the new clause in its entirety. That is what we shall support.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am not one of those who think that a recommendation by a Select Committee must necessarily have great authority in the House—least of all a recommendation by a Select Committee that can clearly be shown not to have gone into the facts and evidence in any great depth. I am a member of a Select Committee, and I must confess from personal experience that, composed as they are of busy hon. Members who have many other things to do, Select Committees often do not go into subjects as closely as those subjects require. The Chairman generally does the work.

I do not believe that any half dozen Members who are given a problem with which to deal and on which to report are necessarily endowed with any special authority, even of a representative kind. So my view of the apparently unanimous report of the Home Affairs Select Committee —issued slightly before the time when I joined it—is that it will not necessarily give us any great guidance.

Mr. Hattersley: I am fascinated by the hon. Gentleman's theory of government—that half a dozen hon. Members do not have any particular authority. I take it that he believes that 650 do. What is the number at which authority begins to be assumed by a collection of Members of Parliament?

Mr. Stanbrook: That is an interesting question to come from the deputy Leader of the Opposition, who should know better. Half a dozen hon. Members could easily be chosen from among the most completely unrepresentative Members of the House. They could be put on a Committee to keep them quiet, or because they will take a particular course of action. There are all sorts of reasons why hon. Members get themselves on Select Committees. That was especially true in the days before the great reform that was achieved when the Government came to power.

Ms. Short: For what reason does the hon. Gentleman think that one hon. Member appointed as a Minister—we all have views of the way in which ministerial appointments are made and the sort of people who hold those positions—would have more authority, independence and time to review miscarriages of justice in serious detail than six members of a Select Committee?

Mr. Stanbrook: I do not think that the way in which we select Ministers is better, more representative, more clever, more sensible or more logical. Much depends on individual preferences and the colour of their eyes or shoes. However, the collective will of the House must be expressed. It is expressed when votes are taken in the Chamber and every one of the 650 Members of Parliament has an opportunity to say what he or she thinks. Shame on those who vote according to what the Whips tell them and not according to their own consciences.

The proof that the Home Affairs Select Committee went wildly wrong in its recommendations is contained in the first part of the new clause, which factually is quite wrong. It says:

> "The Secretary of State shall establish an Independent Review Body to advise him on the annulment, cancellation or revocation of a conviction applicable to cases currently being considered by himself and by the Court of Appeal."

The Home Secretary does not have that power. His only power is to refer cases back to the judicial system. [HON. MEMBERS: "Wrong."]

Ms. Short: Free pardon?

Mr. Stanbrook: That is an entirely different dimension. My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) is suggesting that the Home Secretary has power to annul, cancel or revoke a conviction. He has not; he has power only to refer to the judicial system cases that he is satisfied deserve re-examination. All the blather in which the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) indulged gave a misleading impression.

The proposal is that the Home Secretary should have the right to consider a problem, have his civil servants consider it and say that the jury, the Court of Appeal, and the House of Lords were wrong and that for that reason the case must be reconsidered. That is quite wrong. The proposal is quite outrageous. It suggests that the system of justice that has been established in this country for at least 1,000 years is wrong and inappropriate. For hundreds of years we have followed a system by which a conviction may be reviewed by legally qualified courts in the presence of a jury to establish the truth or falsity of the evidence.

If there is any perceived error in the verdict of the jury, which is advised and directed by the judge, we have a system of appeal. At that stage the Court of Appeal looks at the record of the whole case—and there is even provision for extra evidence—and if, in the minds of those learned gentlemen who are experienced in these matters, all of whom have probably been trial judges, there has been a miscarriage, they allow the appeal or give appropriate directions about a retrial. If it is still contended that there is a point of law, there is a right to take the matter to the House of Lords, our ultimate court of appeal.

10.30 pm

It is proposed in the new clause that all that should be set aside and that a so-called independent—which presumably means independent of the judicial system—review body should have powers above those of the existing judicial system and be able to set aside verdicts which have been arrived at by our present time-honoured system.

Sir John Farr: My hon. Friend has it wrong. The Home Secretary has powers to grant a free pardon, a conditional pardon or the remission of all or part of the penalty imposed by the court. We claim in the new clause that, if he had a tribunal to advise him in the exercise of those powers, he would use them more efficiently.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am obliged for that elucidation of the case. Of course, my hon. Friend is talking about the power to recommend the exercise of the Queen's prerogative by the Home Secretary, who is an officer of the state and who is bound by rules which have evolved over the years.

The new clause proposes a different, separate tier within, or superior to, the judicial system, one composed not of judges with wide and long experience of the operation of the criminal law but of people who would bring to it fresh minds, apparently people who would be untrammelled by the rules of evidence. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said that it was a virtue of the proposed system that they should not be lawyers or be trammelled by legal rules. Under the proposed system they would not have to bother with rules of evidence.

Ms. Short: We are interested in justice and are concerned for people who have been wrongly convicted. We are worried by the fact that our system cannot deliver

[Ms. Short]

justice to people who are wrongly convicted. The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), a lawyer and member of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, would not wish to mislead the House by suggesting that we are proposing powers that do not already exist.

The Home Secretary has powers to refer cases to the Court of Appeal, to refer them back to, or not to, a jury, to release people, to set up a tribunal and to release people with or without a free pardon. He exercises those powers all the time, so the hon. Gentleman must not mislead the House. Although he rightly claims that our system has worked well for thousands of years, that system has evolved, has changed and has been improved over the years. We are now looking for an improvement because it is not working well.

Mr. Stanbrook: The hon. Lady is right to say that this is about justice. Over the centuries this nation has evolved a system which gets as close to justice in any individual case as it is humanly possible to get. She is saying that some people allege that certain cases were wrongly decided —that the jury made a wrong decision and that experienced judges, on looking at the whole case, thought the jury were right. Nevertheless, she says that, because there was a wrongful conviction, this system must be set wholly aside so that there may be created a new power for many people who may be laymen, so far as one knows, observing rules of their own, denying all the roots and experience of history.

Mr. Ashby: Has my hon. Friend considered that the reason for the prerogative is the straitjacket which is imposed by the judicial system? It is there in order that justice may be achieved despite the judicial system. It is really the prerogative that we are talking about. It exists but is merely a different way of achieving it.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am not inviting my hon. Friend to interrupt me again, but is he suggesting that because the judicial system sometimes gets it wrong there must be imported into it somebody answerable not to the judicial system, not subject to the rules of evidence, but some abstract concept of justice of their own, not subject to any rule of any principles whatsoever?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Stanbrook: I am endeavouring to make my speech and then I will sit down.

Somebody untrammelled by all the historical devices which we have evolved to produce justice in courts will be able to upset decisions made within the existing judicial system. I am surprised that my hon. Friend, being a member of the Bar, should suggest that our legal system is not capable and should be amended and modified to meet fresh demands which are made upon it. Historically it always has been. The whole concept of equity was evolved because we were sticking too closely to legalistic notions and we had to have a new system allied to the old but within the judicial system, staffed by lawyers, who could see the equity in any problem. We have had comparatively recently in contemporary terms a judge, Lord Denning, who himself evolved the law to meet the needs of modern society and modern problems.

Mr. Archer: I seriously want to understand the hon. Gentleman's argument. Is he saying that there ought not to be a prerogative power, or is his complaint simply that the new clause as drafted goes beyond the prerogative power? If it is the former, apparently he wishes to take away the power which already exists.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am not saying that there should not be a prerogative power, but I am saying that it should only be exercised on behalf of Her Majesty, subject to recommendation, by an officer of the Crown, which is the present system. Unfortunately, my hon. Friend, in trying to deal with a perceived problem, wants to import into our judicial system something which has none of the restraints or the framework which have been built in to protect other citizens against the abuse of power.

If we provide outside our judicial system a body which can upset the decisions of all the courts below, we shall demolish the whole system and its importance. There will be no restriction on the number of people who may apply to the independent review body, once they get the chance. No one could ever be convicted in future without saying afterwards that he had the right to go to a bunch of largely laymen to set aside his conviction.

The review body will be totally overworked. It will not work for the right reason anyway. The principle remains that if we are to have a system of justice it has to be formed on the basis of experience and qualifications, and it has to be within the established rules and the rules of evidence which apply. Certainly let us modify it, but do not let us destroy it completely.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I thought at one stage that the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) was going down a dangerous road. He started by saying that the House of Commons could be wrong —we could face that—and that Select Committees and Ministers could be wrong, and I thought that at any minute he would say that Prime Ministers could be wrong. The hon. Gentleman is right. I want to take the argument further and say that juries and the Court of Appeal can be wrong. We must investigate that aspect. To say that is to mean no disrespect. We are talking about relatively few cases. Home Office staff dealing with motoring and similar offences submit their recommendations to the Home Secretary. In my day, they did that through a junior Minister.

Mr. John Patten: Could advisory committees be wrong? If so, then what?

Mr. Rees: I am afraid that most things may well be wrong, but we are trying to make improvements. We do not have it absolutely right.

The Court of Appeal was set up in 1907 because it was felt that the decisions of some courts were not correct. That was 81 years ago, not a thousand years ago. Even so, the judiciary felt that all was lost because the Court of Appeal was set up. It is possible to reconsider. The Select Committee on Home Affairs has made recommendations and my right hon. and hon. Friends have tabled an amendment to the new clause, which I do not pretend is correctly drafted.

I support the proposal because I have operated the system and it needs improvement. We should take note when people of the eminence of Lord Devlin suggest that the procedures of the Court of Appeal, without a jury,

need to be examined. It may well be that the Home Secretary should set up an interdepartmental committee anyway to look at the workings of the Court of Appeal. That is a thought.

I support the new clause because of a case in which I was deeply involved and which worried me, and because I am concerned about the Guildford bombing case, like another former Home Secretary, a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church and two former Law Lords. I cannot rest on the argument, "I am deeply concerned; therefore, if I were Home Secretary, I would do something about it in a particular way, with the benefit of other advice." I simply say that I am very concerned.

When I visited one of the women—Carol Richardson—in Styal prison, I was even more deeply concerned that there had been an error of judgment. I have not become involved in the Birmingham case—although I have read the book written by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin)—because I do not know too much about it and I do not believe that it is my duty to jump in and say that I support that case as much as I support the other case.

I support the rule of law. I ended detention in Northern Ireland because I thought that the system was wrong. One should not lock up people, as I did, by a sort of ukase. It is much better to go before a court. I understand the problem of there being no jury. I believe that there cannot be a jury system in Northern Ireland. I support the rule of law and the courts, but that does not stop me believing that courts can be wrong. It does not weaken the judiciary to argue in that way. I believe that Ministers can be wrong. I have never been a judge, but I have been a Minister. The Court of Appeal needs change, and we suggest one way in which the system can be improved.

10.45 pm

The Home Secretary takes advice from a very good source—C4, if it is still called that—in the criminal department. Good and sound people come forward with a large number of minor cases and the occasional important case. We suggest that, while maintaining that system, and keeping the Home Secretary's powers, we should provide 12 additional persons to look into cases and advise the Home Secretary.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) talked about the number of cases. I can remember a case in which we did not take the advice that came forward. The details do not matter but it was a case of murder in Peterborough. The evidence put forward was that something had been wrong with the station clock. Shirley Summerskill, who was the junior Minister, disagreed with the officials. I read the papers. As my predisposition is to support junior Ministers whenever possible—they do not have the best of lives—I agreed with her, and the man got off. That was one instance in which we disagreed with the officials. The officials collect the information and make recommendations according to the case law that builds up; we recommend that additional advice should also be available.

Let us consider what the Home Secretary can do. One case that has worried me, because it was obviously very wrong, is the case of Cooper and MacMahon. In June 1980 I wrote to the then Home Secretary, now Lord Whitelaw, asking him to help me by reminding me what courses of action were open to the Home Secretary. I also reminded him of what happened when I was Home Secretary, but that is another matter—*[Interruption.]* He may not have had access to the precise papers but he had access to the same papers; and there is a subtle difference between the two.

The then Home Secretary, in his letter to me, said:

"On the first point . . . there are three things. A Home Secretary can refer a case to the Court of Appeal under section 17. The main purpose of this is to consider new evidence."

I did not find that provision in the Act, but that is what he said, and it is certainly what I have been advised. The letter continued:

"Second, a Home Secretary can exercise the Royal Prerogative of Mercy so as to grant a Free Pardon or remit the sentence."

Ms. Short: The question of new evidence and the fact that the amendment would not require it are very important. In some cases everyone is convinced that there has been a dreadful miscarriage of justice and they hunt around for new evidence to bring the case legitimately within the system. We must open up the system to enable cases in which large numbers of people are convinced that there has been a miscarriage of justice to be re-examined without the need to find new evidence to get the case reopened.

Mr. Rees: I referred to that a moment ago. That is the usage that has built up, and it is one aspect that ought to be considered, even if it is not mentioned in the procedure in the new clause.

Lord Whitelaw continued:

"Finally, if the person is serving a life sentence, as is the case here"—

Cooper and MacMahon—

"the Home Secretary may be able to release him."

What follows is important:

"There are statutory limitations on this power to release lifers: the Home Secretary can order a release only if he is recommended to do so by the Parole Board and after consulting the Lord Chief Justice and, if he is available, the trial judge."

My successor reminded me of those three aspects of the Home Secretary's powers.

We are not setting up a new tier: it will still be the Home Secretary taking advice. In the Guildford bombers case, on which the Home Secretary held a police inquiry, he went outside the system to have the matter examined. In a way, our amendment would institutionalise such a procedure.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I understand precisely what the right hon. Gentleman is saying, and he speaks with great authority and knowledge, but at the end of the day, it is a recommendation to the Home Secretary, is it not? The Home Secretary still has to decide. The buck stops with him. Let us suppose that he disagrees with the conclusions of that august body. Inevitably, it would be leaked, and he would have to explain to the House why the press were reporting that the review body had arrived at one conclusion and he had decided to overrule it. Would that really assist the Home Secretary in his quasi-appellate role?

Mr. Rees: I remember things like that happening almost every day of the week. The Home Secretary is almost a whipping boy for many of the things that happen. But the Home Secretary must make the decision, and it is not discussed in Cabinet. I would like more evidence to come forward. That might make it easier to reach a decision.

[Mr. Rees]

I kept all the papers relating to that case in a file because I was worried about the case of David Cooper and Michael McMahon, in which I played a part. I also kept the written answer given by the former Home Secretary. The case related to the murder of a sub-postmaster in Luton. The second paragraph states:

"Since then the case has come before the Court of Appeal on no fewer than five occasions, four of them as a result of a reference by the Home Secretary of the day. The outcome is that the court has quashed the conviction of Mr. Murphy after hearing fresh alibi evidence on his behalf, but has not disturbed the convictions of Mr. Cooper and Mr. McMahon."

I played a part in that.

The former Home Secretary went on to say that he did not question the decisions of his predecessors, who

"acted with scrupulous regard to the constitutional conventions"

and all the rest of it. He then said:

"I have accordingly decided to recommend Her Majesty to remit the remainder of their sentences."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1980; Vol. 988, c. *719-20*.]

The real reason for that was that the case had gone on and on. Nothing had changed, and no more evidence had been provided. Time was the factor. They had been inside for so long that the royal prerogative was being used. It was not done earlier. I did not make the correct decision, but my successor did. He did it not on fresh evidence but because so much time had passed. He thought that they had been locked up for too long.

Ms. Short: Especially as they were not guilty.

Mr. Rees: The point is that I realised that we needed a change in the law. The Home Secretary at the time provided me with a paper entitled, "Action taken with regard to the cases while Mr. Merlyn Rees was Home Secretary." I have three or four pages on that, so I must have spent a long time on the case. But I was wrong. My predecessor used the royal prerogative not because of new evidence but because those men had been locked up for so long.

Ms. Short: The case was referred to the Court of Appeal four times. My right hon. Friend was not wrong. Nor were the other people who referred the matter to the Court of Appeal, each of whom was convinced that those men were wrongly convicted. The system was wrong and was incapable of releasing them. In the end, the only way to do justice to them was for the Home Secretary to pardon them. My right hon. Friend was not wrong. Our legal system was incapable of providing justice. That is why we are trying to change it tonight.

Mr. Rees: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's help, but I believe that I was wrong and that I should have found a way of dealing with the case earlier. That is why I support the new clause. The Government could take it away and refine it, but its main aim is to provide more evidence.

The third reason, and my final point, is that I am concerned about the Guildford bombers. I am the last person to want to let people out of gaol who have been involved in bombing and killing. We all know what happened yesterday. It is certainly not in that context that I want to deal with this point, but the more I look at it —I am involved with eminent people—the more I see that something is wrong. The Home Secretary has commissioned an inquiry by the Somerset and Avon police. I trust that I am in order in mentioning this as it is part of the procedures that we are trying to improve. I presume that the deputy chief constable will soon be reporting to the Home Secretary. What does that mean? What will happen then? I shall not say tonight what I think should happen, because the Home Secretary will soon have the report.

There should be a change. Our procedures do not work properly. There should be an interdepartmental committee to consider the 1907 and 1968 legislation about the workings of the Court of Appeal. In the meantime, I want to aid the Home Secretary, in the way that has been suggested, to consider the material and to aid the work of C4 in the Home Office. This issue concerns only a small number of cases. The steps that I took in the case of the murder of the sub-postmaster in Luton were taken in good faith, but I was proved to be wrong because the men were released. They should have been released earlier. The time factor should not be allowed to be an important element in the decision.

Mr. John Patten: With regard to the right hon. Gentleman's question about the Guildford and Woolwich bombings, I can tell him that we have the report from the Avon and Somerset police. It is before the Home Secretary at present, and my right hon. Friend hopes to take a decision whether to refer the case to the Court of Appeal.

Ms. Short: When?

Mr. Patten: As soon as possible.

Mr. Rees: I am grateful for the Minister's intervention. The suggestion in the new clause should be considered to improve the procedures. I have discussed this matter with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). I believe that the functioning of the Court of Appeal since its introduction in 1907 needs to be reconsidered.

In response to the hon. Member for Orpington, I should say that that would in no way weaken the rule of law. If the rule of law has been weakened, it was weakened in 1907 when the Court of Appeal was set up. Appeal is necessary within our system because serious mistakes are made, and it is the duty of this House to correct them.

Mr. Hind: I oppose the new clause, but I do not disagree with the basic idea behind it. We are considering a situation in which the Court of Appeal reviews the proceedings at the trial court and looks for material irregularities. It does not look to decide whether a man is guilty or innocent. It looks to see whether the proceedings were carried out properly, and if there was a material irregularity that could have affected the jury's mind it will act to deal with the matter, either by quashing the conviction or by ordering a retrial. That is what lies at the root of the new clause, not the problem of dealing with the small number of cases currently being considered by C4.

Mr. Lawrence: How does my hon. Friend explain away the concept of the lurking doubt, which has little to do with material irregularity, and everything to do with whether justice is being done?

Mr. Hind: My hon. and learned Friend's question supports what I am saying, which is that the court looks purely and simply for material irregularities. One of my

colleagues who, like me, has appeared in the Court of Appeal said that it was like being mugged. He said, "Two of the judges hold you down and the other one goes through your pockets." That just about sums it up in many respects.

11 pm

I oppose the new clause because I do not think that it is sufficiently fundamental. It raises a number of major constitutional considerations. There is a definite split between the Executive and the judicial functions. The judiciary is there to give the man in the street protection against the Executive. It is the one place where the Executive is held to account. That is important in our deliberations. We must be very careful about crossing Executive functions with judicial functions. That is where the proposal goes wrong.

The investigation that is proposed should be carried out at an earlier stage than is suggested in the new clause. It should be carried out immediately after the trial, when many of the trails are hot, to try to find new evidence and matters that are likely to persuade a court that the conviction was wrong and should be revoked. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) will agree with me on this, as I have dealt with similar matters before. The problem is that the case is often considered years later, when the evidence has disappeared, and it is difficult to follow things through. C4 considers the cases on instinct, feel and experience, not on the evidence. That is very important.

The independent review body proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), for the highest of motives, must consider the problems from the court's point of view.

Ms. Short: What about the wrongly convicted?

Mr. Hind: I accept the hon. Lady's point. The problems must be considered from the point of view of the defendant and the victim. However, we must still consider admissible evidence. Are we to reach the position where we begin to consider anecdotal evidence, inadmissible evidence and matters that would not have been considered by the court?

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: If the hon. and learned Gentleman will allow me to finish, I shall give way to him.

We must consider those factors. An independent body should not recommend to the Home Secretary that a man should go free, or receive a free pardon, or be given a remission, on evidence that would not have stood up in court to begin with and would not have been admissible, and which, if the case were referred back to the Court of Appeal, would still not be admissible. It is important to consider those facts,

Mr. Carlile: Will the hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Hind: Many hon. Members want to speak, and I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman will catch the eye of the Chair later. I shall give way once I have finished this point.

Having looked at the question of admissible evidence, we must also consider who will decide whether the defendant or appellant is to be set free. I do not believe that the Home Secretary should be placed in that position. The matter should be decided in an appellate court. I listened to the interpretation of the new clause by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough will confirm that under his proposal, following the review by the independent body, the case will have to be referred to a court for consideration. There will still be a judicial function to be carried out. The proper place for deciding whether a case should be dealt with by way of a free pardon, or whatever, is in a court, before proper judges, with all the evidence being considered.

Mr. Carlile: I return to the hon. Gentleman's previous point. He seems to be obsessed with the admissibility of evidence. The strict rules of admissibility in both criminal and civil law have been devised so that juries are kept within very tight rules and do not hear evidence that might mislead them. Why should we be so hidebound by strict rules of admissibility in courts in which there are no juries? Why should the Court of Appeal not consider hearsay evidence, and even secondhand hearsay evidence? That court surely has the ability to sift what is relevant from what is irrelevant, rather than sift what falls within the rules from what falls outwith the rules.

Mr. Hind: I disagree with the hon. and learned Gentleman, because, following his view, every summary trial held in a magistrates court would cause the rules to be changed. Magistrates would then be permitted to listen to hearsay, and secondhand hearsay evidence, because they would have the same function and be in a position to perform the mental gymnastics of ignoring secondhand hearsay evidence and drawing out what is relevant. My strong feeling is that evidence before an appellate court should be that which is admissible before a jury and a trial judge.

The third point of importance is the review body's status. One of my hon. Friends made a point about the views of the independent body. Assuming that the whole matter must be referred to an appellate court, as it is now on many occasions, where will the independent body fit in? What will be its status, and how is the court to view its recommendations? Will the court see them? All those factors must be considered, as must the question of how the independent body reaches its conclusions in advising the Home Secretary.

According to the new clause, the people involved will not be qualified lawyers, and they will not consider matters from the point of view of a trial in a lower court in the way that Court of Appeal judges do. Most important of all, who will undertake the investigation? C4 has the police —professional investigators—to assist in its examinations. There is no comparable provision in the new clause.

Mr. Stanbrook: Subsection (6) of the proposed new clause provides for the review body to hold its own trial, and it will be entitled to

"make a recommendation to the Secretary of State after either
(a) an informal inquiry or
(b) a full hearing with legal representation on both sides."

The review body may hold its own trial before making any recommendation. How can that trial be in private?

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend rightly makes the point that there may be an informal inquiry without the discipline of the court, and without considering the rules of evidence.

[Mr. Hind]

Therefore, a view may be formed that might not be acceptable to the Court of Appeal, the House of Lords, or a judicial body.

I concede—as do many of my hon. Friends with whom this proposed clause does not find favour—that this problem needs to be examined more closely. The new clause is only a sticking-plaster mechanism, covering only part of the problem, and does not tackle the fundamentals, as was pointed out by the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South.

The real problem occurs earlier on, and that is when the investigation should be carried out. It should not be undertaken by an independent body that is not a legal tribunal—a body that will establish a third tier. The Home Secretary's function is to consider whether there is evidence for a court to reconsider a finding, and it is only in exceptional cases that he intervenes and recommends a free pardon, for example. We must not overstep the powers of the appellate judicial system that we have established. It must be allowed to function. If there is a need for review, let us examine that system and improve it. We should not introduce a sticking-plaster method to deal with the problem.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) on moving the new clause. It is a pleasure to be associated with him, he being a consistent champion of justice.

The clause should be of interest to all those who are concerned with the reputation of the British judicial system, whether they are Left-wing, Right-wing, Unionist or Nationalist, for it is about justice. I take heart from the fact that hon. Members on both sides of the House and of all shades of opinion have felt able to support the clause. They have done so because they are aware of the grave shadow that is falling over the reputation of the British judicial system as a result of a number of celebrated alleged miscarriages of justice.

One of the beauties of the new clause is that it is modelled almost precisely on the recommendation of a Select Committee that examined the problem in a good deal of detail. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, its proposals have been endorsed by a number of individuals who could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as wild-eyed revolutionaries.

The Select Committee's recommendation arose over a number of years from the difficulty of persuading the Home Office and senior judges to own up to mistakes in a certain number of extremely serious cases, some of which are well known. It is not a problem that originated recently. It has long historical origins, the best known one being the case of Timothy Evans, who was convicted and hanged in 1950. The person who had committed the offence was caught in 1953. It was realised at once that the real offender had been caught, but it took 13 years and a public campaign and two judicial reviews of the sort that the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) says cannot be set up, before Timothy Evans was posthumously pardoned. We do not want to have to go through that time and time again.

The case of Cooper and McMahon has been referred to the Court of Appeal on five occasions, which is a record. On four occasions the references were initiated by Home Secretaries, and on one occasion the normal right of appeal was exercised. It took a decade before a Home Secretary decided that the prison gates should be opened and that the men should each be issued with a railway ticket and sent home. He could not think of any way of persuading the Court of Appeal to admit a mistake. I might add that the men received no apology for the decade that they had spent in gaol.

The problem has been exacerbated in recent years by what are destined to become causes celebres, cases which are already bringing the British judical system into disrepute throughout the world. There are the six innocent people who were convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings and the 11 innocent people who were convicted of the Guildford and Woolwich bombings.

Everyone who has studied the problem has concluded that some form of independent review tribunal is needed to act as a longstop and to cut the knot. In 1968, the well-respected organisation Justice prepared a report on difficulties in persuading the courts to own up to mistakes. It was prompted perhaps by the difficulties in obtaining a pardon for Timothy Evans. It recommended 20 years ago that an independent review body be set up. In 1976, the distinguished judge Lord Devlin, in a report on evidence of indentification in criminal cases, concluded:

> "An independent review tribunal with rules of evidence and procedure different from those of ordinary courts"

is what is necessary.

11.15 pm

In 1982, the Home Affairs Select Committee concluded in paragraph 11 of its report:

> "All our witnesses, apart from the Home Office, felt that some opportunity for independent review would both add to the quality of the advice given to the Home Office and at the same time help to persuade petitioners and the public that each case had been given full and fair consideration."

Those are the words of a Select Committee on which there was a Conservative majority. That view was put to it by the Criminal Bar Association and, as has already been mentioned, by the distinguished solicitor Sir David Napley. Sir David went further. He said that he was

> "unable from his experience to recall a single case where the Home Office has, as a result of its own investigation, felt able to recommend a pardon."

I can speak from my own experience, in the case of the Birmingham pub bombings, of the Home Office department responsible for dealing with alleged miscarriages of justice. The officials there are assiduous, courteous and well-meaning, but see their role as exclusively that of poking holes in evidence presented by persistent journalists, Members of Parliament or other public figures. There are few signs that they lift the telephone very often to do any independent investigation, and still fewer signs that they get out and do some digging.

The Select Committee report referred to a number of other problems, one being the lengthy, unexplained delays that took place while the Home Secretary was considering at the outset whether to refer to the Court of Appeal. It also made the point—extremely relevant in the light of recent experience—that the burden of truth, once a case had been referred to the Court of Appeal, was not the burden of truth that we are used to: the defendants had to prove their innocence, which is far more difficult than the reverse procedure.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Mullin: Certainly.

Ms. Short: He is not the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: It is interesting that we are not supposed to call someone on the Opposition Benches an hon. Friend. We have reviewed the case of the Birmingham pub bombings together more than once, and I, as deputy leader of the West Midlands county council, was in the Birmingham pubs where the carnage had taken place within the hour. Despite that, I too signed the petition that the sentences should be reviewed.

The Court of Appeal sat for longer than at any time in its history, and still said that the verdict was sound. How long is justice or injustice to be? How long do people have to sit to say that a verdict is sound? Having supported the review of that case, I believe that the Court of Appeal was right in saying that the verdict was sound.

Mr. Mullin: The hon. Gentleman will not expect me to agree with him, because I am concerned primarily with whether the convicted people did it or not. I shall come in a moment to what I regard as deficiencies in the way in which the Court of Appeal dealt with the case. Unlike the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark)—who, having made his point, is no longer even listening to my response—I sat through the appeal hearing in the Old Bailey.

We have not yet heard any reference to the Home Office's 1983 reply to the Select Committee report. In paragraph 3, the Home Office says that it will review

"both the terms and the frequency of interim replies to petitions in order to prevent long and completely unexplained delays."

That is what it said in seeking to brush aside the Select Committee's report in April 1983.

I refer to the Birmingham case. Doubts about it were first raised in public in October 1985. It took 18 months before we were able to persuade the Home Secretary to refer it to the Court of Appeal. During that time we were given the run-around. It was difficult to obtain information about the delay. The Home Office has not cleaned up its act, as it said it would in April 1983. It was 10 months after that before the case reached the Court of Appeal. More than two years elapsed between the first serious doubts being raised and the case being given another hearing.

The Guildford case has already been referred to this evening. I believe that the Home Secretary reopened that case in August 1987. We are still awaiting the result. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) asked earlier how the review is going. I can offer my right hon. Friend slightly more information than the Minister was able to offer him. It is not going very well. The Avon and Somerset police have made a rather negative report, the details of which we shall never know. I understand that at the moment the Home Secretary is wrestling with what to do about such distinguished figures as my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South who have expressed strong views about the case. The problem is that there never was much evidence against those people, so it is extremely difficult to find new evidence as the basis for reopening the case.

Paragraph 10 of the Home Office reply in April 1983 said:

"The Home Secretary will in future be willing to use his power of reference more readily".

That is a laugh, for a start.

"the Lord Chief Justice, who has been consulted, sees room for the court to be more ready to exercise its own powers to receive evidence or . . . to order a retrial."

Let me consider that in the light of what happened subsequently. The Home Secretary is, understandably, extremely reluctant to refer the Guildford and Woolwich case to the Court of Appeal because of the kicking that the Birmingham case got before that one. Five years ago the Lord Chief Justice is said to have expressed his readiness to take a more generous view of cases referred to him. If he ever gave such a commitment, all I can say is that he has reneged on it.

The first thing that the Lord Chief Justice and his colleagues did when the Birmingham case arrived before them was to refuse to order a retrial, and the appeal was dismissed with contempt. Lord Lane went further than that. This will be of interest to the Home Secretary if he is thinking of referring any further cases to the Court of Appeal. Lord Lane said:

"As has happened before in references by the Home Secretary to this court . . . the longer this hearing has gone on, the more convinced this court has become that the verdict of the jury was correct."

In other words, "Don't bother sending us any more cases. You're wasting your time." That is the dilemma with which the Home Secretary has to wrestle when considering whether to refer back the Guildford and Woolwich case, or perhaps the Carl Bridgewater case—another one that is in his in-tray at the moment—to the Court of Appeal.

As for an independent review tribunal, in April 1983 the Home Office said, "Leave it to the court. It is a matter of constitutional principle." We shall no doubt hear more about that when the Minister replies to the debate.

That was the position six years ago. The position today is a great deal worse. It does not allow for the complacency of the Home Office's response in April 1983 to the Select Committee's report. The need for some way to break the knot and get round these great injustices has never been greater. The Birmingham and the Guildford and Woolwich cases have already been referred to, and I serve notice that there is another case in the pipeline.

Judith Ward was convicted in February 1974 of the M62 coach bombing. I do not, as I do in the other two cases, put my hand on my heart and say that she did not do it, because I have not studied that case in the detail that I have studied other cases, but a number of people whose judgment I respect have looked in detail into that case. They say that the persons who carried out the M62 coach bombing are alive and well and walking the streets of the Republic and that Judith Ward had nothing whatever to do with it.

By way of a clue as to the possible future of that case, I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the principal Crown witness in the case against Judith Ward was our old friend the forensic scientist Dr. Frank Skuse, who has since had to retire at the grand old age of 51 for what the Home Office coyly describes as "limited effectiveness"——

Mr. John Patten: Limited efficiency.

Mr. Mullin: It varies according to which brief one reads.

The Carl Bridgewater case is still awaiting the Home Secretary's decision. It is not political, in the sense that it involves the wicked murder of a newspaper boy. There are

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considerable grounds for disquiet, but nobody seriously believes that if that case were referred to the Court of Appeal they would get anything but a kick in the teeth.

The hon. Member for Selly Oak, who did not stay long enough to hear my reply to his question, asked about the Court of Appeal hearing of the Birmingham case. It was one of the great cases. It lasted more than 25 days; it was certainly the longest Court of Appeal hearing. It has been conceded that it had before it the greatest amount of evidence that has ever been put before an appeal hearing. A large number of issues of fact had to be determined. Issues of fact are supposed to be dealt with by juries.

Mr. Devlin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mullin: I shall give way, but I want to get on.

Mr. Devlin: I am most anxious for the hon. Gentleman to get on. Conservative Members are most interested to hear what the hon. Gentleman has to say about the various cases. I am following him very closely to hear what he is saying about the cases outstanding. Will he direct my attention specifically to how the new clause will help the situation? That is what I am most interested to hear.

Mr. Mullin: The independent review tribunal would have not merely to consider the evidence put to the court and form a judgment about the new facts that had been put to the court, but to consider evidence that is inadmissible before the Court of Appeal. That point has been made before; the hon. Gentleman was here and he heard it. I shall come in a moment to that point in relation to the Birmingham case.

The Birmingham people were convicted on the basis of confessions which were signed by four of them in police custody and which they allege were beaten out of them with considerable violence. Three former policemen said before the Court of Appeal that that was so. One of the policemen involved in obtaining those confessions—not one of the three who were before the court—has since been to gaol for beating up suspects with a view to extracting confessions. Incidentally, another has just received the Queen's medal. He will have to send it back, as has happened with Lester Piggott's MBE.

A cleaner from the cells at Morecambe, where the men were held during the first day of their interrogation, said that he found blood in the cells shortly after they were vacated. Two prison officers said that, when they saw the men undressed, they had sustained injuries on their bodies "consistent with a systematic beating below the neck while in police custody".

Two solicitors, who were the first civilians to see the men after they emerged from police custody when the confessions had been obtained, said that four of their clients attempted to draw attention to their injuries.

All that was before the Court of Appeal which found different reasons for denouncing every single witness—one was a liar, one was mistaken—and dismissed them contemptuously.

The forensic evidence which was before the court was the other major plank in the case against those six unfortunate men. At the original trial, the forensic evidence was the key. It was also the key to the confessions because it convinced the police that they had the right men and caused them to set about obtaining the confessions in the way that they did. At the original trial Dr. Skuse was elevated to sainthood by the presiding judge, Lord Bridge. That could not happen at the appeal because it had emerged—and it took something to find out exactly the circumstances—that Dr. Skuse had been dismissed by the Home Office for "limited effectiveness". He was a disastrous witness. He had made no notes, he had the wrong formulas, he repeatedly contradicted himself and was contradicted by his superiors. Yet the judge, who did not adopt a generous attitude to other witnesses, set his evidence aside.

11.30 pm

They brought out a woman forensic scientist whose evidence at the original trial was thought so insignificant as not to be worthy of her being allowed to give evidence at all. They elevated her, too, to the status of sainthood that had been accorded to Dr. Skuse previously.

There was also circumstantial evidence that the men had been in the wrong place at the wrong time and had known a number of wrong people. At the original trial Lord Bridge said that the circumstantial evidence did not matter, to the extent that if that was all the evidence there was against the men, they could not be convicted. It was secondary to the two main planks of the confessions and the forensic evidence.

At the Appeal Court hearing, with the spectacular gymnastics for which Appeal Court judges are famed, the circumstantial evidence suddenly became the dominant issue, and the judges spent some two and a half hours of the judgment on it.

For me, sitting as I did for the best part of 25 days watching clever lawyers arguing about sophisticated chemical formulae, the whole thing was irrelevant because I had traced the people who had committed the crime. All four are alive and well and walking the streets of the Republic.

Some time I should be happy to debate the problem of the men's identity. The identity of three of the four men is known to the authorities. I do not suggest that the Minister knows it but I have good reason for saying that the west midlands police have known it since 1975. Once four of the wrong men have confessed, it is very embarrassing to come up with any more.

Mr. Archer: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the disturbing aspects of the subject is that, for every innocent person who is in prison, there is a guilty person walking the streets?

Mr. Mullin: Those who are interested in deterrence will be interested to know that one of the four men who carried out the Birmingham pub bombings went on to commit another murder. There is much to be said for catching the right people when dealing with terrorism.

The evidence that I, as an impoverished freelance journalist, tracked down at that time was inadmissible, and the Court of Appeal could not refer to it. The lawyers all had on their tables copies of the book in which I set out the details, and I commend it to anyone who is interested. The book was the big unspoken issue. Instead of taking it into account, however, we sat arguing about the minutiae of forensic evidence—and all the time I was walking round, happy to be put to the test.

As yet, I have not been pressed too hard about this. I said that the people who did the crime got away, that I had met all four of them, and that two of them had given me a detailed account of what happened. If it is possible for an

impoverished freelance journalist to do that, it must have been within the wit of the west midlands police to do likewise.

Many people know that the wrong people are being held. In the gaols where these men are being held, it is taken as read by governors and other prisoners that they are the wrong ones. I visited two of them two years ago when I embarked on the case. I ran into an assistant governor coming out of the prison. He said, "Between you and me, we have got the wrong people. It is awful; everyone here believes that."

John Walker, in Long Lartin prison, who was described at the trial as a brigadier in the IRA and the brains behind the wicked murders of 21 people, receives open visits, the same as all the other prisoners. A genuine IRA man serving a 14-year term for a terrorist offence in which no one was killed or injured—the man I visited in this category was within two months of release—gets the full IRA treatment: a separate cubicle with two prison officers seated outside. Yet in the same gaol, on the same day, a man who is supposed to have committed 21 murders is allowed open visits—as are all of the Birmingham six.

Open visits are authorised not by the governor of the prison but by the Home Office. It knows that those people are not members of the IRA, but no one can think of a way of persuading the judges to own up. Those unfortunate men have languished in prison for 14 years.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman has said, and, I believe, published a claim, that he has information that could lead to the identification of, the hon. Gentleman says, the right people. Why has he withheld that information? Does he not know that under the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974 the withholding of such information is an offence? Should he not divulge to the police everything that he knows?

Mr. Mullin: I not only claimed and published it but said it five minutes ago; I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was listening. The hon. Gentleman's friends in the police force have not been all that keen to know.

When I first established contact with the people who did it, I was asked, "What will you do if the west midlands police ask you who they are?" I attempted to put the matter before the Home Office. I sent the last two chapters of my book to the Home Secretary two months before they were published. The hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr)—I am sure that he will recall this and back me up—arranged a meeting for me—at that time I was not a Member of Parliament—with a Home Office Minister. A couple of days before we were due to go along, the hon. Member for Harborough received a telephone call and was told, "Do not bring Mr. Mullin with you; come alone." The Home Office was not keen to discover the truth.

My hon. Friends arranged an Adjournment debate in the darkest hours on the subject—by which time my allegations had been published and I had appeared on television—and I sat in the box in the corner of the Chamber. After the debate, the Minister said to me, "I think that you had better come and see me." I went to see the Minister and I was interviewed by two civil servants. They asked whether I would be prepared to be interviewed by an assistant chief constable of the west midlands police. That assistant chief constable was ordered to see me; he did not rush down and say, "Goodness, somebody knows about the Birmingham pub bombings." I was deeply impressed by the state of his knowledge, which clearly came from the archives of the west midlands police headquarters at Lloyd house.

There are police officers who know what happened in this case. Things are starting to turn up in plain brown envelopes. Sooner or later they may become embarrassing, because documents from the headquarters of the west midlands police have already turned up. I promise that when the time comes that will prove a mite embarrassing. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I have answered the question. I am happy to have a debate about it.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he has information that would lead to the apprehension of the people whom he believes to be the perpetrators of the Birmingham bombing? Is he withholding that information? Does he know that it is a criminal offence to do so? Will he answer the question whether he is withholding information from the police?

Mr. Mullin: I am not withholding it; I have been announcing it to the world for the past 18 months. I have made myself available to Home Office civil servants and Mr. Meffen, who is assistant chief constable of the west midlands police. Anybody would want to test, first, whether I have made it all up and, secondly, whether I have been had.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Give the names.

Mr. Mullin: I shall give the hon. Gentleman the reference number of a document in the special branch archives that contains the name of the person who put the bomb in the pub. In due course, his curiosity will be satisfied.

Perhaps I should explain that I am motivated by the fact that six innocent people have spent 13 years in prison for something they did not do. I did not set out—it was not my job—to find the people who put the bombs in the pubs in Birmingham, wicked though that action was. That is a job for the west midlands police, who have never shown the slightest interest, even though all four of the people who did it passed through the custody of the west midlands police after the bombings.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) asks whether I have information that might lead to their apprehension. Of course not—because they all got away—but they all passed through through the hands of the west midlands police after the pub bombings. They were not apprehended because nobody was looking for them, since four people had already confessed.

Ms. Short: Is it not significant that, when we are discussing the enormously important issue of people being wrongfully locked up for many years and about our criminal justice system malfunctioning, all we get from those who oppose us on these matters is a sort of game? Instead of listening to my hon. Friend's explanation, they try to divert the argument. We are talking about the credibility of our criminal justice system, and they are playing games. That brings this House and our criminal justice system into even further disrepute compared with the failure adequately to deal with these matters.

Mr. Mullin: Yes, but I take comfort from the fact that many hon. Gentlemen on the Government Benches—some of whom have put their names to the new clause—do care. I appreciate also that there are some who under

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no circumstances are upset even by the possibility of innocent people going to the gallows. I am heartened, however, in that many hon. Members who do not share my views on many issues do care, and I am addressing my remarks to them tonight. I cannot help the others. They face a dilemma with which they will have to wrestle.

I come to the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings, which in a way is a more scandalous case because, in my view, the authorities have known from the beginning—probably from three days afterwards, but certainly from six months after the arrest of four innocent people—that they had the wrong people. There has never been any serious evidence against those people. There are the confessions of one man, Paul Hill. Those confessions had to be rewritten six or seven times in police custody to accord with each set of facts as they became available. Those half dozen or seven confessions formed the basis of the conviction, not merely of the four people who were done for the Guildford and Woolwich murders, but also of the conviction of the seven other people—Mrs. Maguire and her family, a totally innocent family—who were convicted in connection with making those bombs.

They also, incidentally, formed the basis of the arrest of 31 people, many of whom had to be released because no serious evidence could be found against them and because they were able to produce cast-iron alibis. It was pot luck. They just hung on to the seven who could not come up with cast-iron alibis. As I say, this is more outrageous because the authorities knew from the beginning of this case, whereas in the Birmingham case it only gradually dawned on them that something was seriously wrong.

I will mention a conversation I had with Gerard Conlan. He did not offer this to me as something I should bring to the House and shout about. It was an anecdote he told about something that happened to him after he had been in custody for three days and after he had signed his confession and was signing everything they put in front of him. He said, "The police said to me, 'Now Gerry, we are going to take you for a drive round Guildford so you can show us where you went to plant the bombs.'" He told me he was desperate to co-operate with them, that he would do anything after spending three days and nights with the officers. As I say, he was signing anything they put in front of him.

The problem was that he had never before set foot in Guildford in his life. They put him in the back of a police car and started driving through Guildford. He was taking them down one-way streets and cul-de-sacs and they were getting more and more mad, until in the end they said, "We have had enough of this," and they took him back to the police station, slung him in the cells and closed the door.

After perhaps 20 minutes a face—presumably that of a police officer—appeared at the little flap in the cell door and a voice said, "That confession you've given us: a load of fairy tales, isn't it?" "Yes," he replied. "You didn't do it, did you?" asked the voice. "No," he replied. "We know that," said the voice, "but we need bodies. We're going to do you."

That was day three. I do not make much of that because it is an anecdote and Gerard Conlan has never sought to make much of it. But six months later they certainly found out who had done it because by accident they caught the people who had—the Balcombe street IRA unit, three of four members of which were responsible, along with two other members who got away but who, I believe, were subsequently apprehended in connection with other matters. It is evident from their actions that the authorities knew from the moment they caught those people that they had got the wrong people. The problem was that they had just put away the wrong people. The members of the Balcombe street IRA unit were able to describe in such detail how they had done it that it was not possible to go on pretending any longer that they had not.

11.45 pm

What did the authorities do? They paced up and down and round in circles; they decided to charge the Balcombe street people with everything but the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings. When the Balcombe street people came up in court they all got up and said that as members of the Provisional IRA they would not normally recognise a British court, but because innocent people had been convicted of offences for which they were guilty they proposed to plead not guilty to all the offences.

An enormous amount of fraud and perjury had to be committed. At one stage a forensic scientist in the witness box had a chart. The chart showed how all the different bombs were connected with each other; they all had the same Ever-Ready batteries and used the same Smith's alarm system, the same timing devices and all the rest of it. It was put to the Crown forensic scientist, "You appear to have missed out the Guildford bomb. Would you not say that it was made the same way?" He said, "Yes." "You appear to have missed out the Woolwich bomb. Would you not say that that was made the same way?" He said, "Yes." He was asked why he had missed those out of his chart. He said, "Because I was told to by that police officer over there." The police officer was called, and he said, "I was told to tell the forensic scientist to miss them out by that inspector over there." The inspector was called, and he said, "I was told to miss them out by the Director of Public Prosecutions." It goes all the way to the top. They knew they had got the wrong people. That is only one example.

Apart from the fact that there was never any serious evidence against them so that it is difficult to come up with new evidence, a big problem in the case of the Guildford and Woolwich people was that the judge was Lord Donaldson, now Master of the Rolls, one of the most senior judges; the prosecutor was Sir Michael Havers, subsequently Lord Chancellor; and one of the chief policemen involved was Commander Imbert, recently knighted, and now Metropolitan Commissioner. That is the set of reputations involved. Conservative Members have told me this. I am not making it up out of Left-wing paranoia. I hear all the time that it is very difficult, given the reputations involved, to persuade those in authority to face up to a problem of this magnitude.

One big problem with the Appeal Court is that many judges, though not all of them of course, are preoccupied with the credibility of the judicial system rather than with justice. I should like to give one small illustration. Lord Denning, a very distinguished judge, can always be counted upon to say out loud what others say only in their drawing rooms and in the comfort of their clubs.

When the Birmingham case came before Lord Denning in 1980, as it did briefly when the men were suing the west

midlands police in an attempt to get an admission of how the injuries—which no one denies—had been inflicted upon them, Lord Denning said:

"If the six men win, it will mean that the police were guilty of perjury, that they were guilty of violence and threats,"—

he understood what it was all about—

"that the confessions were involuntary and were improperly admitted in evidence and that the convictions were erroneous. That would mean that the Home Secretary would either have to recommend they be pardoned or he would have to remit the case to the Court of Appeal. This is such an appalling vista that every sensible person in the land would say: It cannot be right that these actions should go any further."

He said that the appeal must be dismissed, and dismiss it he did.

However, Lord Denning has been of value to us in this case. It is relevant to the new clause we are discussing because it is a summary of the problem. On the programme "Did you see?" on BBC2 in February of this year he was asked point blank, was it better that one or two innocent people should remain in gaol rather than undermine the credibility of the legal system? He said, "Certainly." He went on to elaborate that point of view, that the credibility of the system was the priority, that of course it was regrettable but occasionally innocent people would have to suffer.

On the night of the Birmingham judgment, 28 January this year, I had the privilege of sharing a car with Lord Denning between two television studios. It was a journey of about 20 minutes. At each end Lord Denning expressed his absolute confidence in the outcome of the appeal. In the car it was a teeny bit different. He said, "I don't know why they have invited me tonight. I don't know anything about this case." After he had said it two or three times, I gingerly said, "Well, I know the people who did it. They are all alive and well in Ireland." Lord Denning went quiet for a moment and then said, "Oh, that is very anxious." I said, "I thought that that was fairly anxious, too." He said, "I suppose that you know more about this case than anybody else." I said that that was possible. He said, "More than the Appeal Court judges?" I said, "That is possible." He said, "If I were you, I would write a book about it." The book was in its fourth editon at that time and had been one reason why the case had been referred to the Court of Appeal. When the arrived at the BBC studios, Lord Denning's confidence had returned, the red light came on and he even managed a little indignation the second time round.

It is a tragedy that the scale of the mistake is so great that we lack the courage to own up. It is not my intention to rub anyone's face in the case; I just want these six innocent people released. Many people understand that something had gone seriously wrong. Conservative Members understand that—I know, because sometimes they come up privately to shake my hand. A few days after the judgment a Conservative Member said to me, "Chris, you have had an excellent run. Now drop it. You are starting to question the system." He quoted in Latin the phrase—I do not have the appropriate education, but it was obviously something that a judge said in an aberrant moment in years gone by: "Let justice be done even though the heavens shall fall." The hon. Gentleman said, "I do not believe in that. I believe in keeping the heavens in their place. Lay off, Chris. You have had a good run."

Other Conservative Members have said, "Look, Chris, you do not wish to be known as the MP for the Birmingham bombers." I want to be known as someone who cares about justice and allows that care about justice to override practical considerations. I know that that view is shared by many hon. Members on both sides of the House—*[Interruption.]* For every one who shouts, "Rubbish," there are others who care. Some have come to me. The hon. Member for Harborough has never hesitated, and not because of anything that I have done. He came to his conclusion independently of me and has pursued it remorselessly ever since. I congratulate him and am pleased to stand with him.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take what I am about to ask him in a constructive spirit. I have been rather shocked to hear him telling us in the past few minutes of a private and confidential conversation in a taxi with an extremely elderly gentleman, a former Master of the Rolls. We have heard only one side of the conversation. I should like to hear the other side. Having broken that confidence—I have a great deal of sympathy for the new clause—will the hon. Gentleman break another confidence and help people like me, who have doubts about this issue, by telling us who are the Birmingham bombers?

Mr. Mullin: I am happy to address that question in the appropriate forum——

Mr. Carlile: Now.

Mr. Mullin: I have been cross-examined on that issue by an assistant chief constable and a senior civil servant. The hon. and learned Gentleman may feel disturbed at the breaking of a confidence, but Lord Denning did not say, "You cannot talk about it."

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The hon. Gentleman is not giving names because he wants to make money out of it.

Mr. Mullin: The Minister has the nerve to say that I am making money out of it. I am not making money out of it; it has caused me a great deal of inconvenience. That remark disappoints me, coming as it does from the Minister, who is one of the people who will have to deal with the case. Hon. Members should look at the Minister's demeanour and ask themselves whether he is an appropriate person to deal with the matter with the impartiality that his office requires. One expects such abuse from wild men from the backwoods; one does not expect it from a Minister.

Hon. Members: Tell us who they are.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I do not share the experience of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) in these matters. Does he agree that had the Minister shown half as much energy and, indeed, venom, in pursuing the truth of the matter, as he showed to my hon. Friend just now, we might have got to the bottom of it some considerable time ago?

I shall not prejudge my hon. Friend's reasons for not naming names; it may be for the sake of his own safety or for other reasons. But suppose that the information that he has given us tonight is correct. Suppose that the west midlands police have knowledge of three of the four people, that four of them passed through their hands at the time of the original investigation and that at least one of them is named in a confidential special branch file in their

[Dr. John Reid]

possession. The only way for those hon. Members who are shouting for names to test the matter is to demand that the Home Secretary investigate the allegations. If the Government do not investigate the allegations and we ultimately find that my hon. Friend has spoken the truth, this will have been one of the greatest derelictions of duty on the part of any Home Secretary or Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Before the hon. Gentleman responds to that, I remind him that the debate is going wide of the new clause, which relates to an independent review body. I invite the hon. Gentleman to relate his remarks to the new clause.

Mr. Mullin: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that advice. I was intending to finish by addressing myself specifically to the new clause. I am sure that you, Sir, and the whole House will appreciate the relevance of the two cases into which I have gone in some detail. They are the greatest contemporary alleged miscarriages of justice and therefore are the obvious first candidates for review by an independent review tribunal. They provided much of the impetus for new clause 2.

The Minister will reply shortly. I am not trying to be contentious, but I appeal to him not to give us a rehash of the Home Office reply to the Select Committee in 1983. A lot of water has passed under the bridge since then; much has gone wrong and in the light of what has happened, many of the points made then do not stand up to analysis, as I have tried to show. I hope that the Minister will at least attempt to learn some of the lessons. This great tragedy affects not merely the six men and their families, and the 11 innocent people and their families; it casts a shadow over the entire judicial system.

One of the great strengths of the new clause is that it creates a forum for dealing with inadmissible evidence. If the Minister concludes that the new clause is not the appropriate way to do that, I hope that some other way can be found. *[Interruption.]* The Minister's ventriloquist does not find that a problem, but serious people do. The other problem is that the burden of proof—this was the tenor of the Court of Appeal hearing—is on the defendants to prove that they did not do it, which is far more difficult than proving that they did.

12 midnight

It has come to something when Amnesty International starts to take an interest in cases in EC4 rather than in some of the world's better-known tyrannies. Referring to the Birmingham six appeal, it said:

"In Amnesty International's opinion the Court of Appeal consistently refused to give the prisoners the benefit of the doubt on any important point in its judgment. It is striking overall that the court did not specifically deal with the cumulative effect of the testimony supporting the prisoners' allegations. It is also striking that, even though, according to the Court, the prisoners' convictions rested on their statements of admission, the testimony of every fresh witness was dismissed as either being dishonest or mistaken or irrelevant.

Amnesty International also believes that the extent to which the new evidence about the forensic tests casts doubt on their findings is significant in that, if it had been available at the time of the trial, this evidence would have influenced the manner in which allegations of ill-treatment were assessed by judge and jury. In this regard, the evidence at the appeal hearing concerning the scientific tests, while not proving conclusively that the evidence in the original trial must be rejected totally, adds significantly to the doubt as to its fallibility. This element was not present in the original trial.

The judgment of the Court of Appeal seems to rest on an assessment that the six failed to prove beyond reasonable doubt, or to a standard close to that, that they were ill-treated. Under English law it is for the prosecution to prove that confessions allegedly obtained by physical ill-treatment were not so obtained. Amnesty International believes that this has not been proved."

That is the opinion of a very distinguished body to which hon. Members on both sides of the House have paid tribute when it is dealing with cases of human rights in faraway countries. It is a bit more embarrassing when it comes so close to home. I regret to say that Amnesty International sent that conclusion to the Home Secretary and received in return a letter similar to one that it sometimes receives from East German leaders when they criticise court cases there. He said, "The case has been tried according to our procedure. There is nothing that we can do, so get lost."

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the prosecution cannot always prove that there was no ill treatment? If it is alleged, it is difficult to prove that it did not occur. If the new clause was accepted, would it not be open to anyone to claim that he had been ill treated and to ask for the entire prosecution case to be set aside?

Mr. Mullin: The hon. Gentleman is obviously not familiar with the case. No one disputes that those men were injured. They were covered in injuries, as photographs taken at the time prove. The dispute is about whether those injuries were inflicted when they were in police custody—when the confessions were obtained—or when they were in the care of prison warders. The men say that they were beaten up by both sets of people. The police say that they must have been beaten up by the prison warders. The prison warders concede that they beat them up, too, but say that the men were injured when they arrived. That is the nub of the problem.

There are precedents for setting up a review tribunal along the lines suggested in new clause 2. The two judicial inquiries set up into the Timothy Evans case and the Confait case support that argument. If the Minister rejects what is proposed in new clause 2, I hope that he will at least give some alternatives. He is an intelligent and humane man, and I hope that he will not say that everything in the garden is perfect. That is the view of some of his hon. Friends. He must know that not everything in the garden is perfect and that there are some terrible problems.

Everyone who has studied those cases knows that something is wrong and that British justice is being discredited all round the world. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland can no longer set foot in the United States without a Congressman mentioning the cases of the Birmingham six or the Guildford four. In the Soviet Union, prompted no doubt by our keen interest in human rights there, the appeal cases have received a great deal of publicity. The Soviet Foreign Minister is now mentioning those and related cases when British Ministers start lecturing him on human rights in the Soviet Union. European Members of Parliament challenged the Prime Minister on the cases when she was addressing them. It is getting out of hand now, and it is spreading.

In Ireland, it is believed, rightly or wrongly, that an Irishman charged with a terrorist offence cannot hope for a fair trial in the United Kingdom. If one asks for the evidence for that, people point to the Birmingham, Guilford and Woolwich cases. Those cases may have been a factor and will certainly affect public opinion on the issue of extradition and the failure of an Irish court the other day to extradite Mr. McVeigh. We would be in a better position to occupy the moral high ground if we could point to the fact that we have a legal system through which we can confidently extradite people in the knowledge that they will have a fair trial.

Mr. Beggs: Does the hon. Gentleman consider that it would be an appropriate time to test the commitment of the Government of the Irish Republic to human rights by encouraging our own Government to seek to extradite those whom he declares there is evidence to believe were guilty of the Birmingham bombing?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will resist the temptation to go out of order. He must keep to the new clause.

Mr. Mullin: You are quite right, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I shall resist the temptation.

Doubts have been raised in this country by such distinguished persons, not all dangerous extremists, as Cardinal Hume, Lord Devlin, Lord Scarman, Lord Jenkins, my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South—a former Home Secretary—the hon. Members for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) and for Harborough and many other distinguished hon. Members who do not share my views on other matters. Those people have studied these cases and know that something is wrong and that something serious needs to be done about them.

The Home Secretary takes a personal interest in those cases. As an intelligent and humane man, he knows that something is wrong. No one can blame him for his reluctance to refer the case to the Court of Appeal in the light of what happened in the Birmingham case. That is why an alternative method of breaking the knot must be found. I hope that, when the Home Secretary comes to pronounce on the Guildford case shortly, he will not take refuge behind the judges, as I regret he has done in the Birmingham case, and say, "The judges have considered the case and, regrettably, there is nothing that can be done. The correct procedures have been followed." That is the response of the bureaucrat and of the "more than my job's worth" man. I believe that the Home Secretary is a bigger man than that. This new clause gives the opportunity to rise above such a bureaucratic approach, to cut the knot, and to do what he knows to be right in these cases.

Mr. John Patten: It might be for the convenience of the House if I give the Government's view at this stage, having listened with considerable interest to the explanation of the new clause by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) in his powerful speech, the support given by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr.Mullin) and the powerful speech made by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) in his earlier intervention.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough said, the new clause seeks to give statutory force to the recommendation of the Select Committee on Home Affairs in its sixth report in 1982. We have heard a good deal about that report tonight. My hon. Friend is also aware that the Government at the time did not accept the Committee's recommendation. The reasons for our disagreement, which were set out fully in our reply to the Committee, to which the hon. Member for Sunderland, South referred, still hold good. The new clause continues to exemplify the difficulties that the Government saw in 1982, and those reasons are on the record.

For the avoidance of any doubt, I should say at the outset that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is prepared to listen to detailed suggestions about evidence concerning individual miscarriages of justice from my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough, the hon. Member for Sunderland, South or the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. They strongly believe in different ways that those cases are the result of miscarriages of justice. I respect their strength of feeling on this matter.

However, I do not think that this is the right forum, whatever else we debate here tonight, for us to go into the rights and wrongs of individual cases. I do not believe that that was the intention of my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough in moving the new clause. This is not the right arena in which to attempt to do that, and I do not believe that at 12.9 am we are in the right frame of mind. Nor do we sit in the right Chamber in which to debate extremely important issues that affect the welfare of people some of whom have been in prison for a considerable time.

I would prefer, with the agreement of the House, to address my remarks to the amendments to legislation which would change the whole system for dealing with alleged miscarriages of justice. That is an extremely important general issue and I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough indicating assent to that. The matter raises important issues of principle which I believe are best addressed as issues of principle, which is the spirit in which my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough said moved him to present the new clause.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I understand that the Minister does not want to go into details of cases raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin). However, is the Minister aware that Paddy Armstrong, one of the Guildford four, has suffered a nervous breakdown and that a prison move request has been made by his family? Is he also aware that Paul Hill, another of the four, has had 44 prison moves; that Gerard Conlan is, I understand, still in solitary confinement in a very remote prison which his family cannot visit; and that Carol Richardson is under heavy sedation and not allowed visitors?

Will the Minister undertake to look into the welfare of the four prisoners concerned while he examines the report from the Somerset and Avon constabulary? Will he also undertake to look into the reasons why a nun from my constituency, Sister Sarah from St. Joseph's convent in Highgate, has been refused permission to visit any of the four when she simply wants to make entirely humanitarian and beneficial visits? The attitude of the prison authorities and of the Home Office is causing enormous distress to the families concerned. This has nothing to do with the review of the judicial process which the Home Secretary is presumably undertaking now and about which we expect to hear a statement from him in the near future.

Mr. Patten: I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for prison matters

[Mr. Patten]

is here today. He has heard all that the hon. Gentleman has said. My hon. Friend and the prison directorate are always concerned about the welfare, both mental and physical, of prisoners in the care of the state. My hon. Friend will consider, without commitment, the points made by the hon. Gentleman.

I will return to the theme that I had begun earlier about the need to look very closely at the questions of principle. The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) made that point earlier, and I will deal with one or two of the detailed points that he raised shortly.

My starting point is that we are dealing with an extremely sensitive matter of constitutional principle as well as sensitive personal matters for those in gaol, who others allege may have been wrongfully imprisoned. We must consider both in our discussions tonight.

Miscarriages of justice should, as far as possible, be corrected by the courts. That is common ground across the Chamber. The hon. Member for Sunderland, South indicates from a sedentary position that he agrees with me. I am glad about that, because we have courts of law, juries and magistrates courts to settle as fully as possible questions of guilt or innocence of criminal charges, although there are residual cases that interest the hon. Member for Sunderland, South and myself.

I want to develop that point. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has been consistent in his view that, wherever possible, miscarriages of justice should be corrected by the courts and that he would always, with the support of the Lord Chief Justice, be willing to use his power to refer cases to the Court of Appeal more readily. He did so in the case of the Birmingham pub bombers. At present, he has before him papers that should allow him to reach a similar decision in respect of the Guildford and Woolwich cases.

12.15 am

Mr. Mullin: Having done that in respect of the Birmingham case—and it took two years—the Home Secretary got a kick in the teeth. The Lord Chief Justice had a little message for the Home Secretary, which I quoted earlier. He commented that, as with so many cases referred by the Home Secretary, the more the appeal continued, the more it was found not worth the listening.

Mr. Patten: I do not intend any discourtesy, but I rather wish that I had not given way to the hon. Gentleman. I said that I did not intend to discuss, and I will not discuss, the details of individual cases, because to do so would be wrong in this context.

My hon. Friend's new clause deliberately sweeps aside the principle to which I have referred. It is clear from its text that the proposed review body would not simply be a source of advice to my right hon. Friend on exceptional cases, where reference to the Court of Appeal was not an option, but would in many cases supplant the Court of Appeal entirely. That is a tricky line of thought. It is one thing to retain genuine residual Executive discretion where judicial intervention is not an option, but it is quite another to establish what would turn out to be a competing source of judicial authority, which is what the new clause would achieve.

The proposed review body would supplant the Court of Appeal when the normal judicial process is exhausted, and its decisions would have quasi-judicial authority. Yet, according to subsection (5), the new body, appointed by the Secretary of State of the day,

"would have the widest discretion as to the procedures to be adopted in any individual case."

Presumably, that would include rules of evidence. Would it be right, and acceptable to Parliament, to leave such matters to the discretion of the review body alone?

What also worries me about that suggestion is that the person with the power of appointment will be the then Secretary of State for the Home Department, who will have unfettered freedom to appoint whomsoever he wishes. They could be biased in all sorts of ways against, or in favour of, more or less reference, or of a greater or smaller number of those gaoled allegedly unfairly or unwisely being released. Nothing said by hon. Members so far has dealt with that point.

Mr. Ashby: When the Home Secretary is considering exercising his prerogative at present, does he keep strictly to the rules of evidence, or does he go wider? Does he not already choose those from the Department who advise him? Is there anything in the new clause that is different from what happens already—excepting that it would admit the public?

Mr. Patten: Of course my right hon. Friend has his advisers. That touches on the point about C4, raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and other hon. Members, relating to the nature of the advice given to the Home Secretary. Incidentally, as my contribution to open government, I can reveal to the House tonight that C4 has recently been renumbered C3.

Every body, whether the Home Office in the person of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State exercising his discretion or the new body that would be set up by the new clause, will have its advisers. Every body is dependent, to a degree, on the legal advice that comes to it on matters of fact.

The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South, in an important speech—unlike anyone else who has spoken in the debate, he has been Home Secretary—was extremely honest with the House about his views and feelings on the cases with which he was involved. He did not, however, address himself to the possibility that the proposed review body could also be wrong, which causes me to ask where the process stops. It is clear that the process must stop somewhere and that someone must take the decision. What will happen if the Home Secretary of the day disagrees with the advisory body? That is exactly the same as the Court of Appeal disagreeing with the fresh evidence that is put before it. At some stage, someone must take the decision. Despite all the passionately held beliefs of those, such as the hon. Member for Sunderland, South that there are innocent men and women languishing in prison, those people will continue to do so unless and until someone takes the decision to release them. Nothing can persuade the hon. Gentleman that injustice has not been done, but perhaps it will never be possible for him to persuade others that injustice has been done.

Mr. Archer: I have tried to follow carefully the Minister's criticisms of the specific proposals in the new clause. I understand them without necessarily agreeing with them. Does he agree that many Ministers have advisory bodies that advise them in the exercise of their functions? If the proposals were merely for a body to

advise the Home Secretary in the exercise of his prerogative powers, would that meet with some sympathy on his part?

Mr. Patten: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has his advisers in C3. He can refer matters to police forces. That course was taken in the case of the alleged miscarriage of justice involving the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombers. My right hon. Friend has powers to consult lawyers if he so wishes.

There is another practical consideration that I wish to put before the House. We have no reason to think that an independent body of any sort will be able in the end to reach better decisions than those that are arrived at by the courts, which are truly independent bodies. Ultimately, it is a matter of judgment on extremely complex issues. These are judgments that in the end we rightly entrust to the courts.

I can reassure the House that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary takes seriously any question of alleged miscarriage of justice. It is important that such cases should be gone into thoroughly—just as thoroughly as they were gone into by the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South when he was Home Secretary. That is because of the effect that they have on the view that there is injustice, which damages the entire system—we do not wish to see the legal system damaged by allegations of injustice—and, above all else, because of the effect on those who are gaoled and who it is alleged are in prison because of miscarriages of justice.

We do not believe that the proposal that is set out in the new clause is right in principle or in practice. Accordingly, I cannot advise the House to support it.

Mr. Archer: It is unfortunate—I do not lay the blame entirely at the door of the Government's business managers—that we find ourselves discussing a most important subject so late in the evening.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin). It is interesting that Members who have little in common politically, and who would not agree on a wide range of issues, can come together in a common quest for truth and justice, and occasionally will surprise those outside our number who think that everything that we do is devoted to party politics. That is something of which the House should be proud.

It is an essential part of any system of criminal law to arrive at conclusions on facts. There is no infallible method of doing that. There is no institutional or procedural device for ensuring that courts never make mistakes of fact. Sometimes we are confronted with cases in which it is either clearly admitted or pretty well certain that mistakes of fact have been made, and that is some comfort, although of course it does not restore the years of freedom that have been taken away from the individuals concerned. What it does is to raise anxiety about the number of cases in which such mistakes never come to light, and people are in prison protesting their innocence and simply being dismissed.

I do not think that we need be defensive about that. Of the thousands of cases that come before the courts each year, it would be surprising if there were not a small proportion in which the courts got their facts wrong. When we learn of a collection of alleged or real miscarriages of justice—as in Mr. Bob Woffinden's book on the subject—I do not think that we should regard that as a disgrace to our system. I am inclined to think—although none of us knows—that our system probably makes fewer mistakes than many others in the world. It is no disgrace: it simply means that we are not omniscient. It would be a disgrace if, when there was cause for concern, there was no attempt to rectify the matter. It is not admitting a mistake which brings the system into disrepute; it is denying it when there seems to be real reason for anxiety.

In my view, there are three things that we should be doing, and we have been doing them both in Committee and on Report. First, we should be reviewing our procedures to see how we can minimise the mistakes. In Committee we debated whether and when people should be convicted on the basis of uncorroborated confessions. I cannot take that any further tonight, and I do not wish to do so. I had hoped that we would find an opportunity to discuss the desperate underfunding of the forensic service. Forensic scientists can now achieve near-miracles if they are properly funded, both in bringing home guilt and in ensuring that the innocent are not found guilty. One day, when it is within the rules of order, I hope that we can have a discussion on that.

The second thing that I think we should be doing—this is rather different—is considering whether we have the right balance between convicting the guilty and acquitting the innocent. There is no way of ensuring that the innocent are never convicted, unless no one is ever convicted. It is sometimes said that it is better for a thousand guilty people to go free than for one innocent person to be convicted, but that does not dispose of the problem. What about 5,000 or 10,000? A balance must be struck. Any system of criminal justice is a package, and what we must establish is whether we have got the package about right. Merely increasing the conviction rate does not mean increasing the proper conviction rate.

Thirdly—this is what we are discussing tonight—we require a machinery for examining cases afterwards if there is anxiety about whether a conviction ought to stand. Let me say at once that we must ensure that cases are not reopened lightly. I wholly agree with the Minister that generally it is in everyone's interests that a decision, once reached, should stand—that there should be an element of finality and everyone should know where he is. But that principle cannot be rigidly applied so as to override justice when there is good reason to believe that someone who did not commit an offence is incarcerated in prison, and conversely that someone who did is walking the streets free.

12.30 am

I readily concede that we also need to ensure that these matters should not depend purely on the head of political steam that can be raised for them. We sometimes have to raise a head of political steam because there is no other way of doing anything about it, but the steam that can be raised is not necessarily proportionate to the merits of the case.

It was said earlier in the debate that what has gone wrong in this country can be attributed to two factors, neither of which in itself is discreditable. The first is that the criminal process is adversarial. The court's function is not to ferret out the truth, but to adjudicate between two contestants. One consequence of that is that appeals have

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been regarded not as taking another look at where the truth lies but as examining the procedure to see whether the game has been played in accordance with the rules and whether everybody has been given a fair chance. That is necessarily based on the assumption that on the day of the trial the accused was at his best, that full justice was done to the presentation of his case and that his legal advisers were operating at 100 per cent. efficiency. If the procedure has been observed, the tendency is to say to somebody who has lost, "You lost a fair game. Hard luck. Now just take it sportingly." That is a little rough on somebody who is serving a life sentence.

Secondly, a jury is regarded as a venerable and valuable institution, and most Opposition Members would agree with that view. In certain other contexts, we would be arguing exactly that case. There has therefore been a reluctance to reverse a jury's verdict. I should be reluctant to say or to do anything that would cast doubt on the value of a jury, but it has led to the approach that if a jury, properly directed as to the law, and where each side has had an opportunity to put its case, has reached a verdict, that verdict is virtually sacrosanct.

The fact is that from time to time there have been cases where the system has come under pressure because everybody has recognised that there has been a miscarriage of justice. Reference has been made in this debate to the case of Adolph Beck in the early years of this century, who was twice the victim of misidentification. That led to the creation in 1907 of the Court of Criminal Appeal. There was also the Timothy Evans case. From time to time, very distinguished people have sought to do something about it. In 1961, Justice set up a committee to look into the matter. One of the members of that committee was Lord Gardiner. A few years later Lord Gardiner was in a position to do something about it. He was responsible for the Criminal Appeal Act 1968. The purpose of that Act was to try to ensure that the Court of Appeal was not circumscribed in the way that has been described.

Clause 1(2) of the 1968 Act says that an appeal may be pursued

> "(a) on any ground which involves a question of law alone; and
>
> (b) with the leave of the Court of Appeal, on any ground which involves a question of fact alone, or a question of mixed law and fact, or on any other ground which appears to the Court of Appeal to be a sufficient ground of appeal;".

The Act also says that the Court of Appeal can set aside a conviction

"on the ground that under all the circumstances of the case it is unsafe or unsatisfactory".

Unfortunately, that did not turn out as Lord Gardiner had hoped that it would. He had hoped that the Act would lead the courts to ask, not whether they had followed the correct procedure, but whether they had arrived at a proper and safe result.

The reason was simple. There are advantages in having a legal system that has grown pragmatically over the centuries and a process that has developed its own standards and traditions, but it means that judicial and legal thinking carries the weight of six centuries of legal culture. When Parliament makes a specific provision on a matter of detail, the courts faithfully observe it. When Parliament seeks to change an approach, that is much more difficult to achieve, not because the judges consciously decline to respect the sovereignty of Parliament, but because, just as one cannot make people good or honest by Act of Parliament, so one cannot change people's mental habits by passing a statute.

The courts have not operated in the way that was envisaged when the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 was passed. We are left with some very worrying cases. Whatever our views on the procedures, we cannot fail to be worried by some of the cases that have been mentioned tonight by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South and others. We are left with the nasty feeling that the community, in quite properly protecting itself, has committed a serious injustice against those individuals.

When we mention the word "community", we are on dangerous ground. We use the word "community", to describe togetherness and mutual support, but to the individual the community can be a vast, impersonal and uncomprehending entity. If it makes a mistake, the consequences for the individual can be quite crushing.

I believe that we should be grateful to the hon. Member for Harborough, who raised the issue, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South, whose contributions over the years have made it possible. I hope that the House will support this initiative. If, subsequently, the Minister says, "We should like to redraft this," most Opposition Members will not complain. But accepting the principle would bring real hope to the families who feel utterly frustrated because they think that the truth about their cases will never emerge.

Mr. Lawrence: Lest any of my hon. Friends have a heart attack, I shall be very brief.

May I say a good word for the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer)—because he had a good word and the frustration must have been considerable—and for the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin)? It is very difficult for Conservative Members to share that good feeling, because the hon. Member for Sunderland, South is thoroughly obsessed by what he sincerely believes to be a miscarriage of justice for nearly every terrorist who has ever been convicted in this country. Although that is very interesting, I do not think that it has advanced his case.

Mr. Mullin: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lawrence: I shall not give way, because the hon. Gentleman spoke for a long time.

It has not advanced the case for the new clause, because it asks for an independent review body. The speech of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South has been thoroughly counter-productive. What we all fear most is that the hon. Member for Sunderland, South would keep the independent review body going.

A case will start with a jury trial, it will then go to the Court of Appeal, and then to the Home Secretary, who will have to refer matters to the independent review body. The hon. Member for Sunderland, South with his voluminous documents, will prove that the matter will require the deepest, the most concerned, the longest and the most thorough consideration. We will never get an end to our criminal trials and no one will ever be convicted. All those who are convicted want to appeal. They will appeal to the Court of Appeal, to the Home Secretary, to the independent review body, to the European Court of Human Rights, and no justice will be done in the land.

There are people in our country who believe that the best way to cure terrorism and the extremes of crime from which our society is suffering is for those who are guilty to be convicted. I do not think that the independent review body is the answer to possible miscarriage of justice. We need an investigative body within the Court of Appeal. We need to strengthen the Court of Appeal, but this proposal would weaken it and that is why I am opposed to it. This new clause amounts to an attack on the basis of the Court of Appeal. People who are tried and cry "miscarriage of justice" are not always the victims of a miscarriage of justice. This proposal will put a new tier into the appeals procedure in the criminal system and lead to a massive amount of delay, bureaucracy, expense and, in the end, injustice.

It is not the proposal that I find strange: it is the fact that some of my hon. Friends—the Members for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) and for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison)—think that to undermine the status of the Court of Appeal, to have more bureacracy and a new tier of appeal that will be fuelled by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South, would be good for justice.

It is said that there is public disquiet over the system, but that disquiet is largely the result of media activity. As someone who occasionally sees these problems from the inside, I may say that sometimes the media are justified, but more often than not they are wrong. One outcome of this proposal would be that the media would exercise an ever-increasing influence on referrals and, perhaps, on decisions. Of course the media have an important part to play in our democratic system, but we are slipping into the danger that they are laying claim to take over the decisions in our legal system. The process of justice would not be served by that. It is because I am fearful about the way in which that activity could develop that I am against the proposal.

Our system is not perfect, and we need to improve it, but we will not improve it in this way. We will improve it by equipping the Court of Appeal with an independent power of investigation and a staff of investigators. That would strengthen respect for the court and reduce the chances of a miscarriage of justice. The proposal upon which we are asked to vote now will only weaken the system. Because I am against such a weakening I shall not support it, and I hope that all hon. Members will do likewise.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. David Waddington) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 124, Noes 43.

Division No. 362] **[12.42 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Tracey, Richard
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'caster)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dixon, Don
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Fraser, John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Macdonald, Calum A.
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McNamara, Kevin
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alun Michael and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 45, Noes 121.

Division No. 363] **[12.54 am**

AYES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashby, David
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Boateng, Paul
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dixon, Don
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Farr, Sir John
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Fraser, John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Macdonald, Calum A.
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McNamara, Kevin
Michael, Alun
Mowlam, Marjorie
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Chris Mullin and
Mr. Gerald Bermingham.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkinson, David
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Tracey, Richard
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'caster)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I wish to object strongly to the motion. Opposition Members see no reason whatever why we should adjourn consideration of the Bill at this hour —which is comparatively early for the House of Commons. We are gratified by the interest shown by Conservative Members, although it is strange that they are here on a whipped basis whereas Opposition Members are here out of interest. It is significant that throughout our debates today the Opposition Benches have been far fuller than the Conservative Benches.

It seems that the Government are suffering from a strange panic at this state of affairs. They moved a closure on the last group of amendments when hon. Members on both sides of the House still wished to speak. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that only 121 Conservative Members voted in the last Division; I suppose that the Government fear that the figure will fall below the magical 100 needed for a Division if we continue the business.

The issues that we have been discussing today are extremely important, and we have heard important contributions from both sides of the House. To enlighten those Conservative Members who have not been here during all our proceedings, perhaps we should remind them of exactly what we have been discussing.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for gross intimidation of Government Back-Bench Members to take place to prevent them from exercising their freedom to return home at this time of night because of the Government's determination to keep more than 100 Members here? It is a gross infringement of the rights of Members of this House—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I know nothing about any intimidation. The only thing that is delaying us is these speeches.

Mrs. Taylor: Perhaps we should return to the difficult task of enlightening Conservative Members about what we have been discussing today. It seems that they are afraid to leave and that some arm-twisting is going on. The problems in the Government Whips Office seem to be increasing all the time.

The House has discussed reporting restrictions on Crown court proceedings and torture—the latter is pertinent to Conservative Members at this late hour. In

Committee the Minister gave assurances on both issues, and we pay tribute to him for returning to the House this evening and fulfilling those assurances. We also discussed extradition, so that the Government could make yet another correction to a Bill that has been through the House of Commons once already—before the general election—through every stage in the House of Lords and through a Committee of the House. Yet at this late stage the Government are having to correct some of its basic provisions.

The House also had to discuss two completely new issues. Government new clause 79 dealt with the enforcement of Northern Ireland orders in Scotland. The Government were not ready to introduce it even at the Committee stage of the Bill. My hon. Friends and the Minister spent a grand total of 20 minutes on that new clause, which is hardly a filibuster by anyone's standards.

Government new clause 80 dealt with body samples in Northern Ireland. Again, the Government did not tell us before Report that they intended to introduce that issue into the Bill. Depite the fact that it was a controversial and completely new measure, the House spent only one hour and two minutes discussing it. I put it to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the House has not been tardy, but has made progress.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that the problem with adjourning the debate now is that it may give the Minister another weekend in which to think up more amendments? When the Bill was in Committee, after every weekend adjournment new ideas were brought before us.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend is right. Every time we had an adjournment, even during the week, we always had new amendments from the Government. The problem was that most of them——

Mr. Lawrence: Were bright new ideas.

1.15 am

Mrs. Taylor: They were not bright new ideas. Most of the amendments were to correct Government mistakes in legislation that has been before both Houses of Parliament twice during the past couple of years. We still have to discuss 191 separate Government amendments to correct provisions in the Bill.

The debate that we should have been having this evening includes some important issues that Opposition Members believe deserve proper discussion. That is why we are willing to stay in the House tonight and discuss those matters at greater length. They include not only new clauses tabled by Opposition Members, but new clauses and amendments tabled by Conservative Members. They include, for example, the question of children giving evidence through video recordings, a subject that I should have thought would be of concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House. That is covered by the new clause tabled by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) as well as by Opposition Members. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] I do not know where Conservative Members are, but I know where Opposition Members are. They are in the Chamber and ready to discuss the issue as soon as the Government give way and allow us to make progress tonight.

The measures also include a new clause on corporal punishment tabled by the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos). He may believe that it is too late, but we are certainly willing to discuss the matter. The measures also include new clause 16, tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), in which there is a great deal of public interest of which we are all aware. Perhaps the explanation for our early adjournment is that the Government are afraid of being seen to state their case so clearly on new clause 16.

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): Many hon. Members are particularly interested in new clause 16. The hon. Lady appears to be complaining that the new clause should have been reached, yet was not reached. Surely one reason why it was not reached was that the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) went on far too long.

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken. I am not complaining that new clause 16 has not been discussed. It could still be discussed this evening, and I do not understand why the Government have moved this motion to prevent discussion on new clause 16. We would rather stay here and discuss many of the other important measures tabled for debate this evening. We should like to discuss the sale of knives to juveniles, an important issue in society at present, with the increase in violence. We would have been happy to discuss the new clause tabled by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks), although we disagree with it.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): When may we discuss new clause 16? What is the hon. Lady's estimate of the time?

Mrs. Taylor: I hope that the Government will reconsider their position. If the hon. Gentleman is telling me that Ministers are now willing to withdraw the motion, we will be able to talk about that matter tonight. Why do we not make progress? I shall not say how long Conservative Members will talk on these issues. Many Conservative Members who have spoken tonight have taken just as much time as Opposition Members, with one exception, which was due to a very good case and some provocation from Conservative Members.

There are other important issues that we could continue to debate this evening and that the Government are trying to squeeze into a very crowded parliamentary timetable next week, including income-related fines, anonymity in rape cases and breath tests and the amount of alcohol that people are allowed in their blood when they are driving. We should have debated the important issue of the suspension of passports—the subject of a proposal tabled by a Conservative Member.

All those issues are important and they could still be debated this morning. I do not understand why the Government are panicking now. There is no suggestion at this stage that the Government business for tomorrow will be lost. There are many hours to go before we reach tomorrow's business. If the Minister proposes to press the motion, I hope that he will tell us when we will have adequate time to discuss all those issues.

The Government have already told us that they expect the remaining stages of the Bill to be completed on Monday. Is the Minister saying that all the new clauses that I have mentioned, the Opposition amendments and the 191 Government amendments will all be debated and voted upon on Monday? That will not allow the House sufficient time to deal seriously with these issues. We

[Mrs. Taylor]

strongly object to the motion, and we demand extra time for the Bill if the Government insist on taking it off the agenda this morning.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I think that the Minister is offended. I do not know what you do with Ministers when they get offended, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that you will have to make some reparation because once they have the sulks, you have to look after them. The Minister is one of the up-and-coming, rising stars of the Tory party. At least, they said so several years ago. I am not sure, after tonight's performance, that *The Daily Telegraph* and the other so-called quality press will be saying that.

I have listened to this legal filibuster tonight. At least I thought it was going to be a legal filibuster before you took over the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I have been around this place for a while—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] Conservative Members should sing it. They are all in chorus.

I wondered what would happen when the legal wallahs got together tonight. I came into the Chamber at about 8 pm. I noticed that the debate did not start until 5.39 pm. I said to one of my mates then, "When these lawyers get started, this will last a long time." One hon. Member, who is not a lawyer, has dropped off. I can understand the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) being tired, because he was up all night on the Housing Bill and he wanted to go to Ascot. I think that he went to Ascot today and he probably backed the Gold Cup winner, which then got disqualified. I have probably hit the nail on the head there. I think that there should be a stewards' inquiry into why the hon. Member for Crawley is dropping off while I am speaking.

When I came into the Chamber, I thought, "All these lawyers are talking like a snobs' filibuster." There were Privy Councillors and hon. Members could not get in to speak, not even if they cried out. Then my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) was called. I thought, "Well, that makes a break because he is not a lawyer."

Immediately my hon. Friend began to speak, the Conservatives heckled him. Those people have been in the law courts all day. They pick up £30,000 a year on top of their parliamentary salaries. A layman then comes along and talks like a lawyer. Anybody dropping into the Chamber might have thought, "Hello, there's another one." My hon. Friend might have been trying hard—I do not know—but immediately he began, the so-called genteel hon. and learned Members started to heckle him.

On top of that, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlisle)—the so-called salad lawyer, who belongs to the party that dare not speak its name—did not get called, and, to make reparation, he intervened. He reckons that he is one of the so-called liberals and is humanitarian down to his toenails. Nevertheless, he attacked my hon. Friend's speech on some great libertarian issue, only because the hon. and learned Gentleman was mad at not getting the first chance to talk about it.

I was looking forward to a long night. I noticed the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) enter the Chamber with a stack of law books. When Members arrive with law books, one knows that they will put an hour or two under their belts.

I examined the amendments to learn which subjects were to be debated. I saw that they included video recordings, water fluoridation, exemption from jury service and the sale of knives. On and on they went. I thought that I would be able to sit back, for they were nothing to do with me. I thought also that the debate would be above board, and that there would be no arguments about filibustering when the lawyers got started.

The time is nearly half past one in the morning. It is still early. Debate on this Bill did not begin until 5.39 pm, but the Tories have already thrown in the towel.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): They have the weekend off.

Mr. Skinner: It is a cushy number, when one thinks about it. We have been on night shift once this week, and I tried to organise three more. I thought we would have another one tonight, but the Government have thrown in the towel. The Labour Front Bench was threatened by the Chief Whip and the Leader of the House yesterday with having the Short money taken away for allegedly losing control. Now that the Government have lost control of their business, I believe that all their Whips should lose their money. *[Interruption.]* I heard one or two remarks then from the Conservative Benches suggesting that I have some support for that idea.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, know Standing Orders inside out. Let us have a snap vote under Standing Order No. 30—count hon. Members in the Chamber before they change their minds and before the Whips have twisted their arms. The Government have lost control.

Neither is the situation fair to the Chair. Word went around earlier that it was going to be a lawyers' night, and that the debate would last into the early hours of the morning. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker and the Deputy Speakers have made various arrangements, but now they will all fall by default. I am not a lawyer, but I think that the Bill will be guillotined.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The Government would not dare do that.

Mr. Skinner: There is now a guillotine on the Housing Bill. The Government have so much business that they do not know which way to turn. Notwithstanding all the important hon. and learned Members who want to contribute, I believe that a guillotine motion will be introduced for this Bill next week. I may tell my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) that the House will not be allowed to discuss the topics that she mentioned earlier. They will all have to go by the board when the Government introduce another guillotine to cut this Bill's throat.

We ought to carry on. Those hon. Members who prepared for another all-night sitting should join my hon. Friends in the Division Lobbies to ensure that we may have another vote.

There is another reason why we should not stop this debate. The Strangers' Gallery is full. All those people are interested in the Bill and in the amendments. The Government should reverse their decision and allow the House to carry on through the night. We can go straight through the weekend if we like. What is wrong with that?

Royal Ascot finishes tomorrow, so we do not have that to worry about. We do not have to bother about watching England on the box. As near as damn it, the English football team has been knocked out of the European championship. We might as well continue discussing the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury wants to continue, and we have a reserve team outside that will arrive later in the morning. What are we to do? Are we to send a signal to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)—he has missed three or four Divisions this evening—who is hot-footing it back to the House to take part in the proceedings tomorrow?

For all the reasons that I have advanced, I think that we should continue.

1.30 am

Mr. Bermingham: There are two short, sharp reasons, which perhaps the Minister will take on board over the weekend, for not adjourning the debate tonight. A number of new clauses are in jeopardy. Those new clauses contain ideas that cross party boundaries. I draw the Minister's attention to new clause 16, which stands in the names of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), myself and others.

If the Minister can be bothered to listen, I suggest that he should take two lessons away with him to consider over the weekend. First, it is clear that new clause 16 has all-party support. If he looks around, he will see that it has the support of many ordinary, decent people. There are many who are strongly in favour of it. Secondly, those who practise in the courts know of the problems and the embarrassments that are sometimes associated with jury service. Rumour has it that the Minister is not in favour of new clause 16, but he might like to spend the weekend asking those who practise in the courts what they feel about the reluctant juror.

At the beginning of the century, anyone who was reluctant to fight in the armed services was castigated and attacked. Time has taught us that some of the bravest men in the world were those who conscientiously objected to fighting, but were prepared to give their lives willingly on the battlefield as stretcher bearers. That sort of attitude and change of attitude—*[Interruption.]* I regret, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have reached the stage in the evening when we witness what might almost be described as loutish behaviour on the Government Benches. If Conservative Members have comments to make, perhaps they will rise from their semi-sedentary or lying positions —I mean lying in the sense of being flat out—and be kind enough to intervene.

I am prepared always to give way and to listen to any intelligent remarks that Conservative Members may care to make. I regret that on occasions snide, snarled and rude remarks are made by Conservative Members. Such comments do them no credit. We have watched and identified, and those who watch us generally have done so as well. If the hon. Gentleman in the middle of the back row of Benches above the Gangway, who is lying on his side, wants to call me rude names, have the courage to stand up and do it, boyo.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That was a complete and absolute gratuitous insult, and it was entirely untrue. The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) has not yet made any real comment on the motion. He is indulging in time wasting, bad behaviour and unparliamentary behaviour.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall stop the hon. Gentleman before he goes too far. I do not know whether the House understood to whom the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) was referring, but I did not. It might help if the House were to allow the hon. Gentleman to proceed with his speech.

Mr. Bermingham: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I heard what was said and I ignored it. As always, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rely upon your protection in this place. I know of the fairness that is shown by the Chair.

I return to the question of the adjournment of the debate. Perhaps the Minister will take time to consider new clause 83, which seeks to reduce the permitted level of alchohol in the bloodstream in drink-driving cases. It is clear from what is now being said by the experts—and the same feeling can be found in many parts of the land—that the time has come for the question of drinking and driving to be considered seriously again.

I deprecate the motion to adjourn the debate. I have —perhaps naughtily—used the opportunity to mention to the Minister two matters that are of considerable concern to me, and indeed to hon. Members of all parties. I hope that over the weekend the Minister will take on board those few simple thoughts and spare a little time to reflect that outside this place a considerable number of people are desperately concerned about those two issues. Perhaps on Monday wisdom will reign and the two new clauses will pass into law.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to raise a question through you, as I am a little disturbed about new clause 16. I received a letter this morning—which means that it must have been posted yesterday—which clearly indicates that new clause 16 will be guillotined out. We are so near to that new clause that it seems significant that we should be closing the debate at this stage. Can we hear from the Minister that new clause 16 will be debated?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Obviously I cannot be responsible for, or answer to, anything that may be contained in a letter to any hon. Member. The hon. Gentleman has asked the Minister. Perhaps it would have been sensible to allow the Minister to comment.

Mr. John Patten: I find myself in some difficulty. I do not have the letter to which the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) has referred, so I cannot comment on it.

Mr. McKay: I shall let the Minister have a copy.

Mr. Patten: That is very kind of the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Members for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) and for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) and the Opposition Whip, the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding), will I think agree that the Committee stage was very instructive throughout, and was conducted in a very good-humoured way. The Government responded to Opposition Members as

[Mr. Patten]

constructively as they could on a number of occasions, and at no time was there any rancour in the many hours of debate.

I believe—or, rather, suspect—that when the hon. Member for Dewsbury addressed her cornflakes and coffee, or whatever she had for breakfast, she did not believe that by 1.37 am the next day we would have made so little progress on the Bill. I think that she suspected that by 1.37 am she would be safely tucked up in bed signing constituency correspondence or reading an agreeable book, but certainly not still here, our having made relatively little progress on the Bill.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I do not wish to go further into my habits at breakfast or anything else of that kind, but if we were all so sure that we would make such quick progress, why did the Minister report to the Opposition Whip that he had brought his flannelette pyjamas this morning?

Mr. Patten: I do not want to fall into the same trap as the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) in reporting private conversations, but I am bound to say that I think that I had better. The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme quipped to me behind the Chair, "Have you brought your nightie?" I simply answered that I had not, but that I was otherwise fully prepared to discuss these matters. I see that the hon. Lady does not dissent from the joke that she directed at me: she has not denied that those were her words.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Why did she think that my hon. Friend wanted a nightie?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend raises a question that he had better ask the hon. Lady, perhaps behind the Chair. He may get a better answer than I did.

I do not believe that the hon. Member for Dewsbury thought this morning that we should not make the kind of progress that was characteristic of the whole of the Committee stage. We have had some important debates, some of which have been rather long. I believe that important issues are best discussed when hon. Members have had a chance to reflect on the considerable contrast between the proceedings today and those in Committee, when there was all-party agreement. It would be much better to address next Monday to such important issues as video-recorded evidence, exemption from jury service and the carrying of knives.

Mr. Archer: Before the Minister sits down——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Has the Minister concluded his speech?

Mr. Patten: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have sat down.

Mr. Worthington: The Minister was quite right to refer to a constructive Committee stage. All those who served on the Committee came to the Chamber hoping that that constructive attitude would continue, and my impression is that that is what has occurred. However, one of the problems is that the Minister thinks that he can get a seat on the Cabinet by introducing a new clause every day. He works according to some obscure productivity bonus. There are 27 new clauses. They were not examined by the Committee.

This Bill started its progress through Parliament shortly after the second world war. When I saw my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) the other day, he told me that he remembered serving in a Committee on the Bill when he had hair. If we are to do justice to the Government's legislation, what are we to do when 27 new clauses and 200 new amendments are thrown at us? The Minister admitted tonight that he had made a mistake; he had remembered the colonies, and they were suddenly brought into the Bill. After considering these matters for nearly 40 years, the colonies were remembered, but no hon. Member could spontaneously remember where or what the colonies were.

Immensely important issues have still to be considered. We have been making steady progress. I deny that there has been any filibustering. The Opposition are enthusiastic about continuing the consideration of important issues. Given the interest that has been expressed in the subject, one feels a particular sense of guilt about being unable to consider tonight the matter of conscientious objection to jury service. It would be disgraceful if the House did not consider that issue, having given the impression that it would be considered today after interest had been expressed in the subject. Public interest has also been expressed in another important issue—video evidence. It would be a great pity if consideration of that issue had to wait until next week.

I agree with my hon. Friends that we ought to continue the proceedings and deal with those issues. We are at our best now. The Minister said that he was at his best in the morning, but the Opposition are fighting fit and ready to continue. This hand-picked team has been asked rigorously to consider the Bill. When we run out of steam round about next Thursday, our second team will come in.

Mr. Waddington *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—
The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Archer *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I recognise that if the Government Whips choose to close the debate by a procedural motion on a matter of such importance, that is a matter of courtesy, rather than a matter for the Chair, and we have to bear it with fortitude. I raise a point of order for the good name of the House.

People in the Strangers Gallery may think that the attitude of the House during the past few minutes has been somewhat frivolous. Those who are Members of the House know that this happens from time to time and that it does not diminish the attention that we give to the importance of the business.

People in the Gallery are technically strangers, but they have been sitting there all da, because they have a very real interest in new clause 16.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that in our proceedings we take no account of those who are outside the Chamber. It is contrary to our usual practice to make any reference to them. Although the right hon. and learned Gentleman is quite right to draw attention to the character of our proceedings during the past few minutes, nothing has occurred that is out of order, and there is certainly nothing for me to deal with.

The House having divided: Ayes 114, Noes 24.

Division No. 384] **[1.44 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Batiste, Spencer
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dunn, Bob
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Tracey, Richard
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Dixon, Don
Gordon, Mildred
Haynes, Frank
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McNamara, Kevin
Michael, Alun
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Paisley, Rev Ian
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Vaz, Keith
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned:—

The House divided: Ayes 114, Noes 21.

Division No. 385] **[2.00 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Batiste, Spencer
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Tracey, Richard
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Bermingham, Gerald
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Dixon, Don
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Haynes, Frank
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McNamara, Kevin
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Paisley, Rev Ian
Skinner, Dennis

Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Vaz, Keith
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Alun Michael.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee), to be further considered this day.

Commercial Vehicles

2.12 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I beg to move:

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 6511/88 on the weight limit for two axle rigid vehicles and the un-numbered explanatory memorandum dated 24th May 1988, submitted by the Department of Transport, describing a draft Directive amending Directive 85/3/EEC on the weights, dimensions and certain other technical characteristics of certain road vehicles; and endorses the Government's objective of securing Community arrangements which would make it possible to keep axle spacings and axle weights within current United Kingdom limits in order to safeguard bridges in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have lost a bit of steam now. I wanted to raise a fair point of order. Before he leaves the Chamber, that thing there—*[Interruption.]* Oh, he has not left; he has sat down. I am talking about the Chief Whip. I was the only one who was standing to contribute. Because it was me, he went up to the Chair and suggested that you should accept the closure. He put pressure on you——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Member must not jump to conclusions about what advice the Chair may or may not have received. Does he wish to pursue his point of order?

Mr. Haynes: I do. I wanted the opportunity to make a few remarks about what Conservative Members had said, but that thing there came up to you and suggested a closure—*[Interruption.]* Oh, shut up. I think that that lot has been to Ascot and had too much to drink, by the sound of them. I have the Floor, not that lot. It is time that you kept control of these public schoolboy louts, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

My point of order is that I was stopped from making a short contribution from the Tribune Bench next to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I do not reckon to sit there; I reckon to sit here, near where I am. You saw me, Sir. I would have been called but for the fact that the Chief Whip went up to you and stopped me. I have always given co-operation to the Chair and always will, but that thing there will get no co-operation from me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair deprecates that style of addressing or referring to another hon. Member. It is very regrettable and most discourteous.

The acceptance or otherwise of the motion, That the Question be now put, is a matter for the discretion of the Chair. Responsibility was mine, and mine alone, and it remains mine. I accepted the motion and put it to the House. Mr. Peter Bottomley.

Mr. Haynes: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have not finished yet. It is all right for Conservative Members; they can do just as they like and get away with it. I want the opportunity to express my views. The Government Chief Whip usually sits in his place on the Front Bench, but he was not sitting there when I rose. He came to see you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What am I to believe other than that I have been denied the right to speak?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I repeat that the acceptance of a motion that is put to the House is within the discretion of

the Chair. I exercised my discretion and the responsibility is mine. By implication, the hon. Gentleman is uncharacteristically criticising me. I very much hope that he will not persist with that line. Mr. Peter Bottomley.

Mr. Haynes: Further to the point of order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman made his view clear to the House. I can well understand his anger, but he must not persist. We should get on with the business. Mr. Peter Bottomley.

Mr. Haynes: But——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been in the House for a long time. He is a highly respected Member of the House and he is behaving very uncharacteristically.

Mr. Haynes: Further to the——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I very much hope that the hon. Gentleman will not persist in provoking the Chair.

Mr. Bottomley: The draft directives concern the weights of two, three and four-axled vehicles used in international transport. These are due to be discussed in the European Council meeting on 20 and 21 June. The discussions do not concern the United Kingdom derogation for 38-tonne articulated vehicles—by far the most important vehicles used in international transport to and from the United Kingdom. They do not affect national standards applicable to United Kingdom operation. In total, the directives apply to some 0·3 per cent.—one in 1,000—of goods vehicles on our roads.

Some time ago, proposals were put forward by the Commission. In December 1984, the Council agreed a draft directive on lorry weights and dimensions, which was debated on 18 December 1984. The directive was published as 85/3/EEC. It set gross vehicle weight limits for five and six-axled vehicle combinations—articulated lorries and drawbar combinations. In June 1986 the Council agreed the maximum drive axle weight for such vehicles, which we debated on 1 July. The Council's decision was incorporated in directive 86/360/EEC.

Both the directives that I have mentioned—85/3 and 86/360—contain derogations that allow the United Kingdom to maintain lower limits for certain weights than are permitted in the directives. This was intended to give us time to strengthen some of our bridges for the increased weights. Our limit for articulated lorries is 38 tonnes.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Is the Minister's remark that the derogations give time for the United Kingdom to strengthen bridges a statement of Government policy? Is that the only reason why we have not increased total weight to 40 tonnes and why we have not increased from 10·5 to 11·5 tonnes the maximum weight on the drive axle?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that to get the derogation we had to argue reasonable cause. As he knows, the reasonable cause is the condition of our roads and bridges. We recently announced a bridge strengthening and survey programme, which will last for 15 years or more. That should help to answer the question that the hon. Gentleman rightly asked, and my words and the words that the Government have used before will be well known in Europe. I hope that that shows that there is no change in the situation. We spelt out the matter plainly.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Why does the Minister say that the derogation was of a limited period —perhaps 15 years—given that when the issue was debated in Parliament on 18 December 1984, the then Secretary of State for Transport, now the Secretary of State for the Environment, said that it was of indefinite duration. How can the Government say that it is of indefinite duration at one moment, to get the proposal through, and then say suddenly that things have changed and that it is not indefinite at all?

Mr. Bottomley: It was to be open-ended. I am not sure whether my right hon. Friend said "indefinite" or "open-ended", but we can take it—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps my hon. Friend will allow me to speak for a moment, and I shall try to answer him. I take the two words to mean the same——

Mr. Taylor: That is stupid.

Mr. Bottomley: I do not wish in any way to change the words used by my right hon. Friend in that debate, nor the sense of them. I was about to explain that the only thing that has changed is that we have announced the bridge survey programme, which is not likely to be completed in the near future.

Our limit for articulated lorries is 38 tonnes, and our drive axle weight limit is 10·5 tonnes. The Commission has proposed no change to those arrangements. It is important that the logic of the derogation prevails for all the other vehicles now subject to discussion.

It has always been the intention to harmonise the weights and dimensions of all heavy vehicles used throughout the Community. Five and six-axled vehicle combinations are the main type of vehicle used in international transport. However, the Council has now considered two, three and four-axled vehicles, which were the subject of earlier proposals in 1971 and 1979-81.

For two-axled lorries the weight proposed is 18 tonnes; that compares with a United Kingdom limit of 17 tonnes. The weight proposed for three-axled lorries is 25 tonnes, compared with 24·4 tonnes in the United Kingdom, and that for four-axled lorries is 32 tonnes, compared with 30·5 tonnes in the United Kingdom. The weight proposed for all four-axled combinations is 36 tonnes, while here it is 32·5 tonnes. The drive axle weight for all those vehicles is proposed to be 11·5 tonnes, whereas in the United Kingdom it is 10·5 tonnes.

Directive 86/360 already sets a limit of 11·5 tonnes for the drive axle of five-axled combinations but contains a derogation allowing us to maintain our existing limit of 10·5 tonnes for this axle. The draft directives present the opportunity for member states to question the United Kingdom's need for a similar derogation for two, three and four-axled vehicles. It is important that the derogation is maintained for all those vehicles. If any attempt is made to remove our right to a derogation at the forthcoming Council meeting, we shall resist it with the utmost vigour.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: This is the fundamental point. Am I right in thinking that the decision will be made by a simple majority at the Council of Ministers? If so, how will the Secretary of State resist our European partners' proposal to remove the derogation?

Mr. Bottomley: With the derogation of 10·5 tonnes on five and six-axled combination articulated vehicles, it is self-evidently ludicrous—whether in English, French,

[Mr. Bottomley]

German, Greek or any other language—to go for more than 10·5 tonnes in respect of any other vehicle. If the limiting factor is the maximum weight per axle, it would be crazy to ask for a higher weight for some vehicles and not for others. That is why the 10·5 tonne axle limit is important, and the House should give its full backing to the Government's desire to preserve it. It is a matter of common sense, but it will also help my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on Monday if he has the full backing of the House.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Will my hon. Friend accept the gratitude of my constituents for his courageous stand, and will he continue to show such strength and fortitude in the years ahead?

Mr. Bottomley: We certainly will. We did it for the 38-tonne vehicle, and we shall do it for these.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Government have already given in on 38-tonne vehicles.

Mr. Bottomley: I said exactly the opposite. The more the hon. Gentleman says that, the more he is likely to mislead the people who will be in negotiation with us. If the hon. Gentleman had his heart and mind in the right place, he would say that the Government are getting it right. There is no prospect of losing that derogation for a very long time. Sometimes I wonder whether Opposition Members and some of my hon. Friends are acting for those on the other side of the Channel who want to have heavier weights or heavier drive axles on our roads. I offer those remarks in parenthesis, as I wish their remarks had been made behind Mr. Speaker's Chair, not in front of it.

With a 10·5 tonne drive axle, it would not be practical for a two-axled lorry to weigh more than our present limit of 17 tonnes, and 6·5 tonnes is the practical limit for the front steering axle. The proposed 25 tonnes for the three-axled lorry is only half a tonne more than our present limit and presents no problems for bridges or roads.

However, the four-axled lorry is slightly more difficult because there is a potential problem with bridges. Our current four-axled vehicle is already the critical determinant of bridge loading. It would be technically feasible to permit the proposed increased weight of 32 tonnes provided that there was sufficient distance between the front and rear axles. The formula in the draft directive of 5 tonnes per metre is acceptable to us and we would deem it essential for it to remain unchanged. There would be some increase in road wear with the four-axled vehicles, but very few rigid vehicles are used in international transport to and from the United Kingdom, so there would be almost no practical effect. Some member states favour a formula for weight against wheelbase which, if agreed, could cause significant bridge overload and so is totally unacceptable to the United Kingdom. We shall resist that in favour of the Commission's proposal.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Emphasis is laid, both in the explanatory memorandum and in the Minister's speech, on the suggestion that the measure will be restricted to international traffic. Where in the draft directive does it state that the measure is restricted to international traffic? How will the directive restrict itself solely to international traffic, and how will the Government or the Community prevent people from taking advantage of the changes from a domestic point of view?

Mr. Bottomley: I shall answer the hon. Gentleman in detail later. In many other areas, the directive covers international trade and not the national regimes. The draft directive covers international traffic, but does not cover national regulations for national traffic. The same applies to drivers' hours. In practical terms, we are talking about one vehicle in a thousand. We are talking not about the popular five and six-axle units, but about units that make up 0·3 per cent. of our heavy goods vehicles. The majority of vehicles used in international transport have five or six axles and are unaffected by the proposals. I was talking about four-axle vehicles and said that we would resist the idea of adopting a weight against wheelbase formula in favour of the Commission's proposal.

Let me now turn to the question of the four-axle combinations which are articulated lorries or drawbar trailer combinations. The weight limit proposed by the Commission is 36 tonnes, whereas our present limit in this country is 32·5 tonnes. Some member states would wish even higher weights for axle articulated vehicles. Although the directive applies only to vehicles used in international traffic, which answers the hon. Gentleman's point, and would not force us to increase our domestic limits, we will argue most strongly against European colleagues for any increase in weight from 32·5 tonnes.

An increase in weight to the Commission's proposals may not cause undue bridge damage, provided we gained drive axle weight derogations, but it would cause extra road wear and tear and make the use of four-axle articulated and drawbar units more popular for international freight. We know the feelings that have been expressed in this House on previous occasions when the issue of weight increases for these vehicle types has been raised. The majority of vehicles used in international transport have five or six axles and are unaffected by the present proposals.

The existing directives—85/3 and 86/360—apply only to goods vehicles. The new proposed directives would apply also to passenger vehicles—buses and coaches. The maximum weight of a two-axled coach could therefore be 18 tonnes with 11·5 tonnes on its rear axle. In this country, we already allow a total weight of 17 tonnes on these vehicles, with a 10·5 tonne rear axle. With a derogation on drive axle weight, we could maintain the 10·5 tonne limit on the rear axle and effectively keep the total weight unchanged at 17 tonnes. When our bridges have been strengthened and we no longer need the derogation, the extra tonne of total weight will allow more passenger luggage to be carried, a move that would be welcomed by the operators and their clients.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Can the Minister tell us when the bridges are likely to be strengthened? What time scale are we talking about?

Mr. Bottomley: I do not see how it could be less than 15 years, and it could be significantly more than that.

The main benefit that we are seeking is to have a common market in road haulage. Our operators should be able to make journeys in the EC without a permit. Although these are separate issues, they are related and we must enter the Council of Ministers meeting on 20-21 June prepared and able to fight our corner. If we are not given

leave to do so by the House, then all we can do is to enter a scrutiny reserve and risk being outvoted. It is majority voting in the Council now, on key weight issues, and unless we are careful lorry weights could be pushed up still further. In the next few years we stand to reap substantial benefits in negotiations on road haulage and market access. This amending directive on lorry weights must not stand in the way of Britain's position on these issues, and that is why we should agree to it.

We still remain committed to the undertaking given in 1982 that there should be no increase in the maximum weight of the heaviest lorries until our bridges are suitably prepared and Parliament agrees. I again assure the House that I am making no such proposals now. We are achieving the beginning of a movement towards liberalisation of road haulage throughout the Community, and those elements of harmonisation to which we can agree will be of value to our exporting manufacturers. I hope that the House will approve the motion.

2.30 am

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I found very unusual the Minister's charge that I am doing the work of his friends in Brussels. I have not had such a charge laid at my door before.

By facing both ways over the issue of maximum lorry weights, the Minister has caused confusion. The House should be aware that the task of strengthening bridges has been neglected over the past nine years by the Government and there is now a considerable backlog of repair, and that is causing concern about the condition of our bridges. I assure hon. Members that it will be some time before the Government can make any changes. However, it was important that the Minister added the rider "when Parliament allows" when he addressed the matter the second time. He did not say that the first time around. It was important that he made that correction.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I use the parliamentary condition as often as we can. If I left it out the first time, I apologise to the hon. Gentleman and to Parliament. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not going to suggest to our European partners that a Labour Government, if we had one, would get the bridges mended so rapidly that the derogation would fall and Parliament might have to face the issues sooner.

Mr. Lloyd: On that basis, I draw comfort from the fact that the derogation is indefinite. A Labour Government would have no truck with increasing the weight to 38 tonnes.

As there are very important issues in the draft directive that must be addressed, I shall consider those rather than the maximum axle weight, which is slightly off the track tonight. The Public Accounts Committee, in its report earlier this year on heavy goods vehicles, provided a considerable amount of statistics which had not been placed on the record before. For example, it showed that the cost of the maintenance of our road system because of the damage caused by heavy goods vehicles is about £600 million a year. The Committee was critical of the Department of Transport and called, among other things, for better information about all the adverse effects of heavy goods vehicles on our roads.

The Committee explained something that hon. Members may not have realised. It said that there are classes of heavy goods vehicles. I know the Minister will say that steps are being taken to amend that, but the track costs of some of those vehicles exceed by a considerable amount the amount raised in taxation. There is a clear subsidy from the public to road hauliers.

The most important issue that the House should consider is overloading. According to the Public Accounts Committee, overloading already costs the nation about £50 million a year. That money could go a considerable way towards the cost of strengthening bridges. It would not allow an increase to 40 tonnes, but it would provide an adequate bridge network. It would do away with those signs that we see in so many parts of the country saying that the bridge is unfit to take loads above a certain weight.

The House should realise that overloading is endemic in the road haulage industry. Department of Transport surveys show that between 7 and 22 per cent. of vehicles tested were found to be overloaded. The Public Accounts Committee felt that those figures were an underestimate. It felt that more than 22 per cent. of vehicles were overloaded, and it went on to say that overloading among foreign lorries was worse than among domestic lorries. However, only about 3 per cent. of foreign lorries are checked during their time in this country. The probability of being caught is very low.

A five or six-axle, 38-tonne lorry overloaded by a factor of up to 10 per cent. can provide a significant increase in its operator's annual profits, and the risk of detection—particularly with a foreign lorry—is so small as to be insignificant. The temptation to overload is very strong, and the Public Accounts Committee's conclusion was that the practice was one that the House should take closely to its heart.

The Minister spoke of increasing the weight limits of four-axle lorries with drawbars or articulated lorries from 32·5 tonnes to 36 tonnes. A 10 per cent. increase in that higher limit would take the weight to 39·6 tonnes—virtually the same as the 40-tonne limit that the road haulage industry and the EC are trying to impose. Also significant is the lack of weighbridges, which the Government will not provide at the ports even in the light of the debate on ferry safety. With that inability to weigh lorries entering the country, the problem falls on to the shoulders of the police. The Association of Chief Police Officers recommended that there should be no prosecution unless a lorry is laden to a factor of 10 per cent. above its permitted weight, so the directive is already moving towards the 40-tonne lorry on British roads.

Over many years the problem has been that both the domestic and international haulage industry have pressed for higher axle weights at every possible opportunity. Over the years the industry has adopted salami tactics, whereby the weight limits have been systematically increased, little by little.

The Commission's 1979 proposals have been upgraded and are now in this draft directive. For example, in 1979 the Commission proposed a 17-tonne limit for a two-axle rigid vehicle or tractor unit, but it is now 18 tonnes. The Commission's proposal for a 24-tonne limit on three-axle units—lower than that of the United Kingdom—has now been upgraded to exceed the United Kingdom limit, at 25 tonnes. In 1979, the Commission proposed a limit of 30 tonnes for a four-axle rigid vehicle, but it is now 32 tonnes. The Minister has already made the point that in 1979 the

[Mr. Lloyd]

Commission proposed a limit of 35 tonnes for an articulated or drawbar trailer combination, but it has now been increased to 36 tonnes.

The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has already quoted the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, when the right hon. Lady was at the Department of Transport. On 25 November 1982 she said:

"I shall now deal with weights, as many right hon. and hon. Members have dealt with them. There is no increase for the four-axle lorries, which would have increased road damage."

The Minister should take on board the fact that his predecessor was clear that raising the limit would increase road damage. The right hon. Lady continued:

"In addition to the fact that there is no increase in the four-axle lorry weight, there is no increase in the drawbar trailer combinations. They are unusual on our roads, but they might have become more popular if the weight limit had been raised."

I refer again to the weight salami. The Minister has given assurances about international limits, but what will happen if the Community produces a draft directive next year suggesting that domestic limits throughout the EC should be increased? Is the Minister able to give a guarantee as to derogation, or will the majority voting system mean that Britain must accept what the Community says is good for us? As 1992 approaches, and as pressure increases for standardisation of both domestic and international trade, can the Minister guarantee that we will not be confronted with having to adopt the international limit on our roads? On a previous occasion the Freight Transport Association stated in *Freight*, its house magazine, that the 1984 directive, which came into effect on 1 July 1986, applied directly to international traffic. It added that it had quickly become the domestic minimum. That worries the FTA and many other organisations, especially in the light of the draft directive.

The Minister said that the present 32·5 tonne four-axle articulated vehicle or drawbar trailer combinations are relatively infrequent on British roads, and that is true. I think he said that three out of every thousand heavy goods vehicles on British roads came within those categories, but they represent 16·5 per cent. of heavy vehicle traffic on international routes. I believe that that figure has been quoted in Community documents.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: That was the finding of the Select Committee.

Mr. Lloyd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding me that that figure was quoted by the Select Committee.

The capital cost of operating a lorry increases with the number of axles that are available. A four-axle lorry can be operated up to 36 tonnes, and the advantage of moving up to five or six axles for an extra 2 tonnes is not particularly great. However, 16·5 per cent. of heavy vehicle traffic on international routes comes within that category, and I suggest that we shall see a rapid increase in the number of these lorries on our roads, whether they are international traffic or, if my worst fears are realised, domestic traffic. What the Minister describes as a relatively minor problem may become a increasingly serious one as time passes.

The weight on the drive axle of a lorry is of great importance, but so is the average weight per axle. On 25 November 1982, the then Under-Secretary of State for Transport, the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), said:

"I shall come to the issue of enforcement in a moment. It is the average axle loading that counts. On a 38 tonne five-axle lorry, it is 7·6 tonnes, compared with the 8·125 tonnes on the present 32·5 tonne four-axle lorry. It is 6·5 per cent. less and those are the internationally agreed figures.—[*Official Report*, 25 November 1982; Vol. 32, c. 1093-94.]

We are moving now to an average axle weight of 9 tonnes, which is a significant increase on the 1982 position. We are having forced upon us something that the Minister's predecessor said was unacceptable. Some six years on, the Minister tells us that the increase is a mere bagatelle and of no significance.

With the increased traffic on our roads, and with the threat of more and heavier lorries appearing on them, there is all the more reason to apply the logic that the right hon. Member for Wallasey set before us in 1982. It will be unacceptable in any circumstances to see the proposed four-axle articulated or drawbar trailer combinations on our roads that are laden to 36 tonnes, or up to the 39·6 tonnes that would keep them within the ACPO limit. Even worse will be the lorries that are significantly overloaded to 40 tonnes or more. The Minister must deal with that point if he is to carry with him even those of his hon. Friends who are sympathetic to his views.

The Minister asked—I go along with him on this—that the House should support the Government on derogation relating to the drive axle. It would be the height of irresponsibility in any circumstances to move from 10·5 to 11·5 tonnes, and it would be unacceptable for the Secretary of State to propose anything other than leaving the present system intact. If the Minister wants an assurance that the Opposition will support the Government on that one issue, he can have it.

Our position is simple. There is no case for any of the increases proposed by the Commission. They are an unwarranted interference in the United Kingdom's traffic conditions, and they will be of no advantage to Britain. The Minister talks about the potential for cabotage and the advantages that he expects to accrue to the British haulage industry, and I know from previous exchanges that that is the view that the Government wish to put forward. The Minister will be aware, however, that many people take a rather more pessimistic view of the future of road haulage, for all kinds of reasons, but among others the degree of subsidy accruing to foreign operators. Domestic operators will face very unequal competition once cabotage comes into force.

It is of no advantage to this country for us to fall meekly into line with Community proposals. That applies not only to the drive axle but—this is important—to the maximum weights permissible on the different axled lorries that will come on to the roads.

For some time now an important debate has been taking place on the environmental consequences of heavy vehicles on our roads. I note that the Freight Transport Association, in its submission to selected Members of Parliament, expressed the view that implementation of the Community's proposals would have no adverse effects on the environment, and would have only a marginal effect on roads and bridges. The Minister knows that that is not the case. The proposals could have quite a serious impact, particularly on bridges. He has already explained the necessity to guarantee that the present axle weights are maintained in order to protect our bridges, many of which

would be very vulnerable if the proposals were adopted. Because of the paucity of information, which was mentioned by the Public Accounts Committee, it would be an extremely foolish Minister—or an extremely foolish Eurocrat—who would predict that our bridges would be able to take the increased weights of overloaded 36-tonne vehicles.

The Freight Transport Association has an interest to uphold—the interest of those who would benefit from the increased haulage capacities—but for it to say that there would be no adverse effects on the environment is nonsensical. Everyone recognises—even the Community, although it draws a different analysis from mine—the environmental impact of an increase in maximum weights. That is inevitable. It is also inevitable that the damage to roads and bridges will be increased, and the effect is not likely to be marginal, unless the Minister can tell us what new steps he intends to take to guarantee, not only that lorries will be checked, but that there will be powers to ensure that overloaded vehicles become a thing of the past.

The Minister knows that he is not in a position to do that. We do not have the weighbridges, the Department of Transport staff or the necessary will power from the present Government. They have often been asked in the past few years to institute checks, and more recently they have been asked to do that in connection with the overloading of ferries. It is only with reluctance that steps are being taken now, and we are told that it is impossible to check foreign lorries on that basis. Checking foreign lorries as they arrived in Britain would be a way of preventing their being overloaded when they reached other destinations. The mechanisms exist, if the Government are prepared to put them into practice, but without weighbridges, Department of Transport inspectors and the political will, nothing will change.

It is important for the House to take on board one simple fact. The draft directive has almost no relevance to safety or to traffic conditions on the roads of Great Britain. The Eurocrats' proposals may make sense in other countries, but that is for them to decide. There is an overwhelming case that Britain's needs are special, and the Minister's case was that our needs are special. We need derogation.

It would also be better if the Commission were to say that the directive has nothing to do with Britain and that it would be preposterous for the Commission to interfere with weight limits on British roads, where the conditions that apply elsewhere do not apply. The draft directive ought to be buried. That would make sense in terms of the Minister's position and that which I have outlined to the House.

2.50 am

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My hon. Friend the Minister has a tremendous track record in seeking to promote safety on our roads. The hour is late, but it would be quite wrong if I did not take this opportunity again to place on record the concern of my constituents over conditions on the roads in Kent and ask my hon. Friend to ensure that the weights and sizes of lorries on our roads do not increase.

My hon. Friend will know that I am particularly grateful to his hon. Friend the Minister of State for the improvements that are being effected, particularly on the Thanet way. It will make a tremendous difference to my constituents. I hope that I shall not offend my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), in whose constituency the port of Ramsgate is located, when I say that we are looking forward to the announcement of a relief road for Ramsgate harbour.

The condition of the roads in the gateway county of Kent is unsatisfactory. Lorries use roads that were not constructed for the sizes of vehicles that they are now compelled to carry. The villages of north Thanet suffer daily from the pounding of juggernauts that often use minor roads as rat runs instead of the major roads. The damage done by heavy lorries to the roads of Kent is costly and considerable. The ports of Dover, Folkestone and Ramsgate benefit considerably from the traffic that is generated by the freight haulage industry. We do not suggest that it is unwelcome, but there is a limit to what our roads can take. We have to balance the cost benefit of the freight that the ferries carry against the negative cost of the damage done to our roads and to buildings in our villages.

I know that my hon. Friend is particularly concerned about safety—a subject that has not been mentioned tonight. He knows that in the past two weeks there have been no fewer than three major accidents involving lorries on the roads of Kent. In my constituency, sadly, only a couple of weeks ago three people were killed when a foreign lorry driver veered off the road. I have to be careful about what I say because the case is sub judice, but there is reason to believe that the driver may have been asleep. The road in question was unsuitable for that size of vehicle, with the result that three people are now dead.

Anybody who has driven down the A20, particularly along the Canterbury bypass towards the ports of Dover and Ramsgate, knows only too well of the horror, particularly in wet weather, of being overtaken—very often on the inside—by a foreign juggernaut. The people of Kent have had enough. We do not wish to deter business. We are concerned that, even when the tunnel is built, drivers who would normally rest on the ferries will not do so. Therefore, far from an improvement, we may find that some of our roads will become still more dangerous.

I do not wish to take up any more of the House's time. I have made my point. In conclusion, on behalf of my constituents—and, I fondly believe, on behalf of all the people in the county of Kent—I urge my hon. Friend the Minister, with every ounce of strength at his disposal, to resist any further increase in the sizes and weights of the lorries on our roads.

2.55 am

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): First, I agree with some of the things that the Minister has said this morning, but at the same time I disagree with him. If he is going to fight on behalf of the people of this country about the heavy vehicles on our roads, I will support him. In fact, I will go with him. Never mind supporting him over here, I will go with him and carry his briefcase for him.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is my hon. Friend seriously suggesting that after all the performance that we have had tonight and after all his references to the people on the Tory Front Bench, he would go with a Tory on a fact-finding tour of the Common Market?

Mr. Haynes: I have to let the House into a little secret. A few months ago I went to New York, and the Minister's wife was with the group. She is an hon. Member and she told me some nice things about him. She said she thought what a good Minister he was and what a good job he was doing. I listened to her and took it all in. If she is to be believed, and after some of his remarks tonight, I am prepared to support him in the things that he is fighting for across the water.

Mr. Skinner: Rather than his wife?

Mr. Haynes: I do not want to fight his wife. I want to fight for the people in my constituency.

Before my hon. Friend interrupted me, I was going to say that I have had regular representations from the Nottinghamshire county council about its roads. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), I have had representations from the Derbyshire county council, because many of the vehicles that come through Derbyshire come into Nottinghamshire. I have had representations from the chairman of the highways committee of Nottinghamshire county council, Councillor Keith Williams—a wonderful worker on behalf of the people in Nottinghamshire in regard to roads and transport.

I am concerned about the state of the roads in Nottinghamshire, and, if my hon. Friend will forgive me, in Derbyshire, too.

Mr. Skinner: It is very important that the House should understand that my hon. Friend is talking about a coalmining area. One of the problems that we face in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and similar areas in the coalfields is not only the very heavy vehicles, which have been increased in weight as a result of our being in the Common Market, but subsidence. Will my hon. Friend draw to the attention of the Minister the fact that special attention should be paid to those areas afflicted by subsidence, because the many beautiful bridges in that area will suffer even more than those in Kent which have been mentioned already?

Mr. Haynes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making the point about mining subsidence. I am not wandering into mining subsidence; I am just making a point. It is a major issue, and it goes with the problems that are being created by massive vehicles moving along our roads when they come off the motorway.

I have noticed the sort of vehicles that British Coal now buys. They are not always British Leyland; they are foreign vehicles from across the water—from Europe. The amount of damage that those massive vehicles are causing is amazing. I should have thought that the Minister would keep a close eye on them. They are doing a lot of damage in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) mentioned overloading. I look forward to hearing the Minister's reply to this serious matter. My hon. Friend made it clear that the Government are not doing enough about the problem. I have had representations about work not being done to ease the problem in my county. However, I have a suggestion about how to overcome it. The Minister must first persuade the Treasury to provide the money.

There are intersections on the M1. I travel up and down that motorway every week.

Mr. Skinner: I have been with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Haynes: My hon. Friend is correct: he has travelled with me on many occasions. He would agree that I am a safe driver. The heavy lorries, with their maniac drivers, are frightening. They travel very fast, often dragging trailers behind them——

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Rowntree's lorries?

Mr. Haynes: I got into trouble when I brought up Rowntree a few weeks ago.

These damn lorries travel like hell up the motorway. Some of them are overloaded, because they are not being weighed to see whether they are. They travel so fast that they frighten drivers like me to death. They sway when they switch lanes. I disagree with the Minister about buses and coaches. He is agreeing to extra weight for them. When the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, was in the Department of Transport, she said that she would take action against speeding bus drivers because of the huge numbers of accidents that had occurred. But the problem continues. If we add weight to fast-travelling buses, we can imagine the results. There will be messy accidents. Even though the Minister is tired—he is yawning—I hope that he is listening, because this is a serious problem.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the number of speeding coaches has halved since I have been the Under-Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Haynes: I do not believe the Minister. I travel on the M1 every week—150 miles up and 150 miles down. Those heavy vehicles are passing me when I am doing 70 mph. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover will confirm that I stick to the speed limit, because he has travelled with me many times. Heavy lorries, buses and coaches are still a danger on our roads. It is about time that the Minister woke up and did something about it. The Minister said that the figure had halved, but I do not think that he travels on the M1 enough to know.

Mr. Skinner: Since the Minister started his job there have been cones up and down the motorways. My guess is that, as a result, the traffic has been slowed down so much that it is possible that there has been a reduction.

Mr. Haynes: My hon. Friend must remember—if he does not, I shall remind him—that police accident reports state that vehicles have ploughed through the cones and hit vehicles coming in the other direction. The Minister says that the problem has halved, but I still do not believe him. Accidents are still taking place. He should do a bit more travelling on the M1. I cannot speak for the other motorways because only the M1 goes through my county.

Mr. Skinner: The Government could have fiddled those figures on the same computer as they use for the dole figures.

Mr. Haynes: I never thought of that, but I do not think that I shall wander on to social security matters, although I am tempted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that we will return to the weights and dimensions of commercial vehicles.

Mr. Haynes: I am speaking about the weights of lorries. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover is trying to

direct me away from them, but I am not having it. I said that I would not wander on to social security, although it is tempting.

The Minister is responsible for transport. I should have thought that he would have had many talks with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about opening more rail lines so that we can overcome this problem. All the goods carried by heavy lorries should be carried by rail. I know that Beeching did an axing job, but we are in a different ball game now because we shall have the Channel tunnel. There is a need for a proper rail service from Mansfield to Nottingham. The Minister should take some action on this, because it would take heavy loads from lorries and put them on the railways.

Mr. Skinner: There is a serious argument for the electrification of the midland line.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us return to the weights and dimensions of commercial vehicles.

Mr. Skinner: We are talking about increasing the axle weights of heavy lorries from 32·5 tonnes in 1983 to 38 tonnes. If we spent more money on railways, we would not be talking about 38-tonne lorries. If we electrified the midland line in accordance with the early-day motion standing in my name and the names of my hon. Friends, we would make some progress. The Minister has responsibility for railways as well as roads.

Mr. Haynes: That fits in with the motion that we are discussing. We are talking about taking heavy loads off the roads and putting them on the railways, where they should be. I hope the Minister is taking note of my remarks and is not sitting on the Government Front Bench taking no notice and looking gormless. *[Interruption.]* I seek your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I distinctly heard the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) comment on what I am saying, but I am unable to reply because he is outside the Chamber, beyond the Bar.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must address his remarks to the EC document that is before the House.

Mr. Haynes: I come to the question of the bridges which must be repaired because of the strain being placed on them. They are being smashed to smithereens. I recall my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) bringing before Parliament the difficulties that occured with spaghetti junction. The Government denied there was anything wrong, but in the end they had to spend millions of pounds putting things right.

Mr. Skinner: The fiddle.

Mr. Haynes: Yes. A right old fiddle had been going on because it had been done in a cheap way without using the proper materials. Likewise, our bridges are being destroyed. We will not see Whitehall officials or the Minister mixing concrete and doing the repairs. The lads in the counties and the local transport departments will have to do it.

Mr. Skinner: What about the sewers?

Mr. Haynes: Yes; somebody will have to accept responsibility for repairing the sewers, too. What Government grant will be available for repairing the sewers and the bridges? The Government have cut drastically the money that should be spent on repairing the roads. The roads in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire are getting smashed to hell and the counties do not have enough money to carry out the proper maintenance work. The roads near my home are full of potholes. We never had such problems under Labour rule.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying a long way from the subject matter of the document that is before the House. We are talking about the weights and dimensions of commercial vehicles.

Mr. Haynes: Exactly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am referring to the commercial vehicles that are damaging our roads because they are too large and overweight. It is happening in Doncaster as well—in your constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker—so you have some responsibility in the matter. I am speaking on your behalf as well as on behalf of my constituents and those of all hon. Members. I am a little surprised, therefore, that you accuse me of drifting from the subject. I am drifting, but I am drifting through Derbyshire into Yorkshire and beyond to Jarrow —all the way up the M1.

The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) spoke about the problems of Kent.

Mr. Skinner: A Tory-controlled area.

Mr. Haynes: Yes; and Kent has not suffered the sort of financial cuts that have occurred in my area and elsewhere. There is plenty of money in Kent, yet the roads there are bad. When I was towing a caravan in Kent I had an axle broken. So it is not just in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and your county of Yorkshire, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but in Kent as well that the roads are affected. It is happening all over the damn place and it is high time the Minister put his foot down and did something about it. He should challenge the Treasury to give him extra money to put things right. We owe a debt to the people in the community and we should give them proper and safe roads. At the same time the Department of Transport should do something about the lorries that are too large and are carrying too much weight. It is the Minister's responsibility to do something about it.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has dealt with subsidence and with the effect on bridges and sewers of these 38-tonners with heavy axles. He has also dealt with the speed of the lorries. There is one point that he has not mentioned. Like me, my hon. Friend rides a bike. These long articulated lorries come sailing past. They are frightening, because we never know when they will finish. At one time we knew when the back end of an ordinary British lorry would pass us. Now, with the 38-tonner, we are waiting for the end of it to pass us and, with the draught, it feels as though we are in a vacuum. That is another reason why we should vote against the motion.

Mr. Haynes: I thank my hon. Friend for that point. I have watched the Minister on television and listened to him on the radio. He is always bragging about what the Department of Transport is doing for the roads. I wish he would come and look at our roads to see what they are like because of the damage done by these damn great, overweight vehicles. Yet we are being pressurised to take more and more heavy vehicles. That is why I said at the

[Mr. Haynes]

beginning that I am prepared to support the Minister in opposing what the people on the other side of the water in Europe want us to accept.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend understands the Common Market and knows what the game is about. The Minister, in answer to a question, said that they have got majority voting on these issues in the Common Market. With majority voting we have not got a cat in hell's chance. If they want to increase axle weight and go from 38 tonnes upwards, they will do it, because West Germany is the top dog in the Common Market. It has got about $40 billion surplus in its balance of payments. We have a massive deficit. The West Germans will call the tune.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be both brief and relevant. That was neither.

Mr. Skinner: It will be if they finish up in Doncaster.

Mr. Haynes: My hon. Friend has made a good point. He was right to drag in Doncaster. Two of my hon. Friends are from Doncaster and they complain about the roads and the heavy lorries. It is high time that the Minister pulled the stoppers out and got something done about them. He spends too much time in front of the television cameras instead of being out on the job. It would be a good idea if I went with him to give some assistance and to keep him on the job, but he would not want me with him in front of the cameras.

Mr. Skinner: Not unless my hon. Friend wore a top hat.

Mr. Haynes: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's wife would be pleased if I appeared on television with him. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will seriously consider his statement. I did not mean what I said about carrying the Minister's briefcase. I was joking.

I hope that he will take note of everything that has been said, especially by the Public Accounts Committee. The PAC's recommendations on roads and transport are sensible. The Minister appears not to be listening to the Committee. There are a number of Labour Members on the Committee. I hope that the Minister will listen seriously to the PAC's views on roads and transport generally. If the Minister did that, he would press the Treasury to make additional funds available, and I am sure that the PAC would back him. The PAC overlooks departmental spending——

Mr. Skinner: It is in this document.

Mr. Haynes: That is right; I have seen it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must address himself to the issue before the House, the weights and dimensions of commercial vehicles and the draft directive.

Mr. Haynes: The PAC has had a go at the Minister about the roads damaged by vehicles. I support the Committee, but the hon. Gentleman takes no notice of it. If he did, he would make representations to the Treasury for additional finance to overcome the problems. I said that I support what the Minister is trying to do with respect to European legislation—telling the European Council what to do. The European Council has no right to tell us what to do.

I remember the right hon. Gentleman who sat at the end of one of the Back Benches——

Mr. Skinner: Enoch Powell.

Mr. Haynes: Yes. He said that the European Council would take away our rights and sovereignty, and it has done just that. There is more coming. It is high time that the Minister said, "Stop. We will decide here, in the United Kingdom. We do not need you, in Europe, to tell us what to do. We will decide for ourselves." This is the mother of Parliaments. Members of Parliament collectively will decide the kind of transport that should be on our roads.

The Minister should work hard to improve rail services. The heavy lorries should be taken off the roads and the passengers and goods should go by rail. We should take off the road the buses that the Government have encouraged. The roads are overloaded with the damn things.

Mr. Skinner: And check the lorries.

Mr. Haynes: And check the lorries. I shall not take up that point. I shall sit down.

3.22 am

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) has made such a comprehensive speech that there is not a great deal left to say, but I want to put a few points on the record. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister appreciates that the opposition to the order comes not just from a few nuts who might be thinking about the interests of those across the Channel.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Just in case people read the report of the debate later, will my hon. Friend make it clear that he is talking about opposition to the draft directive rather than to the motion? I suspect that Members on both sides of the House would want to support the motion.

Mr. Taylor: The motion makes a minor proposal about the directive. We are concerned with the directive. The basic point in the directive is on increased weight. The Association of Metropolitan Authorties, a substantial organisation representing the major conurbations in the London boroughs, issued a statement today in which it said:

> "The association believes there can be no justification for accepting the proposed increases in lorry weights now being proposed by the Commission, having regard to the information provided to Parliament in 1982 and the numerous subsequent undertakings given to Parliament by the Transport Secretaries of State and Ministers in the intervening six years. The Association believes that the provisions of the draft directive to amend directive 85 of the EEC are not appropriate."

We are discussing, albeit at a very late hour, a matter of significance.

We have had assurances in the past, and we are now being given further assurances, but the sad fact is that the assurances that we have had in the past have tended to fade away. Every time we give more power and authority to the EEC and allow lorries of greater weight, we find that previous assurances disappear. I remind the Minister of our debate on 18 December 1984, when we were given splendid assurances. We were told that there was no question of allowing heavier lorries on our roads. Now the proposal is that we should. The directive also said that the derogation was of indefinite duration. Now we are told

that it is not of indefinite duration, but had something to do with accommodating changes in our bridges and roads. Finally we were told:

"The directive makes it clear that any future decision on this subject"—

on lorry weights—

"can only be taken by a unanimous vote; thus our position in Europe on lorry weights is actually strengthened."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1984; Vol. 70, c. 250.]

The proposed directive, on the other hand, is to be decided by majority vote.

I am also worried because the Minister said that the number of lorries of the weights that are being increased quite substantially—by several tonnes—on our roads is limited. I ask him to consider what the Government said last time round. Speaking for the Department of Transport was that delightful lady who is now the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. She explained her opposition to increasing the 32·5 tonne limit by saying that such a move would make the lorries more popular on our roads. She said that they were unusual on our roads but might become more popular if the weight limit had increased.

We had assurances on all those issues. Frankly, it seems that we are wasting our time in trying to get more assurances. It is now proposed to throw aside all the assurances, to increase the weight and to go ahead from 32·5 to 36 tonnes.

Nevertheless, I hope that the Minister will give us assurance on one point. Even if we increase the weights of lorries further, which will cause much concern to the community, I hope that we can at least do something about the terrible problem of overloading. The Minister must know that checks done in Kent in 1987 showed that 12·5 per cent. of foreign vehicles stopped in random batches were overloaded. That is substantial percentage. Current fines seem to have little impact on overloading, and resources for checking are unbelievably limited. The Minister will be aware that pre-weighing facilities are not available at a number of ports. If we are obliged by majority vote—or perhaps the Government will agree with the directive—to go ahead with increased lorry size, the very least that we want to know is that when a lorry comes to this country in a boat it will be weighed to establish that it is not overloaded. We are talking not just about convenience on the roads or about the problems of cars that are pushed out because there are too many lorries; we are talking about people's lives and about safety. We are talking about the dangers involved. We are discussing very serious issues.

I have no personal animosity against the Minister, but he must know that we get repeated assurances late at night—at 2 am or 3 am—on Common Market issues but we may as well forget it the next time they come round. We were told that we would get control of the budget if only we agreed to extra cash at the time of Fontainebleau. Now, to get round that, they have told us that it was a 10-month year last year. We have been told time and again that the CAP will be reformed if only we give a bit more money and a bit more power. We know exactly what is happening: spending is at an all-time high and reform is just a joke.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman takes a keen interest in matters affecting the Common Market. Has he noted that one of the ways in which the Common Market is to try to find the necessary money—now that it has gone bankrupt for about the third time in the past five years—to pay for the bureaucracy that spews out documents such as the one before us is with a £5,000 million loan, £900 million of which is to come from British taxpayers? As the hon. Gentleman knows, it sticks in the gullet for us to be pouring out much-needed money that should be going to the recipients of social security, the National Health Service and pensioners in Britain.

Mr. Taylor: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point about the intergovernmental agreement to provide an extra £5 billion. I could give him four quotations from Ministers assuring me that intergovernmental agreements would never happen again.

No one is listening to the debate at this late hour, and, sad to say, no one will bother. I hope that the Minister will agree that all the assurances that have been given in the past—"If only we give a bit more"—have fallen apart. He should be aware of the serious danger posed by heavy lorries on our roads and by consistent overloading. I appeal to him at least to say—this is a minor demand—that he will oppose increases in lorry size.

In the past, the Government could have stopped such proposals simply by saying no. But now, with majority voting, the British voice does not matter much because it will be overturned. I hope that the Minister will at least make the point about the dangers of increased lorry size and that he will vote against it, even though Parliament and the Government cannot control it. Let him at least make a stand to show that something important is at stake. He must stand firm and oppose the ridiculous increase from 32·5 to 36 tonnes. especially in view of what previous Transport Ministers have repeatedly said on the issue.

I hope that the Minister will assure me that weighing facilities will be provided at ports which do not have them at present. There is little point in our passing laws if they can be disregarded because of overloading. There is a serious danger here, and we have a duty to the travelling public to do something about it.

3.31 am

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Although the hour is late, this matter is of great importance and must be considered carefully by the House.

The Minister can give as many assurances to the House as he likes, but they are meaningless because they can be overruled in Europe. The document that we are discussing is another example of the EEC overruling the sovereignty of the House. Many of us saw it coming. As a Member of the European Parliament, I witness such occurrences daily. There is a tendency now to forget the solemn assurances that were given to the British people. When we held a referendum on joining the Common Market, the pro-Marketeers' argument was that there would always have to be a unanimous vote in the Council of Ministers. That was a con trick to get the people of these islands to vote yes. After they had voted, the position was changed; and we do not know what other changes will take place.

We are privileged to have on the Front Bench the Minister responsible for roads in Northern Ireland. I take this opportunity to emphasise the awful condition of the roads in Northern Ireland, as my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) can testify. The roads to the ferry ports in Northern Ireland carry large vehicles from the Irish Republic. Most of them are overloaded, but they are not tested or weighed.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The Minister should consider that point. At Larne harbour, in my constituency, there are occasional spot checks on Sundays to detect overloaded vehicles. But, because of the ease with which drivers communicate, they can direct their colleagues to stay clear of Larne harbour for an hour or two or to use another harbour. When the boys move on, it becomes a free road. There must be proper weighing facilities at every port in Northern Ireland.

Rev. Ian Paisley: It is interesting to note the deterioration in the road structure in Northern Ireland as a result of those heavy vehicles. At present, the roads in Northern Ireland are disgraceful. There are not only potholes, but large crevices in the roads of Northern Ireland and they are deteriorating even more.

It is all very well for the Minister to say that he does not like the directive, just as we do not like it, but, as the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said, the Minister must make known his opposition by voting against the directive. Even if he cannot change it, he must at least put a marker against that deterioration and the forces of the Common Market overruling the wishes of the people of this country. The tragedy is that the battle on this issue is lost simply because of the voting system whereby the strongest possible representations made in good faith by the Minister can be wiped out. Those matters must concern everyone.

The Minister responsible for such matters in Northern Ireland can confirm that the number of deaths on the roads of Northern Ireland is far greater than the number of deaths from terrorism. Those heavy vehicles are adding to the number of victims killed on our roads. The Minister is not responsible for the roads in Northern Ireland—I am sure that he thanks God that he is not—so we shall have to leave it to the hon. Irish Earl at the end of the Front Bench to take responsibility for them. I am sure that the Minister is interested in the fact that vehicles from the Irish Republic help to damage our roads. Perhaps he will undertake to ensure that those vehicles will be weighed to check that they are not overloaded.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can it really be in order that, while the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) was speaking for 10 minutes, there was a Tory asleep at his feet?

3.38 am

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) said that the battle is lost, but I do not believe that it is lost. The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) invited me to his constituency. I went there to a battle that was supposed to be lost, and the Conservatives won the by-election.

Mr. Haynes: The Minister is talking about a by-election in 1977. I won it back.

Mr. Bottomley: I think that the House has noticed that, especially when the hon. Gentleman speaks quietly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) talked about the importance of getting the weight right. I draw the House's attention to the motion, especially the second part of it. The Government are asking the House to support them in obtaining arrangements that allow us to keep axle spacings and weights within the current United Kingdom limits to safeguard bridges in this country. In my opening remarks, I spelt out how, for those two, three and four-axle rigid vehicles, if we keep the 10·5-tonne drive axle, we shall just about keep the weights that we want. That is the point upon which the House should focus tonight. That is why we are considering this matter before the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 20-21 June.

This House does matter. A united voice from the House helps. I sometimes wish that those who have different views about the Common Market would realise that, if we use the House to back our corner of the Common Market, so that we can send in Ministers with united support rather than saying that the battle is lost, we can do as well in our negotiations in Europe as we have done during the past seven years in our trade and economy improvements which have made it possible for us to increase our spending on roads.

The hon. Member for Ashfield raised the question of county council and highway authority spending. There was £700 million available last year which was not spent on road maintenance. If it had been spent on road maintenance, that would have helped.

Safety was also mentioned. It is worth remembering that there have been fewer vehicles since the change announced during the previous major debate. Although each time a heavier vehicle is involved in a crash the consequences are greater, because of the reduced number of vehicles there are fewer casualties. The casualty rate dropped by 10 per cent. last year. That kind of drop is greatly to be welcomed. I pay tribute to the many members of my union, the Transport and General Workers' Union, who drive coaches and lorries and congratulate them on their improved performance.

Like the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), I believe in using the railways as often as possible, but it is not kind to say that all the people who earn their living by driving our citizens around in coaches and buses should lose their jobs. Consumers need a proper choice.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: They have no choice.

Mr. Bottomley: They must have a choice if twice as many people use the coaches now that we have deregulated them. The use of trains is also increasing.

Mr. Skinner: The Minister is talking about people losing jobs if the lorry and axle weights are lower. According to the Public Accounts Committee report, published in February this year, in the period since the heavy lorries were introduced the number of lorries on the road has dropped from about 600,000 to 435,000. If there are smaller lorries there must be more people in work.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. gentleman is trying to have it both ways, and because of the time he will probably succeed.

The lorry-checking programme is growing. The numbers and use of weighbridges are increasing. We need to have greater help from the magistrates. If we calculate the value of overloading by about 10 per cent. throughout the year and compare that with the fines that the magistrates courts impose, they are not necessarily the greatest deterrents in the world——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 6511/88 on the weight limit for two axle rigid vehicles and the un-numbered explanatory memorandum dated 24th May 1988, submitted by the Department of Transport, describing a draft Directive amending Directive 85/3/EEC on the weights, dimensions and certain other technical characteristics of certain road vehicles; and endorses the Government's objective of securing Community arrangements which would make it possible to keep axle spacings and axle weights within current United Kingdom limits in order to safeguard bridges in the United Kingdom.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &C.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

COMPANIES

That the Companies (Fees) Regulations 1988, dated 13th May 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th May, be approved.

Question agreed to.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I must have missed something. I did not hear the motion entitled "Roadworthiness Testing" called.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): It was not moved.

Carrickfergus and Smiley Hospitals

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

3.43 am

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): It is now just over 13 hours since I came to the Chamber. It has been a long wait to be 13 hours early after having been a few seconds late before.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss the proposed closure of the Carrickfergus and Smiley hospitals, in my constituency, and the implications flowing from that.

In answer to recent questions to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, I have been informed that the highest concentration of heavy industry in Northern Ireland outside Belfast is in the constituency of Antrim, East, which I am privileged to represent in this House.

Antrim, East has the highest total number of employees in energy and water supplies industries, extraction of minerals and ores, manufacture of metals, mineral products and chemicals, metal goods, engineering and vehicle industries and construction industries of any constituency outside Belfast.

In 1987 approximately 5,500 ships handled imports and exports through the port facilities at Magheramorne, Carrickfergus, Ballylumford and Larne, involving well over 5 million tonnes of cargo. In 1987, there were 5,107 ship visits to Larne harbour, with a total of 1,459,737 passengers and 614,506 vehicles, of which 308,746 were commercial and 305,760 were cars and caravans. There is no record available of the number of vehicles or persons leaving or meeting passengers at Larne harbour.

That information may serve to indicate the reason why there is total opposition by elected representatives and the community as a whole to the northern health board's proposal to build a new area hospital in Antrim, to provide acute services which are already available at Moyle hospital in Larne, backed by the facilities at the Smiley and Carrickfergus hospitals. If those proposals proceed, my constituents will be required to travel 24 miles from Larne, 35 miles from Carrickfergus, 40 miles via Larne from Carnlough, and 37 miles from Islandmagee to Antrim for acute hospital services that are already available and accessible. People in Great Britain do not expect to put up with such inconvenience or to be treated in that way. Is it any wonder that we are saying, "No thank you" to the proposals?

Roman Catholic, Protestant and dissenter alike are saying yes to equality of provision of acute hospital services for the consumers served by the Northern health board. Decisions on future hospital provision and planned closures have been taken by an undemocratic quango. The majority of health board members are accountable to no one—but many are place seekers appointed by a Minister to bulldoze through the decisions of the DHSS. Consultation is meaningless if those who make and take decisions will not listen to reasonable argument and amend policy that is unacceptable except to those in the immediate catchment areas of Antrim and Ballymoney/Coleraine.

In a report in the *Ballymena Guardian* on 28 April, when asked if the present campaign to try to secure a rethink of the whole strategy will make him change his mind, the Minister replied no. Asked also whether he

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would change his mind if campaigners succeeded in convincing board members to vote in favour of a rethink, the Minister again replied with a firm no.

Ulster Unionists are constantly accused of saying no, but when a Minister answers no to such questions, that is arrogant and contemptuous of the beliefs of intellectuals, members of the medical profession, experts from outside the health board, and my constituents, who reject what is being forced upon them.

General practitioners in east Antrim almost unanimously reject the proposals for Moyle, Smiley and Carrickfergus hospitals. Is the Minister prepared to ignore those experts on community care, or will he reconsider the ability of Moyle and associated hospitals to provide adequate acute services in east Antrim? The present proposals will never be acceptable in my constituency, and I predict that no elected Northern Ireland forum will fully implement them if responsibility is transferred in the next five years to a democratically elected body there. The Minister may proceed with phase 1 at Antrim, but when the right to take decisions is restored to elected representatives in Northern Ireland there will be no phases 2 and 3.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is a disgrace that within the area covered by the Northern health board there is to be one acute hospital at Coleraine and a heart hospital at Antrim? Only the heart hospital is provided for. Yet in every other area there are more than two acute hospitals, and in many of those areas there is a smaller population. The vast majority of the hon. Gentleman's constituents and of mine will not be given the equality of service that is available in every other area in Northern Ireland. Does he agree with me that this is an example of deliberate discrimination against both Protestants and Roman Catholics in our constituencies? Hospitals are being closed and services are being removed, such as the heart unit at the Ballymena hospital which was made available through the donations of the people. That unit is to be taken away and the people will be robbed of something for which they paid.

Mr. Beggs: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his helpful intervention. I concur with the arguments that he has advanced.

I believe that the Minister is unintentionally misleading when he proclaims that a large high-technology hospital is a necessity for the area. The Antrim hospital will not provide regional specialties under phase 1. Patients will continue to receive these services in the large Belfast teaching hospitals. Professor James McCormick estimates that about 10 per cent. of all ill health requires hospitalisation and that 90 per cent. of all hospital patients can be treated successfully in smaller hospitals. It is reasonable to conclude that only 1 to 2 per cent. of all illness requires the high technology that is already provided in Belfast hospitals. It is widely accepted that patients requiring treatment beyond the capability of their local hospital would request transfer to one or other of the Belfast hospitals rather than to an area hospital at Antrim and would be so transferred.

The proposed Antrim hospital will not provide anything which the existing hospitals, including Carrickfergus, Smiley and Larne, cannot provide. The consultancy skills to be available at Antrim will be the skills of consultants transferred from the existing small hospitals.

It makes no sense to twin phase 1 of the Antrim hospital with the old Masserene hospital at Antrim. It is miles away on a different site where no acute hospital services have been provided for years. In fact, I am deeply disturbed that the logical arguments put forward by Moyle action committee and the Federation of Action Committees have not been given the consideration that they deserve. The alternative plan to the existing proposals would give a fair and equitable provision of acute services to everyone involved. This is the main reason why the action committees have widespread support.

Most districts of Northern Ireland are within 15 miles of acute services. At present, people living in the Antrim district are only 17 miles, of which 14 miles are motorway, from the main Belfast hospitals. Removing acute services from Moyle in Larne would require many of my constituents to travel twice that distance—about 37 miles, of which only a few miles are motorway—along roads that are restricted to single-lane traffic by constant vehicle movement to and from Larne harbour.

The proposed Antrim hospital puts the whole of east Antrim outside the 15-mile norm for access to acute services. My constituents will suffer most from a gross reduction of hospital services for the most heavily industrialised constituency outside Belfast with the second largest port in Northern Ireland. Is this progress that is being proposed, or is it madness?

We do not object to equal provision of services for the needs of people in Antrim, but it must not be at the price of reduced services in east Antrim, where the hospital needs of everyone are now met. I challenge the Minister tonight to spell out what is to be gained by providing phase 1, with 300 beds at Antrim. The existing consultants are to be transferred there. The existing equipment and facilities are adequate to meet the needs, and nothing additional by way of services available at present is to be provided.

The scheme for the Northern health board area which the Minister inherited from his predecessors at the Department of Health and Social Services is a waste of public money. The Minister should arrange an independent appraisal. I ask him to invite the Select Committee dealing with health matters to visit Northern Ireland and carry out an appraisal of the existing provision, to invite consideration of the alternative put forward by the Federation of Action Groups and even perhaps to invite the Public Accounts Committee, with its expertise, to help by carrying out an appraisal of the expenditure proposed in the Antrim complex, rather than an inquest after irreparable damage has been done to hospital services in my area.

Let me quote briefly from the report of the Royal Commission that examined the National Health Service in 1979:

> "Acute hospital services are generally excellent, most of them provided by peripheral teaching hospitals, often in old buildings, ungenerously staffed . . . It should not be assumed that because a building is old it is unsatisfactory—the UK is not so wealthy that it can afford to scrap perfectly usable hospitals merely because they are old".

That was nearly 10 years ago. Moyle, Smiley, Carrickfergus and many other small hospitals have been upgraded, adapted and extended, and adequately serve the needs of the Northern health board. They would get glowing reports today from a Royal Commission. Some

£3·5 million has been spent on the Moyle and Waveney, £4·4 million will be spent on Whiteabbey and Mid-Ulster, and then they will be downgraded if the proposals for Antrim are fully implemented. Some £40 million will be spent on phase 1 at Antrim, unwanted by the majority of those in the area that is to be affected. Much less expenditure—about £25 million, we believe—could fully repair and modernise hospitals at Waveney, Moyle, Mid-Ulster and Whiteabbey.

The proposal to amalgamate Ballymoney and Coleraine on a new green field site seems reasonable for that area, but the proposed downgrading of all hospitals in my constituency, including the closure of Smiley, an essential part of the Moyle complex and Carrickfergus, is unreasonable.

Constituents ask whether the Government and Northern Ireland Office Ministers really care. I hope that the Minister will show tonight that he cares by indicating his willingness to look at representation beyond the ministerial brief offered by officials who have got it partly wrong this time. Two acute hospitals, as the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) has already pointed out—an incomplete hospital at Antrim and another at Coleraine—will not be able to provide acute services for the whole Northern board area. Can the Minister assure us that the Eastern health board will provide acute services in the Belfast hospitals for 90,000 people and that the Southern health board will provide them for 20,000 from the Northern health board at the South Tyrone hospital in Dungannon? If the Eastern and Southern boards cannot provide for those 110,000 people, the concept of two acute hospitals is undermined and the alternative hospital proposals are more realistic.

The Moyle action group and others active in the Federation of Action Groups have still to be convinced that their proposals do not stand up to any reasonable scrutiny. They have commissioned a report by a highly respected former employee of Coopers and Lybrand. Will the Minister promise to examine the report carefully—it should be with him in a very short time, if it is not already —and take a new look at the suggestions put forward by the action groups on behalf of the people of my constituency before committing himself publicly to a full-blown phase 1, 2 and 3 hospital at Antrim?

The new career structures for junior doctors that are under consideration should provide adequate staffing for the smaller hospitals. The main teaching hospitals in Belfast must be more closely linked to the smaller hospitals providing acute services that would enable junior doctors to be allocated from a central pool in Belfast to any hospital in the Province when the need arises.

The community hospital concept has not been taken up and developed widely in Great Britain. This out-of-date concept, rejected on the mainland, should not be forced on the people of Northern Ireland. There is an opportunity for the rationalisation and modernisation of hospital provision for acute services that would attract increased support. There is overwhelming opposition from general practitioners, nurses, trade unionists, industry, elected representatives and the public as a whole. Alternative provision provides value for money and will have widespread support.

Will the Minister please further examine his Department's and the Northern health board's proposals? Has he considered the implications for the new Antrim hospital if patients are given the right to choose, which is very good Conservative policy, and they decide to take the monetary value of their operation to a hospital other than Antrim? Or shall we continue to be lectured and dictated to by those who think that they know what is best for us and who are unwilling to listen to reason and to engage in constructive dialogue?

I hope that the Minister will again accept the detailed documentation from Moyle and retain it in his Department for further consideration in relation to all those areas that will be more than 15 miles away from acute services based on an Antrim hospital now satisfactorily served by existing east Antrim hospitals. I am sure that we all aim to achieve what is best in the provision of acute hospital services for the Northern board area and at the same time have value for money, co-operation and widespread acceptance.

For those reasons, I oppose the proposed closure of Smiley and Carrickfergus hospitals in my constituency and the planned run down of acute services in east Antrim.

4.2 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): I am sure that the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) regrets as much as the rest of us do the 20 seconds delay that he experienced a fortnight ago in coming to the House, which has resulted in the rest of us being here for the last 14 hours. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) is in his place. I know that he has a close interest in the subject that we are discussing.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East rightly pointed out that I inherited the Antrim hospital proposals. They were far down the track when I arrived on the scene. I considered them carefully and, for reasons that I shall give the House, I decided that it was right to proceed with them. When I answered the questions of the hon. Members for Antrim, East and for Antrim, North, no and no, it was because the time had passed. The ship had left port, the rocket had left the launching pad, and, millions of pounds had been spent on the design project for this fine new hospital. It is now in the process of going to tender and it will be built. The question is, why is it to be built, and why is it to be built there?

As to why it is to be built, I accept that small, acute hospitals have had a remarkable history in Northern Ireland, particularly in the Northern board area. In the last century hospitals were built within one day's walking distance from where anybody lived in the Northern board area. They were run by dedicated surgeons who were capable of dealing with every aspect of surgical technology and surgical practice as it existed in those times.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is no longer true. On a recent television programme one of the councillors at Cushendall, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Antrim, North, said that he sat in his front room and looked out of the window and that if he ever had a coronary he could go up the road to the hospital. Unfortunately, if he went up the road to the hospital, when he got there he would find that no one was manning it and that the equipment there probably would not save his life. That is no reflection on the people. The technology just does not exist.

In the Northern board area we have to concentrate acute facilities in places of excellence that are properly manned and have the very best equipment and to which we

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can attract the best staff. We must ensure that there are community hospitals to which people can go for geriatric care, for community care, to be attached to health centres or to have minor operations. All those facilities must be available so that people can go into acute care for a short time and then go back to their community hospitals.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Let us consider the example of Ballymena. At their own expense the people of Ballymena opened up a very valuable heart department. As the Minister knows, the people of Ballymena can walk to the hospital if they have heart trouble. The record of the Ballymena heart ward is outstanding. That will be taken to Antrim, away from Ballymena. Is it fair that the people who have paid for and helped to run the specialist heart ward at the Ballymena hospital should be robbed of it? The people of Antrim did not pay for it.

Mr. Needham: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I have been to that coronary ward. There is nothing finer in terms of the dedication of the staff, the care and the equipment, but the hon. Gentleman must be the first to admit that the building is old and in an unsatisfactory condition. I believe that when those who work there see the facilities that will be produced in Antrim, they will welcome that opportunity. The hon. Gentleman asked how people would get there. The answer is that it is crucial that we have an ambulance service with all the right equipment to make sure that they get to Antrim as quickly as they possibly can.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East referred to the roads in Northern Ireland. I have some sympathy with the points that he raised, but we are building a dual carriageway to make sure that they will be able to get to hospital that much quicker.

I believe that we need a new acute hospital in the central and southern sectors of the Northern board. The hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe), who is not here this morning, believes that it should be at Antrim, as do the friends of Antrim hospital and the Antrim council. The hon. Member for Antrim, North would prefer it to be at Ballymena and the hon. Member for Antrim, East would prefer it to be at Larne. Wherever we put it, it will not get universal approval. If one considers the long-term need for a major acute facility—and the Northern board has considered the matter very carefully—it has the delegated responsibility for such matters. It does not consist of my puppets, and I am sure that, on reflection, the hon. Member for Antrim, East will realise that. I know that the hon. Member for Antrim, North has been to the board and discussed the matters with the officers and the chairman and has had a very full briefing.

While I understand why, from a constituency point of view, the hon. Member for Antrim, North would prefer it to be in Ballymena and the hon. Member for Antrim, East would prefer it to be in Larne, I believe that the Northern Board has reached the right decision. I do not believe that we can continue with very small acute hospitals because we cannot staff them. There are already problems in the Southern board area, where large acute hospitals cannot adequately staff emergency units. In Downpatrick there are major problems with attracting and keeping staff because they want to work in major acute centres of excellence that will help them get on in their careers.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I know that the Minister does not want to mislead the House. No one knows the geography of Antrim better than the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) and the Minister himself. He well knows that Ballymena is the middle. He said that Antrim was central, but it is not. It is the southern extremity. So why not put the hospital there? There was no opposition from Larne when the decision was made that the Waveney hospital was to be the central hospital. It was to have an acute service to provide the necessary balance. Now all the acute services are being taken away and concentrated in the northern periphery.

Mr. Needham: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. We have debated it at length, mainly in the columns of the newspapers, and not, unfortunately, until this evening in the House. In view of the geography of the Northern board area and the potential of phases 2 and 3 that are to follow, the greenfield Antrim site is the most sensible place. We can get people from Larne and Ballymena there and look after them in the finest possible way.

The main points of the debate are Smiley and Carrickfergus, about which I have not yet made a decision. I have listened to the points made by the hon. Member for Antrim, East and I shall be in a position to come out with a decision early next week. I am confident that I have the information that I require to make that decision. I see no need for a public inquiry. I have taken into account the opposition to these closures. The hospitals may well be able to be closed and transfers take place to the Moyle. That will not affect the quality of service that the people there will get.

It is right to ensure that there are proper-sized units for obstetrics. We can go forward with Antrim and the rationalisation of acute care in the Northern board area. That will provide the constituents of the hon. Members for Antrim, East and for Antrim, North with a better and more professional service than they are receiving now.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes past Four o'clock on Friday morning.

House of Commons

Friday 17 June 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Cartmel Church of England School

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I have spoken in the House before about the threat that hangs over four secondary schools in my constituency. I have here a petition concerning one. It says:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of the Governors of Cartmel Priory Church of England Special Agreement Comprehensive School of Cartmel in the County of Cumbria, Sheweth

That Cumbria County Council have produced options under a review of Secondary Education in Cumbria that include the closure of our school.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will ensure that Cartmel Priory Church of England Special Agreement Comprehensive School will not be closed but will be retained into the twenty first century for the secondary education of all children of the Cartmel Peninsula in the County of Cumbria.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray &c.

It is signed by the governors of that school, and I hope that the House and the Government will take note of their views and ensure that this fine school is not closed.

To lie upon the Table.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the five motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Wolverhampton Urban Development Area Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Sheffield Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Leeds Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Central Manchester Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (1988 General Capital Increase) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Tourism

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

9.36 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): Twelve months have passed since we last had a major parliamentary debate on tourism, which period coincides with my first year as Minister with responsibility for tourism. I have had an exciting and happy year, having had responsibility for one of our most vibrant and buoyant industries. I believe that, collectively, we have substantially raised the profile of the tourism and hospitality industries, and the fact that I as a Minister in the Department of Employment spend approximately 80 per cent. of my time on tourism is recognition of the importance that the Government attach to it in terms of wealth, job creation and the regeneration of so many of our older towns and cities.

Spending two to three days a week out of London —travelling probably 1,000 miles every week criss-crossing the country—has given me the opportunity to see not only so many pieces of our existing rich tourism jigsaw, but the new exciting developments under way and coming on stream—the Liverpool waterfront, the Swansea maritime quarter, Manchester Granada studios tour, Center Parcs in Sherwood forest, and the 2,000 berth Brighton marina, where we launched "Tourism '88", to mention just a few.

The last year has seen the opening of many new hotels. I have opened the Cannizaro at Wimbledon, the Ladbroke Hilton at Portsmouth, the Ramada at Manchester, and, recently, the Caversham at Reading. We can be proud of our high quality country house hotels. But there is still a shortage of budget accommodation, particularly in London. I am pleased to note that the London tourist board has identified 33 potential sites in the Greater London area.

We have seen further expansion of our tourist development action programmes across the country. I launched those for the Forest of Dean and for Lancaster. We have seen a mushrooming of our white-on-brown tourism signs, and a significant growth in our tourism information centres. I was particularly pleased to open one in my Pendle constituency, and yesterday I unveiled a plaque for that in Southport. I am delighted to see that the hon. Member for Southport, (Mr. Fearn) is with us to take part in the debate. Nationally, there are nearly 600 tourist information centres.

Competitions and awards such as the Catey's, Hotelier of the Year, Young Chef and Young Waiter of the Year, Caravan Park of the Year, Resorts 2,000 Competition and blue flag awards for clean beaches all help to raise standards, and the qualitative assessments now coming into hotel classification and introduced for holiday parks and self-catering accommodation can do nothing but good.

All in all, as I am sure the House will agree—particularly those hon. Members who are present, who do so much to promote tourism nationally and in their own constituencies—that standards in British tourism have risen dramatically in recent years and the industry's pride and confidence has never been higher. I pay tribute to the

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considerable efforts of Duncan Bluck and the tourist boards in promoting and developing United Kingdom tourism.

In introducing the debate last year I highlighted five themes: signposting, spotlessness, service, training and the needs of disabled people. I shall touch on all those today, but it is service and training on which I wish to concentrate. If I have learnt one thing, it is that tourism is a partnership industry and is about and for people.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): After dealing with the five points, will my hon. Friend make a sixth point —the weather? That is more important than anything else.

Mr. Lee: As a Minister at the Ministry of Defence I was responsible for the Meteorological Office. I no longer hold that direct responsibility. No doubt my hon. Friend will make his points about the weather forecasts in the Devon and South-west region.

I want to talk about the opportunities that exist in the industry for young people, for those returning to the labour market and for those who are currently out of work. I also want to discuss some of the opportunities for the industry, such as the Channel tunnel, predicted continuing growth in international travel and tourism, and the single European market.

Tourism is central to the British economy. It is capitalised at over £25 billion on the stock market. It employs 1·5 million people, it includes some of our leading companies and leading figures in the business world and it is a growing industry. Last year, was a record year, with 15·4 million visits to the United Kingdom. Overseas visitors spent a record of £6·2 billion. That is three times more in foreign earnings than our motor vehicle industry and 10 to 12 per cent. more than aerospace.

A higher proportion of those foreign earnings are net earnings. Unlike much manufacturing industry, the raw materials—the service, the food, the drink, the manufacturing input to the accommodation—are largely produced here. Over two thirds of total expenditure by overseas visitors is spent on services such as accommodation, travel, eating, drinking and entertainment.

Tourism also has a key relationship with the rest of British industry. English tourist board estimates show that over £1·2 billion worth of tourism-related construction projects were under way during the last six months of 1987. These are providing major opportunities for our construction industry as well as ensuring a great many jobs. It is the relationship with other industries, particularly manufacturing, however, that is too often not appreciated. We estimate that, on average, 80 per cent. of the construction work of a new hotel in this country is "British". Just think of the opportunities for our manufacturers—beds, curtains, carpets, electrical equipment, kitchen equipment, right down to glass, crockery and uniforms for staff.

We should also be aware of the relationships between new caravan park developments and the caravan manufacturers, as well as between marina developments and boat building. In other words, an expanding tourism industry goes hand in hand with a buoyant and healthy home manufacturing sector. I am delighted with the buoyancy of our home caravan industry and the amount of money that it is spending to promote itself and its image.

If one takes into account fares paid by overseas visitors to British carriers, one finds that a total of nearly £8 billion was spent by overseas visitors. That is equivalent to £145 for every man, woman and child in the country. An additional £10 billion was spent by British residents, on holidays and day trips in this country. It is often forgotten that nearly 80 per cent. of holidays taken by British people are taken here rather than abroad—73 million holidays in total in 1987. That is slightly more than the 71 million in 1986 and is an encouraging sign.

I welcome the fact that the great majority of people have more disposable income and more choice in their leisure activities. I also welcome the fact that the fares paid to United Kingdom carriers by people going abroad, plus travel agents commission, brought an estimated £1·8 billion into our economy last year. I welcome the fact that the tourism industry realises that it has to compete internationally for both domestic visitors and for those from overseas. It is competing successfully. The United Kingdom is fifth in the world league of overseas tourist earnings in dollars. Taking overseas and domestic visitors' expenditure together, tourism is worth £18 billion to the United Kingdom economy. That is about 5 per cent. more than last year. There are now about 1·5 million people working in tourism, and the figure is increasing at the rate of nearly 1,000 net new jobs every week. It is one of the fastest job creating sectors. Recent changes that the Government have made to the licensing laws are estimated to produce perhaps a further 50,000 jobs.

The Government play their full part in that partnership. Ministers meet regularly to discuss tourism issues. I meet my colleagues, my noble Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts), the Minister of State, Welsh Office, and my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to discuss common tourism issues. In that connection, I welcome and endorse the Wales tourist board strategy launched by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales on Tuesday. It shares common goals with "A Vision for England", produced by the English tourist board. It shows the potential that exists for the private sector with the support and co-operation of the Government, which through the board, will be investing some £11 million over the next five years, aiming to create 1,300 jobs.

In Scotland, I welcome the establishment by my noble Friend of the Scottish tourism co-ordinating group, another splendid example of partnership, bringing together the principal agencies responsible for the promotion and development of tourism in Scotland.

I particularly welcome the news that Northern Ireland has had its best tourism season since 1970. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) is here today. Obviously, other tragic events still dominate the news in Northern Ireland, but I hope that that will not deter people from discovering the beauty of the Province and the charm of its people.

The Government, in all parts of the United Kingdom, invest substantially in the partnership with the private sector. Total United Kingdom investment in tourist boards has been increasing steadily and now amounts to over £70 million a year. That has financed the work of the British Tourist Authority, which markets the country

overseas, and the English tourist board, which administers our section 4 scheme of assistance to tourism developments. Under that scheme the boards can provide assistance, normally up to a maximum of 20 per cent. towards the capital costs of new developments or the expansion or upgrading of existing facilities, subject to certain criteria. A separate but comparable scheme operates in Northern Ireland. In 1987-88 assistance totalling £14·8 million was offered by the ETB to 609 projects in England. The largest section 4 project assisted to date has been a £1·5 million grant towards the £34 million Center Parcs development in Sherwood forest. Recent projects assisted have ranged from £750,000 for the £8 million Granada studios tour in Manchester to £3,150 towards the cost of en-suite facilities at the Shapwich House hotel in Somerset.

One growing part of the industry, and something of a personal crusade of mine, is what I term the development of modern industrial tourism, that is to say, manufacturing and commercial firms opening themselves up to visitors by setting up properly organised and designed visitor facilities, including perhaps reception centres, walkways and viewing points, to see British industry at work. For many years our ceramic, glassware and distillery companies have been doing that. On Wednesday I opened the Dennis Hall visitors centre at Thomas Webb Crystal in Stourbridge, part of the Coloroll group. That is an excellent example of what can be achieved with a purpose-built centre linked to tours of the manufacturing process.

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. recently opened a £5 million visitor centre at Sellafield hoping to attract 150,000 visitors this year. Local authorities are getting in on the act and realise the potential.Cheshire and Coventry have put together and successfully marketed tours of a wide cross-section of industries in their areas. The public sector also has a role to play in industrial tourism, and that is demonstrated by the way in which the Central Electricity Generating Board is encouraging visits to power stations.

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): Will my hon. Friend confirm that the grant of some £9 million by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment towards the creation of a new hotel in Birmingham, together with the grants from the Government and Europe for the creation of a city centre convention centre of operating in a European dimension, will put Birmingham firmly on the map and make it one of the most prominent industrial tourism centres in the United Kingdom and Europe.

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend, from his local knowledge, cites a superb example of how a substantial Government contribution, coupled with a substantial private-sector input, can produce something of major regional and national importance. He is absolutely right.

The CBI is supportive of industrial tourism and, in conjunction with this Department and the ETB, will be jointly promoting a conference on Industrial Tourism—the first of its type—to be held at Centre Point on 15 September. In addition, the ETB is currently preparing a publication, designed to encourage and assist firms wishing to exploit their tourism potential, to be launched at the conference. Our section 4 grants are also available in theory for this type of development of industrial tourism.

The conference provides a good example of partnership, which is so important to the tourism industry. People in the tourist industry work in an incredible range of jobs, at all skill levels, in the public and private sectors, at attractions, in restaurants and in hotels and other accommodation, in transport and in travel agents.

Not just the Government are involved. There is partnership between local authorities, which are taking an ever-increasing interest in tourism, partnership with the Government and partnership with the tourist boards, whose efforts with the private sector in so many areas deserve the highest praise.

I am particularly pleased to see partnership at regional level, increasing the number of commercial members of tourist boards. In the north-west, for example, there has been about a 100 per cent. increase in commercial members in the past year.

The most important partnership is the parternship of the market place—between a person offering a service and a visitor and, giving a visitor value for money in a skilled and professional way. That is where our tourism industry has to compete now and in future, and that is where I want to focus today's debate.

Tourism is a people industry. To provide the right service, it has to recruit the right people. It has to do so in an employment market where the number of young people leaving school will fall by over 20 per cent. between 1986 and 1994. So the industry will have to fight hard for its share of those entering the labour market. I am glad to say that the industry is making a substantial and growing effort to reach out to young people.

Last year, for the first time, we had a catering and hotels open day, organised by *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* magazine, to which I pay particular tribute. It encourages young people and careers teachers to see over 2,000 hotels and restaurants. I was present at the Manchester launch. It was a great success and we intend to repeat the event in November.

We have careers videos and material being produced by the tourist boards and the industry, and there are 20 technical and vocational education initiative projects in schools around the country. The awareness of careers officers is also increasing. A recent survey showed that they found material on tourism increasingly helpful. YTS is making a major contribution. Some 5,000 places are run by the Hotel and Catering training board, which gave me a presentation on its assessment of the labour market earlier this week. It estimated that about 75 per cent. of those completing the course go into jobs.

A growing industry also needs to look at the skills that those already in the labour market can offer. The industry has already made substantial progress in employing part-time workers and married women returning to the labour market who often wish to have that kind of work. The number of full-time jobs is also growing, and the industry needs to look hard at the skills already on offer in the labour market to fill them.

Employment training, announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment in February, is a major new training initiative which has the potential to help the industry tap those skills. It offers training to 600,000 unemployed people in a full year, and we are providing £1·4 billion to ensure its success. It is an important opportunity for the tourism industry, and we want to see it fully represented.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): All this training is vital, but does my hon. Friend agree that the one area of concern that the Government have not dealt with is the teaching of foreign languages so that people can assist tourists visiting this country? Part and parcel of education and training is learning how to make people feel welcome, and that is not achieved if no one can speak their language. No one is learning Japanese. What will the Government do about that?

Mr. Lee: That is a fair point and an interesting one. It is also the first time that it has been raised with me in the context of tourism and I shall certainly think about it. The BTA has recently opened an office in Japan which I am sure will be staffed by Japanese speakers. I take my hon. Friend's point about employing in the tourism industry people with knowledge of a foreign language.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): As my hon. Friend is talking about part-time and full-time workers in this great industry, will he consider the still crying need for more youngsters to be trained in craft skills? We raised this in our last major debate on tourism. Has he had discussions since then with his opposite number in the Department of Education and Science so that we produce rather more indians than chiefs? At present major centres, such as York, Brighton, Hove and Blackpool, are sadly devoid of the craft skills that they need.

Mr. Lee: I shall deal with that later in my speech.

I was particularly pleased to see that the Hotel and Catering training board is seeking a substantial number of places in the employment training scheme—some 28,500 places. My Department and the Training Commission will do all that they can to ensure that firms in the industry become involved.

It is particularly important that employment training will offer all entering the scheme who wish it the chance to work towards a vocational qualification. That will be a major step towards maintaining our competitiveness in the level of skill and the standard of service that we offer. It is also particularly important that employment training should offer a flexible programme of training, generally between three to 12 months, with outcomes based on an individually agreed action plan. That is necessary for an industry with such a diversity of skills, skill levels and opportunities.

Lastly, in getting its recruitment right, the industry must look to recruit its managers and future managers. I welcome the increase in the number of college places on offer.

Training does not stop when people are recruited. Training should be for life. Many of our larger companies in the tourism industry already recognise that. Trusthouse Forte which spends £10 million per annum on training, is perhaps the best example. But the industry needs help, because it is so diverse, to focus its training efforts and to ensure that those entering the industry have a clear route towards vocational qualifications.

That is why the Secretary of State and I launched the tourism training initiative in October last year. The initiative is designed to bring together all sectors of the industry so that training needs can be identified and gaps in training provision can be filled. The ultimate objective is to construct a coherent system of qualifications that meets the requirements of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications and its Scottish equivalent, SCOTVEC.

It is the aim of the initiative that the industry should play a leading part in identifying its needs, and that the industry and providers should work together to find ways of meeting them. I should emphasise that the initiative does not seek to duplicate or deny the value of the existing good work of employers and providers. The initiative is firmly centred on achieving coherence and improving communications between parts of the industry.

Since the launch of the TTI in October, I have addressed a second national conference, at Wembley on 27 April. It was attended by nearly 100 leading figures from the industry, and gave some useful pointers on training needs and the way forward for the initiative. As well as the national conference, there are plans for a series of regional conferences. I was glad to have the opportunity to address the first, in Durham on 24 March.

The initiative has attracted wide support. The ABTA national training board and the Hotel and Catering training board, which both have in place excellent systems of qualification which meet NCVQ standards, are involved in it. Many leading figures in the industry are involved. We are particularly grateful to have Brian Wolfson, chairman of the British Institute of Management, chairman of the National Economic Development Council sector group on tourism and leisure, and chairman of Wembley Stadium Ltd., as the leader of the steering group. I should like to say a word of appreciation for the work that Don Calder of ABTA and Duncan Rutter of the HCTB are putting in. With commitment like that, we are well on the way towards ensuring that the United Kingdom tourism industry has a profitable and competitive future. The initiative is another example of the partnership between sectors of the industry, and between the Government and the industry.

It goes without saying that pay and conditions, and the opportunities to get on, will play an important part in attracting the people when the industry needs to continue growing. Pay and conditions have often, largely unjustly, been used as a stick with which to beat the industry. The average earnings index currently shows pay in the hotel and catering industry to be 88 per cent. higher than it was in 1980, with an 8·5 per cent. average increase over the past year.

Of course, that does not place hotel and catering workers among the highest paid, but there are many compensations in working in the industry. Perhaps the greatest of those, although unquantifiable, is a job that constantly changes, a job that involves, by and large, meeting the public, and a job that gives satisfaction through ensuring that the public are satisfied.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): To say that workers in the tourism industry are not among the highest paid is a massive piece of understatement. What the Minister should have said is that they are among the lowest paid and among some of the most exploited workers within industry. I hope that the Minister will tell us what he proposes to do to raise standards of employment rights, conditions and wages of those workers.

Mr. Lee: With the greatest respect, that is the sort of generalisation that does our growing tourism industry so

much harm. Of course there are some bad employers, as there are in any industry, and one accepts that there are a number of low-paid jobs, but there are a tremendous number of jobs that pay a good wage, and increasingly there are significant opportunities for career advancement and development in this huge industry. The tourism industry increasingly recognises that it cannot be in its interest to continue to have the staff turnover rates of the past and that it must make sense to retain staff. Pay levels are improving, and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and others who are minded to make similar comments should endeavour to keep some sort of balance. It is a huge industry and a range of salaries are on offer.

Many of the 1·5 million people who work in tourism do so in exceptionally pleasant environments. Their work has none of the repetition and regimentation of process work. That means that, as well as a varied job, hours and periods of work can be flexibly adjusted to suit the individual. Some 54 per cent. of those working in tourism-related industries are part-time employees. Self-employment is also growing in the tourism industry, and that is to be welcomed. The labour force survey has shown that in the past four years there has been a 27 per cent. increase in the number of self-employed people in hotels and catering. Most important, opportunities in tourism are also growing regionally. In the two years to December 1987 the number of jobs in hotels and catering in the north-west increased by 14 per cent. and increases of 13 per cent. were recorded in Yorkshire and Humberside, the east midlands and East Anglia.

I hope that that helps to overcome the stereotype of a low-pay, poor-condition industry to which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West alluded. That image will not help the industry to expand. What is equally important is the level of opportunity—of early responsibility—that the industry offers. That is not often recognised. It is possible to get right to the top of the tourism industry in a way that is not possible in many other traditional, less flexible industries, and it is possible to do so at a relatively young age. Some examples of current vacancies on offer include: manager of a country house hotel, aged 30-35, at a salary of £25,000, plus car, plus benefits; and head chef, for a hotel restaurant in Ipswich, aged 28 plus, at a salary of £12,000-£14,000, plus £2,000 bonus, plus living accommodation. I would not claim that such salaries are universal or even the norm, but they show that the opportunities are there. Many of the top jobs in the industry carry substantial salaries.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. Does he agree that it would be helpful to say exactly the same thing to careers officers and those involved in education, so that young people at school will understand that there are great opportunities in tourism waiting to be taken up?

Mr. Lee: Certainly I intend to say that increasingly in the coming months. National initiatives such as the catering careers open day are a step in the right direction. The sad thing is that it has taken until this year to produce that major initiative. Given that in the past the industry has prided itself on selling its product to the customer so well, it has not sold itself successfully to young people by highlighting the career opportunities.

One of the benefits of the industry offering such a wide and individual range of opportunities is that there are opportunities for women, and, traditionally, there have been excellent opportunities for people from ethnic minorities. Equality of opportunity is one of the great strengths of the industry.

At the beginning of my speech I promised to mention disabled people, and I take particular pride in and responsibility for promoting their employment in the industry. Three tourism employers won the "Fit for work" awards this year; the George hotel at Bromley, part of the Trusthouse Forte group, the Turnberry hotel in Ayrshire and the Station hotel in Dumfries. I am pleased to say that the number of disabled young people in catering and allied YTS stands at 6·3 per cent., compared with the national average of 4·4 per cent. of all trainees. I am also delighted that disabled people are able to benefit from the industry as consumers.

The holiday care service, which receives financial help from the English tourist board, plays a large part in ensuring that people with special needs—not just disabled people, but single parents and the elderly—are adequately catered for. It encourages hotel and travel operators to provide facilities for disabled people. It provides free information and advice to customers. I am also glad that the English tourist board has set up a working party, "Tourism for All", to look at recent developments in holiday provision for disadvantaged and disabled people. I look forward to seeing its report. With the hon. Member for Southport, I visited an impressive example of recent developments. I am referring to Sandpiper centre in Southport, which opens shortly. It will provide specialist accommodation for disabled people and it is an outstanding development of its type.

Last year I mentioned the specific issues of signposting and spotlessness. As any traveller will know, a great achievement has been the spread of our white-on-brown tourism signposting on our major roads and motorways. They are much appreciated by the public, as I know from my postbag. We now have 16,000 approved signs, and that is an increase of no less than 13,500 in the past year. However, much progress must still be made especially in our cities.

Hygiene and cleanliness are vital parts of the infrastructure of tourism because image contributes substantially to the impression gained by the customer. Hygiene and cleanliness vitally affect the partnership that I have mentioned between the visitor and the industry.

Litter also has a vital effect on visitors' impressions. I welcome support for the Tidy Britain group and the major initiative launched by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister earlier in the year. Specifically we shall watch the progress of the City of Westminster Act 1988, which allows on-the-spot litter fines. I hope to attend a presentation by London Regional Transport of its major initiative later this month.

So far 1988 is shaping up even better than last year's record year. There were 2·9 million visits to the United Kingdom by overseas residents in the first quarter of this year—10 per cent. more than in the equivalent period last year. Those visitors spent over £1 billion—4 per cent. up on last year—and indications are that the number of visits by domestic tourists, and bookings for longer holidays, are up to or exceeding last year's levels. That shows that

[Mr. Lee]

investment in all-weather facilities, and in improving the quality of accommodation and other services, is beginning to pay off.

What is also encouraging is the spread of visitors. Contrary to popular belief, only 20 per cent. of our visitors presently come from North America. They are, of course, extremely welcome, but there is a strong growth in the number of visitors from western Europe and from the rest of the world, in particular—as my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) said—from Japan.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend mentioned road signs. Will he consider putting up some signs that are not written in English? That would make tourists feel more welcome and give them some idea of where they were going.

Mr. Lee: I have a difficult enough job to get the Department of Transport to approve the white-on-brown signs in English, and I believe that it would be a nightmare to try to get it to approve signs in Japanese. However, I take note of my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Although the dollar exchange rates need to be carefully monitored, the wide base of the industry gives us a considerable degree of security. The liberalisation, particularly of transport, that will occur with the advent of the single European market will present both a challenge and an opportunity for the industry. We must ensure that all sectors of it are aware of what will happen in 1992 and are prepared to take advantage of it.

Perhaps the most significant development in the foreseeable future will be the opening of the Channel tunnel in 1993. It is thought that 15 million travellers will use the tunnel in its first year of operation, compared with a total 15·4 million visitors who came to our shores last year. The potential scale of increased movement is obvious and presents a challenge both in terms of road and rail infrastructure and to the industry in producing and marketing a product that will not only attract more people to these shores but will encourage our own people to spend their holiday and leisure time here.

Let us respond boldly—the rewards are immense.

10.9 am

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I feel almost guilty about having to be a little critical of the Minister this morning because he has had a lovely half hour, telling us about the glories of the British tourism industry.

We start from a common basis because Opposition Members welcome the growth of our tourism industry, its diversification and the way in which there has been a real response from the private sector to look for change, development and diversification.

The main thrust of—

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sheerman: No, I will not. I have only just started.

I should like to concentrate the Minister's attention on some of the more fundamental problems that Opposition Members recognise as emerging in tourism. The Minister went through a whole catalogue of visits that he has made and things that he has opened. We are privileged to see him in the Chamber this morning as he seems to spend so much time rattling around the country. I, too, visit a number of—

Mr. Lee: I have the company of a tremendous number of my parliamentary colleagues this morning, whereas the hon. Gentleman has a thin degree of support.

Mr. Wardle: Precisely.

Mr. Lee: I can only hope that the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends are out supporting tourism in the regions.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is quality that counts.

Mr. Sheerman: Perhaps we do not have so many consultants on this side of the House—[Hon. Members: "That is cheap."] Perhaps it is cheap, but it is a fact. To get on with my speech—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. There is too much sedentary noise.

Mr. Sheerman: I do not want to rehearse the arguments and discussions that we have every time that we debate tourism. However, it is important to put on record the fact that the Labour party policy document entitled "Quality, Community and Commitment" has still not been taken fully into consideration by the Government, fundamentally because the Government still believe that the private sector will provide. They still have the laissez-faire belief that the private sector, pursuing its own interest, will do the best possible work and produce the best product for the industry's future. We do not believe that. We believe that there should be proper public and private partnership but, if that is to work, it must be led, planned and encouraged by the Government.

I shall try to show that, unless the Government take their responsibilities seriously, what may sound like a pretty picture when one listens to the Minister is actually a crisis in British tourism of a proportion and size that will be damaging to its long-term future.

First Opposition Members have always argued for growth and diversification in tourism, by which we mean that there is still too much emphasis on London and the south of England and not enough emphasis on opening up the regions to tourism. Although there have been some encouraging signs, many of the pundits of the tourism industry are pessimistic about its long-term future.

Secondly, it is absolutely essential that we have a well-trained and well-paid work force. Whatever the Minister says, I refer him to an excellent publication produced by the Low Pay Unit entitled "Waiting for Change". The title of that booklet means that for a significant number of young people—and older people—working in the hotel and catering industry is a degrading experience of long hours, split shifts and poor pay and conditions. According to the investigations carried out in that research, a high percentage of hotel and catering workers are paid an average of £60 per week less than employees in comparable industries. That is a fact.

The Minister knows that I have never subscribed to the belief that all tourist jobs are bad. That is not the case—the majority of tourist jobs present opportunity and a good career structure and are well paid. However, we must address the fact that 30 per cent. of the jobs in hotel and catering are low paid and exploitative. We need Government direction on that. I shall return later to the benefits of having a well-paid work force, living in good

conditions. For too long this country has put up with the idea that many jobs in tourism can be low paid and part time, especially for young people and women. Why cannot we move to the views of our competitor countries which have a quite different attitude and believe that part-time jobs in tourism for young people, and for women who work part-time, should be well paid, with good conditions and pensions? That is a different attitude from the one taken by many employers in this country where the Government have progressively stripped away protections for young people and workers in the industry.

Thirdly, I should like to turn the Minister's attention to effective standards of service and consumer protection. I still believe that this country does not have enough protection for its consumers. I know that many Conservative Members believe that there should be proper mandatory standards for hotels so that consumers can be assured that the hotels will be of a certain standard. Many hotels have not adopted the new crown standard and some of the larger hotel chains have not co-operated with the system. Until they do, it will remain ineffective.

Fourthly, the Minister knows that Opposition Members believe strongly that tourism and leisure should be for all. We mean that in two ways. We mean that the community has an interest in tourism. If tourism is well planned by the Government, and if local councils are encouraged to participate fully in the development of leisure services and facilities to cater both for the incoming tourists and local inhabitants, there will be a much better reception for incoming tourists and much more positive attitudes on the part of all those who live in tourism areas which cater for many visitors. Unless the community as well as the visitor is seen to benefit, tourism will get a bad name, people will resent tourists and the traditional British welcome for tourists will begin to fade. The quality of the welcome that we give visitors to this country is second to none. All the surveys show that, and all hon. Members know the welcome given in their constituencies to visitors from overseas and from other parts of the country.

However, tourism and leisure should be for all in another way also. The Minister did not say anything about the 40 per cent. of our population who, measured by the British Tourist Authority's standard of having more than four nights away from home as a holiday do not have a holiday. For whatever reason—low pay, handicap or retirement—a high percentage of this country's citizens do not enjoy a proper holiday each year.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): What does the hon. Gentleman consider to be a proper holiday? One of my neighbours has never been far from the village but has a long holiday every year. Travelling all over the place with a bunch of children is not everyone's idea of a holiday.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman knows that research shows that the sort of people he is describing are not the people who do not have holidays. That research shows that people who do not have holidays cannot afford them—people on low incomes and handicapped people. It also includes single parent families and people on social security benefits. They are the sort of people who need a holiday, a rest from the daily routine.

Any Government should examine the position of citizens who do not get an opportunity for a holiday. Most people believe that a decent holiday is almost a right, and we must encourage that. There is a great deal of under-used capacity in the industry at different times of the year. There is great potential, and hon. Members will know that there is a European initiative for providing holidays for less advantaged groups. It is called social tourism and we should be a the forefront of trying to devise ways of getting to the hidden group of people who do not get a holiday. The Minister did not touch on that, and that was a grave deficiency in his speech.

In these debates we usually talk about better co-ordination of the tourism effort. I should like to use as an example of that a document that most of us interested in tourism will have received. It is called "Tourism 88" and features resorts at work. Conservative Members will know that we continually react to this kind of promotional literature. It is basically a piece of public relations on behalf of the Conservative party. I do not know how any Government can publish promotional literature of this sort at the expense of the taxpayer. It is an absolute disgrace. It is full of pictures and quotations from Ministers, but I shall desist from reading to the House any of the quotations.

This Government publication is a piece of Tory propaganda. *[Interruption.]* It might be Tory tourist propaganda, but it is still propaganda. It is an insult to any serious understanding of tourism and of where the industry is going. Not only is it propaganda but includes information that is certainly not correct. For example, it exaggerates the growth of the tourist industry. One of the tables in the publication—and I had the figures checked by the Library—shows the growth of the industry. The table shows the employment attributable to tourism from 1979 to 1986. I ask hon. Members to pay attention to these overall figures and to look at the table.

I should like to quote from the Library's interpretation of employment in United Kingdom tourism. In 1979 1,710,000 people were employed in tourism. That is markedly better than the 1982 figure; we must remember that not everything is growing under this Government. There was a steep decline in the tourism industry after the Government came to power in 1979. By 1982 employment in the industry was down to 1,475,000. It increased a little in 1983 to 1,550,000, and by 1984 it was 1,610,000. That was still not up to the 1979 level. The estimate for 1985 is 1,680,000.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sheerman: No, because I am in the middle of a run of figures. The 1986 estimate is 1,710,000. Those figures were not published by the Government in their propaganda document.

Mr. Field: If the hon. Gentleman had bothered to analyse the figures, he would have had to tell the House the full story which shows an increase in self-employment in tourism from 130,000 in 1979 to 195,000 in 1986. Those are the latest figures available, as the Library will tell the hon. Gentleman. This is another example of the Labour party showing its dislike of self-employment.

Mr. Sheerman: The self-employed were included in the figures that I gave of the overall total employment in tourism. In this propaganda document, the Government mislead the public—or whoever is unfortunate enough to read it. That is not my only criticism of the document.

Mr. Lee: Is the hon. Gentlenman saying that employment in tourism over the past few years has not shown a very steady increase?

Mr. Sheerman: Yes; I am saying that there has not been a steady increase. After the Government came to power there was a severe decline, but there is now some growth. If the Minister wants to challenge the figures that I have given, I can pass them to him and he can have them checked by his civil servants. I see a certain flurry between the Minister and his advisers.

This document symbolises very well the Government's attitude to tourism. I should like to mention some of the things that the document does not show. Not only are some of the figures wrong, but some things are omitted. It does not say that we have a crisis in tourism. The Minister looked askance when I used the word crisis. In 1979, in terms of the balance of trade, we were earning from tourism £250 million plus. Last year we were more than £1 billion in the red in terms of the balance of trade, and that is serious for tourism. There is no mention in the document of the fact that Britain is desperately in the red and that people going abroad are spending £1 billion more than we are getting in.

Mr. Bevan: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to correct his malicious comments. He talks about a deficit of £1 billion, but he is not taking into account the amount spent by incoming tourists and natives on domestic tourism. When added together, the figure exceeds £10·75 billion compared to the amount spent by British tourists abroad. This is surplus to the amount spent by our tourists abroad.

Mr. Sheerman: I am talking about the balance of payments in an industry, about how much we buy from abroad and how much we earn from products that we sell abroad. It is a simple sum even for the hon. Gentleman. We are spending £1 billion more than we are getting in from tourism.

Mr. Barry Field: Under the Labour Government one could not take more than £200 abroad. The Labour Government had such tight restrictions on capital that it was almost impossible to go abroad and a passport had to be stamped every time one wanted £200.

Mr. Sheerman: That situation did not exist in 1979. I do not see what the hon. Gentleman is so cross about. We are merely presenting some facts from "Tourism '88", which is supposed to be state of the art in terms of what is happening in British tourism.

If this is a propaganda document from Tory Central Office, we accept that facts will be left out. If it is a Government document presented by civil servants, it is a national scandal. Can one imagine the steel, auto or chemical industry putting out a document which does not say that we are £1 billion in the red?

Mr. Lee: I am getting fed up with the hon. Gentleman's miserable speech. He says "we" but means himself and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who is the only other Labour Member who has turned up to support the debate. "Tourism '88" is the equivalent of the annual report of the British home tourist industry. It is nothing to do with tourism overseas. If the hon. Gentleman wants to quote those figures, we can debate them. He is right in saying that there is a balance of payments deficit, but this document relates to home United Kingdom tourism.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman had more than half an hour at the Dispatch Box, but he did not mention that imbalance. We have heard a Minister responsible for tourism who did not mention that there was a deficit in the balance of trade in tourism of £1 billion, and rising. That was a severe deficiency in his speech.

The Minister said that "Tourism '88" was about domestic tourism. That was an interesting statement, because there was no mention of low pay in the document. I scrutinised it for any mention of the problems of the 30 per cent. of people on low pay. There was no mention of the 40 per cent. of the British people who do not get a holiday——

Mr. Holt: If all those people went overseas, the balance of payments would be worse, according to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Sheerman: The document is purported to be about holidays at home and holidays abroad.

Mr. Lee: The document is not about holidays abroad. It is the equivalent of the annual report of the British home tourist industry. Can the hon. Gentleman not see that?

Mr. Sheerman: I can see that the Government wish to limit the breadth of the debate to what they think will give them many brownie points. The document does not mention the 40 per cent. of people who do not get a holiday.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that it is official Labour party policy that everyone should be guaranteed a holiday away from home?

Mr. Sheerman: That is an attractive proposition, but it is not Labour party—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members do not like this, but the fact is—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps some of the counter-arguments can be put when hon. Members make their speeches rather than by way of sedentary heckling.

Mr. Sheerman: Some Conservative Members do not seem to like it when one takes tourism out of the warm glow of all-party bonhomie and puts some of the facts to them. Of course we do not say that we must guarantee every family in Britain a holiday, but the idea that every family in Britain should have a holiday is a nice aspiration. It is possible if a Government have the guts to say that that is what they would like to secure and if they try to do something about it.

"Tourism '88" does not mention the imbalance between London and the rest of the country. The statistics show that this problem is getting worse. More and more money is spent in London and the south and a fair proportion is not given to the rest of the country. There is some growth but not enough diversification. That is a problem in the long term.

"Tourism '88" rather exaggerates the amount of investment and the number of people employed in tourism. "Tourism related" is a broad category in which the document includes restaurants, cafes, hotels, every pub and bar, libraries, museums, art galleries and other recreational activities. One suspects that the tourism-related element of some of those is a little far-fetched.

When we look at other parts of the long-term investment in tourism, we see that some of the things that we should normally put in other categories are included in tourism. The inclusion of libraries, art galleries and every swimming pool as expanding investment in tourism slightly exaggerates the true position.

I intend to show that the real deficiency in the Government's thinking—and of "Tourism '88"—is that they pay little attention to some of the longer-range difficulties that tourism is facing. The Minister has acknowledged that it is an important industry. He touched on the subject of the Channel tunnel. I suggest that the treatment the Minister gave transport and the Channel tunnel was a dereliction of his duty as a Minister. Those who have studied the development of the Channel tunnel know that British Rail will face problems when the Channel tunnel is completed. The Minister said that 15 million people a year will use the Channel tunnel in the first few years. That is an enormous number of people who will be coming to this country. It is, therefore, a disgrace that the Government have no strategy to enable those 15 million people to come from Cheriton in Kent into London in a fast and convenient way. It is ridiculous that the French will provide fast and modern trains to bring people to Calais, yet when people come through the Channel tunnel and arrive at Dover they will find that British Rail provides a very slow service into London.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): It is a different gauge.

Mr. Sheerman: It is not a different gauge but a lading gauge.

The Government's inability to organise and plan for the influx of 15 million visitors will cause problems if those people want to go anywhere but London. When they get to London, they will be unable to travel under the Thames because the Government are not planning a proper Thames tunnel through which to travel to the north.

The Minister represents a northern constituency not far from mine. People in the provinces and the regions are worried about the impact of the Channel tunnel because it will accentuate the difficulty of getting visitors out of London and the south-east to the rest of the country. It is a serious dereliction of duty for the Minister not to have said that the Government are doing something about that problem.

"Tourism '88" sets out what other Departments are doing about tourism. I am delighted to see that the Department of Transport is

"to allow parking of coaches in marked on-street parking bays, and to improve marketing of coach cards."

If that is the Department of Transport's long-range strategy for tourism, the Government are in deep trouble.

Mr. Tony Banks: Perhaps the Department of Transport will do something about the tourist coaches that park on Westminster bridge, to the inconvenience of those who travel across it and to the great danger of people getting out of left-hand drive coaches on to the middle of the road.

The Channel tunnel will cause problems at Waterloo, if the terminus is to be there. Clearly there will be even greater problems in that part of London. My hon. Friend should encourage the Department of Transport to locate the Channel tunnel terminus in, for example, Stratford, in the east end. I hope, too, that my hon. Friend will say something about the impact on London as the focus of tourism and the great strain that that puts on the services provided by local authorities in London.

Mr. Sheerman: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and he anticipates my analysis of the transportation problems and those problems that are facing London due to the Government's inability to think only in the short term.

London and the south-east are faced with a tremendous influx of people because of the opening of the Channel tunnel and with the increasing problem of people moving around our capital city. Hon. Members know that transportation in London is deteriorating at an amazing rate. They can see that transportation by tube, bus, car and bicycle is seizing up. We shall have 15 million visitors as a result of the Channel tunnel, so planning is needed to enable them to travel round this city. If that is not done, London will cease to be the beautiful city that people want to visit and there will then be a reaction to a city that is clogged up, overused and around which people cannot travel conveniently. All the attractions of this great city will be as nothing if our transportation system is allowed to deteriorate.

I warned the Minister a year ago about the deterioration of the tube system in this city, that labour was being cut and that supervision on the tubes was a disgrace. If one stands at Westminster station, one can see numerous graffiti-covered trains. Unhappily, shortly after I warned the Minister, the King's Cross disaster took place and that was not unrelated to the supervision on our tube system and the number of people working on it.

In an analysis of the long-term problems facing our transportation system, I should say a few words about air transport. Hon. Members may have seen a statement issued only this week by Lord King about the problems of people travelling by air to this country. They have occurred because we have introduced a crazy system of banking and holding aircraft wishing to land at our major London airports of Heathrow and Gatwick, which has developed as a result of the lack of investment in the air traffic control system over 40 years. I say "over 40 years" because I do not want to be entirely partisan.

Unless we consider carefully the problems of air traffic control at our major airports, the number of visitors that they can handle will be greatly restricted. If we want to extend the long-term capacity of our airports to handle the projected number of people who will want to travel by air over the next five, 10 or 15 years, we must extend our existing airports and plan new airports now. That is not my party's policy, but I believe that those people who live near airports are probably the most cosseted consumer group that I have even come across. The Government must stand up to those people and plan airports and air traffic sensibly.

Mr. Holt: I support the hon. Gentleman's comments. No Government in 1928 or 1935 envisaged that almost every household in the land would have a car. No one appears to be working out now what will happen when we all have private helicopters and aeroplanes. That may sound far-fetched, but 60 years ago four-car households sounded far-fetched to our forebears, yet we have such households today. There is almost universally one car per household. I hope that the Minister will comment on that matter.

Mr. Sheerman: By agreeing with me on this point, the hon. Gentleman draws attention to the need for a long-term strategy. If tourism is a vital industry, we must think ahead and plan. We are not thinking in the long term about road, rail and air transport. There are no plans to take account of what is happening before our very eyes.

Mr. Steen: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there has been a 12 per cent. growth in flights coming into Gatwick over the past year and that, because of that and the stacking and flow arrangements, the charter airlines are unable to get the third roster round and are running into their night flight commitments and allocations? By the end of July, they will have run out of all their night flight allocations, which will mean that they will have to fly to Luton, Hurn of Stansted, for example, with the result that tourists will be left in various airports all over the country throughout the night, unless the Government do something about that.

Mr. Sheerman: If the hon. Gentleman reads *The House Magazine*, he will see that the article about British Airways emphasises that very problem. We must do something about it very soon. It is a matter not simply of this summer's confusion and delays, but of the longer term problem of people being unable to travel. Increasingly, people believe that they have a right to travel by air conveniently, whether as charter or scheduled airline passengers.

We should also consider the great opportunities offered by the waterways. The Minister did not make much of the great opportunity of opening up the Thames to tourist traffic, but it is already happening. We can see it as we stand on the Terrace and watch the new Thamesline operating. The Minister should consider the restrictions on water transport in this city. I am told that one cannot obtain a contract to run a service on the Thames for more than a year, which restricts any real investment initiatives on the Thames.

One of the best tourist sites in Britain today is the London docklands. Anyone who has not made the trip from Tower hill on the Docklands light railway to the Isle of Dogs, walked through the tunnel under the Thames to Greenwich to see the Cutty Sark and the Armada exhibition and then zoomed into London on the Thamesline has missed a real treat. It is one of the best things that one can do in London today, but we must have a decent high-speed waterway system.

Mr. Barry Field: As the only hon. Member who can sail from his back garden to both County hall and this House, may I rely on the hon. Gentleman's party's support in my application to Mr. Speaker to put a pontoon at the bottom of his private steps so that in future I can moor my boat there when I arrive?

Mr. Sheerman: I have never believed in privilege, and I believe that Embankment or Westminster pier is quite close enough for the hon. Gentleman—although I wish that he would offer me a lift sometimes.

Even if the Government act now, we shall still have long-term problems with road, rail and tube transport.

Mr. Robert Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sheerman: My speech is becoming very long. I have had many interventions and have given way on a number of occasions. I have been trying to consider tourism in the long term rather than the short term and bring home to the Minister the fact that he should be considering the long-term problems rather than superficial problems.

Mr. Robert Banks: The hon. Gentleman talks about extending tourism in London, but would it not be better to be talking about extending tourism in such places as Newcastle, which has a remarkable river and history? Surely we need to develop tourism in those areas.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point and he anticipates my remarks.

I want to consider how one element of the transportation system in our city affects the rest of the country and tourism in general. I shall deal with regional diversification in a moment, but it is important to take on board the transportation issues to which I have referred this morning; and I thank the House for being tolerant with me. It is all a question of judgment.

The Government state on page 8 of their document that they do not make forecasts. If they do not make forecasts, industry will be in trouble. That is the central, fundamental problem about the Government's strategy in economic terms and with regard to a particular interest in the tourism industry. The Government must make plans. I hope that I have convinced the House that there must be planning with regard to transportation.

The Minister neglected to mention another important area. My hon. Friends and I contributed to an important debate on the subject last year.

Mr. Holt: There were more speeches from Opposition Members then.

Mr. Sheerman: That is right. There were many maiden speeches in that debate.

We referred in that debate to hotel accommodation and the lack of it—especially budget accommodation—in London. We referred to the problem created by the Government's housing policy and the restrictions on the ability of local authorities to provide decent accommodation for the homeless. That has caused problems in terms of providing the ordinary traveller rather than the expense account traveller with decent budget accommodation in the capital city. Travellers might come from Huddersfield, Preston or even from the constituency of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt).

Last year I said that London was becoming a forbidden city to many people who cannot afford to stay here. There are many four and five star hotels, but still very little budget accommodation. A horrendous number of people are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. They do not want to be there. It is rotten for them and it stops people going to those hotels. The only people who benefit from the crazy system encouraged by the Government are the landlords. The Government's document on tourism should have addressed that problem.

There are too many people in cheap accommodation. The Minister should talk to some representatives on Conservative-controlled councils in the London area. Some of those councils have a very bad reputation for putting people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and for not granting planning permission for new hotels which might alleviate the hotel shortage in London. The Minister will be aware that the London tourist board predicts a real problem by 1990-92 in terms of the shortage of bed space in London.

I wonder whether the Minister is aware that his responsibilities, like mine touch on training. The achievements in training young people and adults in the industry have not been good enough. The Minister has scrutinised the figures and referred to 5,000 places on YTS. Those places are welcomed, but there should be more. The training effort across the industry is far too little and far too late. This is a prime industry. The Minister called it a people industry. One's holiday is made or broken by the quality of the people one meets and the service they give. That does not come naturally. Some people are naturally charming, but most people have to be trained to be good at personal relations. We are not training well enough. The Minister should be looking closely at the way in which training in the industry is funded and delivered.

There is some method in training. However, it is clear that the funding for training represents far too small a percentage of the industry's total bill. The Minister referred to Trusthouse Forte. I believe that the percentage of funding granted to training by THF as a proportion of its turnover or wage bill is far too small—and that is one of the best in the industry. However, the average percentage devoted to training by the poor provider in the industry is very bad.

The Opposition will never be content when poor training, and poor wages are often found in an industry with very high profits. That is a juxtaposition. The tourism industry is very profitable. We need only look at the annual accounts of most of the companies in the industry.

Mr. Lee: I thought that the hon. Gentleman was saying that the industry was in crisis.

Mr. Sheerman: The Minister is aware that I was referring to the crisis in terms of the balance of trade in tourism and the inability to think long.

Companies like THF are making very handsome profits. Those profits go cheek by jowl with very poor efforts on training and poor rewards for many of the staff in the hotel and catering industry. That is nothing short of a national scandal.

Because of the interventions, I have gone over my planned time. However, I am sure that, in relation to the time of the contributions overall from the Opposition Benches, a balance will be struck.

The Government's problem is that they are not thinking long. They believe that the private sector will provide, and they do not really care about the least advantaged people who do not have holidays and those who work in drudgery for very low pay. We need a Government who want to plan ahead in this vital industry not for next year, but for the next 10 or 20 years. We need a Government who believe in the people working in the industry and the people served by the industry. The Opposition believe that the Government are derelict in their duty to the consumer and the workers in the industry.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Short speeches may help to avoid disappointment.

10.56 am

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): The weekend before last I visited a constituent of mine who is 110 years old. Many hon. Members will recall that last year I made arrangements for the lady to go to America. At 110 years old, she flew in Concorde, stayed at the Waldorf Astoria hotel and spent five marvellous days in New York. She is the oldest tourist ever recorded in the "Guinness Book of Records".

When I visited her 10 days ago she was, alas, lying on her bed suffering from an ingrowing toenail. We tried to plan what to do on her birthday this year, on 1 August, when she will be 111. She said, "I had someone in the other day who is 87 to see me. She was very rude. She said that she would not want to live to be as old as me." She was most upset. She said, "Here am I, still enjoying life at 110, nearly 111, looking forward to going to places. Even if I cannot go to them, I am lying here this afternoon thinking that I am visiting the Grand Canyon and the Taj Mahal."

If people still have that will and urge to travel, explore and see things at that great age, clearly tourism has a future as more and more people live longer and healthier lives and can travel all the more as a consequence. All those marvellous people may make the great effort and travel, but it took my constituent longer to get from her home in the north-east of England to London than it took us to cross the Atlantic to travel to New York. The roads from London to the north-east are a national disgrace, and have been so for a long time.

Everyone is aware of the problem, we all wring our hands about it, but no one tackles it. All parties in the north-east are presenting a uniform approach to the Government. In loud and clear voices they are crying, "Stop tinkering around with the existing roadways and trying to improve them, because you are really sticking an elastoplast on when you ought to be carrying out major surgery." They want the arterial motorway to the north-east that tourism demands. It is needed not only for tourism but for the region's commercial interests.

Shortly, as a result of great enterprise by one of my constituents, a new ferry service will operate between Teesside and Hamburg. It will exist primarily to transport tourists from West Germany and the rest of western Europe. I was delighted to hear my hon. Friend tell of the need for increased transportation in that area. This new ferry service will start operating soon, and, once it is established, visitors using it who are mad enough to want to visit London will face a horrendous journey. I urge my hon. Friend to speak to someone in the Department of Transport. It would have been as well if a Transport Minister had been present to hear this debate, because much of what we are saying—and there is no one on the Opposition Benches to say anything—relates to different methods of transport.

Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends will urge on the initiatives of Humberside county council. It is not necessarily a county council to whose views one would normally subscribe, but there is cross-party interest in a new roadway to the north-east, running through Newcastle and on into Scotland. I regret the fact that no hon. Members representing Scotland are present, because I was told by at least one that he would wish to intervene at this point in my contribution to support the concept of a major roadway through eastern England, from London into Scotland.

When one reaches north-east England, one finds that it is glorious. It has lovely roads, although they could be improved. Improvements need to be made also to our airports, particularly that at Teesside. Many people living in the north-east are compelled to travel to London if they wish to fly to other parts of the world. I cannot understand

[Mr. Richard Holt]

why we do not make more of the opportunities presented by both Newcastle and Teesside airports. If we do not develop their potential, matters will be made worse for people living near Heathrow and Gatwick.

There is also a need to train people to understand the cultures, natures and languages of overseas visitors. We as a nation have an appalling record in learning to speak or understand the languages of those who visit and tour our country from overseas. Our safety notices are only in English, as are the signposts to places such as Sherwood forest or Bath.

There was recently a survey not only of whether staff knew when to serve at table from the left-hand side or the right, but whether they could speak the customer's language while doing so. In most countries overseas, people have taken the trouble to learn English and make us feel welcome. Something in our character, perhaps deriving from our schooldays, when it seemed much more macho to learn subjects other than languages, discourages us from following that example. That attitude is wrong and we must change it. Perhaps it stems from before, or during, the last war. Today, we must look to the future and teach foreign languages to schoolchildren of four or five years of age, and not wait until they are 11.

In almost 90 per cent. of our schools French is mandatory. Why do we want to teach that number of children French? We ought to envisage, instead, a multi-language teaching opportunity, which would manifestly help our tourism industry. The Japanese language is one that I had in mind, and Chinese and Arabic are others. It may not be too long before the Chinese become wealthier and start visiting this country as tourists, in the same way as the Japanese do now.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): How does my hon. Friend propose to differentiate between the areas in which different languages are taught? Does he expect schools in Newham to teach Chinese, and those in Birmingham to teach Japanese?

Mr. Holt: Not even my hon. Friend would suggest that everyone should be like Dr. Doolittle and learn to speak every language of the world. However, a representative selection of languages should be taught to all schoolchildren. When I went to King's Cross station the other day to buy my ticket to the north, I queued behind someone who did not speak good English. None of the ticket sellers there could speak anything except very bad English. As a consequence there was a total impasse, causing great frustration to those anxious to catch their trains. Nor did it do much to enhance the reputation of our country.

While this may be regarded as a glib point, for too long we have thought, "What is the point?" and have not done anything about improving that area of education. Given the way in which tourism will inevitably develop into the next century, as more and more people travel by air and by sea, we must be conscious of the need to make them feel welcome. I believe also that there will be a change of attitudes in the near future, and instead of people chasing the sun abroad, as the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) seemed to think, they will realise that it is not much of a holiday to pay an exorbitant sum of money to travel somewhere and on arriving there get sunburnt lying on the beach, be uncomfortable, and get beaten up and kicked to death by yobbos.

Mr. Tredinnick: My hon. Friend means British yobbos.

Mr. Holt: All that happens in Spain, and many more people from overseas will want to take their holidays in this country as a consequence.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does the hon. Gentleman mean that they will come here to get beaten up?

Mr. Holt: I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will remember the thoughts of my 110-year-old constituent. The world has developed since that lady was born. That was 10 years before the Wright brothers first took to the air, and now she has flown in Concorde. I do not know what the future holds, any more than she does. We have not yet reached the stage when travel will be a case of saying, "Beam me up, Scottie", and finding ourselves in Sydney, Australia, in 30 seconds flat. Nevertheless, the technical changes and advances that there have been in my elderly constituent's lifetime are nothing compared with those that will come in the next 100 years. We do not know where the computer revolution will take us. Transport and travel will advance, and tourism will become much more important to the future nature of our country. I urge my hon. Friend to try to look that far ahead.

11.8 am

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): Tourism is a growth industry, in spite of what we have heard from certain hon. Members today. Last year more than 15·6 million visitors came to Britain and spent a record £6·3 billion. In the past five years, an increase from £3·2 billion has been seen—in other words, the cash return has doubled since 1982. That is for overseas visitors only. Total spending on tourism is now at a record figure of £18 billion.

The key to that success is a combination of Government initiatives, local communities and private organisations all joining together to create an attractive environment, alive to the developing needs of today's tourist population. Tourism and community interests also go hand in hand, and I emphasise that local authorities have always been heavily involved in the development of tourism, providing facilities and infrastructure, attracting investment and co-ordinating local interests. Whether preserving Britain's heritage, creating leisure facilities and entertainment, or simply making visitors feel welcome, local councils are at the head of the industry. It is the councils that mastermind a complex operation of supply and demand, putting new attractions on the tourist map and ensuring the popularity of those that are already established.

Over the past decade, forward planning and investment have attracted increasing private enterprise and led to a flourishing partnership, which has had a dramatic effect on the health of local communities. Between 1984 and 1987 local councils injected over £521 million into tourism, creating confidence in the private sector to the tune of over £500 million. As a result, nearly 10,000 new jobs have been created over the same period, both directly and indirectly —jobs that cost less to create than in other more traditional sectors of the community.

A thriving tourist industry also attracts other unrelated business, keen to benefit from its vitality and prosperity.

As a result, councils are breathing new life into areas of economic decline. Today the growing list of Britain's tourist attractions includes coal mines, convention facilities, leisure pools and heritage centres, thanks to the work of local authorities. No other agency can match them for scope and range. They provide the stability and continuity necessary for growth and, in a complex network of interests, they are the single element that has the long-term interests of the whole community at heart. Their role cannot be ignored, and I shall suggest ways of helping them later.

Jobs in the holiday business are cheaper to create than in most other industries. It costs the country £35,000 to generate a new job in manufacturing, but only £5,000 in tourism. Those figures are highly significant, given the Government's commitment to spending large sums on job creation schemes. Moreover, each direct job in tourism created by English tourist board grant-aided projects has been shown to lead to two further jobs. Businesses come in all sizes, from huge hotel chains to small cafes, and they are given much encouragement and practical support, again by local councils. They also offer a wide spectrum of jobs for men and women, young and not so young, manual or managerial, skilled or unskilled. The demand for manual labour in tourism is increasing, contrary to the trend in traditional industries.

The status of those jobs has also risen. Most are no longer part-time or seasonal. Less than 4 per cent. of the work force is now laid off in the winter. But the salaries are well below those in industry. Indeed, guidelines on scales of increased pay should be laid down by the Government, in conjunction with the tourist boards, for the 1·4 million people who are involved in the tourist trade.

The influence and sophistication of tourism is growing rapidly. Jobs demanding high competence are being created. Rewards and career structure are highly attractive, which is reflected in a sharp increase in recruitment. Those recruits must be encouraged to stay in the expanding tourism industry. Acceptable salaries and conditions will help.

On Merseyside—which includes on its coastline at the fringe, near Lancashire, my beautiful Victorian resort of Southport, which is also famous for its shops—I am pleased to say that the huge potential of tourism has been actively recognised, with the tourist board working in conjunction with the district council, the development corporation and the North-West tourist board. The action and the results are positive. Indeed, about £110 million worth of development is now going on.

The fruits of all those enterprises are now apparent. Tourism is big business on Merseyside, with 19 million visitors a year yielding revenue of £250 million. Tourism means jobs. The industry is the 11th largest employer on Merseyside, with 14,000 people employed. It is the fastest-growing job creation sector. It is confidently predicted that the number of visitors and leisure industry jobs will double quickly, although some have been put off lately by visiting the Tate in the North, where I and many hundreds of others decided that we were looking at a load of trash.

Mr. Lee: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right, but how does what he is saying square with what the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) said when he referred to an industry in crisis?

Mr. Fearn: I have never agreed that the tourism industry is in crisis, because I am in the centre of it and I see it as a vibrant industry. I want it to grow. Therefore, I shall not denigrate it.

Southport leads the north in shopping and golf and it has the second largest number of day visitors. Developers are falling over themselves to participate in Britain's largest proposed marina, indoor complexes, hotel and conference developments and more shopping areas, one of which the Minister saw. It is boom time in the north—I put it as high as that—where the scenic beauty far outstrips that in southern England. In the north house prices are reasonable and yuppies are not necessary.

This decade could see a new industrial revolution, with tourism at the forefront. Service industries are taking the place of traditional manufacturing as wealth and job creators. Tourism is now the country's third largest industry and second biggest foreign currency earner, placing Britain fifth in the world league for earnings from international tourism. The new industries are helping to compensate for job losses brought about by new technology and the recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Many successful tourism projects are now springing up in some of the very areas that have been hardest hit by the decline in heavy manufacturing.

Tourism has helped to bring new life to rural areas, where agriculture has also experienced a downturn. Changes to the milk quota system and other EEC regulations have badly affected regions where farming is often the sole source of income. Farmers are now beginning to see tourism as a way of putting redundant land and buildings to more profitable use, together with rural areas that are subject to agricultural conservation or environmental constraints. For example, in Wales alone more than 3,000 farmers are now actively involved in tourist projects.

It is tourism's ability to bring renewed prosperity to a wide range of locations, coastal and inland, rural or urban, which is so valuable to the health of Britain's economy, yet investment by the Government and private interests has been selective. The problems are becoming obvious and need to be tackled head on.

Earlier I said that some of our solutions were to be found later in my speech. The lack of holiday and hotel accommodation is the major factor inhibiting the future development of tourism. The shortfall is most serious in the budget and medium price ranges. National and regional incentives are needed to attract more private investment in hotel accommodation. District councils should consider sympathetically planning applications for hotel development, and perhaps a Government directive would be helpful. Beds are being lost to other uses. Provision for retirement homes, general accommodation and housing for homeless persons and bed-and-breakfast accommodation are creating major difficulties. An amendment should be made to the Planning Use Classes Order to stop the drift of bed stock away from tourism. Tourist boards must examine closely the classification, designation and inspection of accommodation. I welcome the re-evaluation of the crown classification system.

Historic buildings are in grave danger of disappearing altogether. Each year the architectural masterpieces that are owned by local authorities cost more to maintain. The problems associated with London's national monuments

[Mr. Fearn]

are likely to be repeated in every city and town in the United Kingdom. More resources must be channelled into the preservation of our disappearing national heritage.

Regulations limiting the use of capital receipts are preventing councils from investing more in essential infrastructure and from giving greater assistance to private firms that are keen to invest in tourism. I suggest that councils should be allowed greater freedom in that area. I am advocating controlled use to benefit tourist expansion, not a free-for-all.

The rate support grant penalises areas that have a large influx of day visitors, such as my home town of Southport. No allowance is made for this when spending levels are calculated. I welcome the Government's proposal to review the current and future provision of statistical data on tourism.

The Government's underfunding of key organisations, such as English Heritage and its Welsh counterpart, the Countryside Commission and others, threatens the future of our heritage and countryside. The ability of the British Tourist Authority to promote Britain abroad is severely impaired. Even a small increase in grant aid from the Government would improve matters. The Government should initiate a major independent review of the needs of these public bodies. Recommendations for future funding should be made.

Access to tourist areas is another major problem. Poor roads and traffic congestion are making travel increasingly difficult for tourists in all areas, but especially those that are rural or semi-rural. The roads network outside major cities and major routes should be improved and better maintained. In my area, a bypass at Ormskirk would effectively make Southport more accessible and could greatly increase the numbers of tourists who motor to our 12 miles of beach.

Rail travel may be striving to attract the British tourist population, but unfortunately British Rail is still not delivering the goods for the average visitor. Poor rolling stock and lack of access to many areas still exist. Any initiative to open up closed lines that could be economically and viably set to good use once more should be seized, and the Government should encourage that.

I ask the Minister to take heed of the pleas of legitimate amusement caterers on the subject of amusement-with-prizes machines legislation. We must consider the enormous harm that a total ban would have on the entertainment business, including leisure parks, piers, and other attractions. As I understand it, the lobby's intention is to remove gaming machines from unsupervised sites. It must be nonsense to remove them from supervised parks and attractions where families are entertained.

The state of the environment is of continuing concern in respect of existing and potential tourism. Efforts to improve the quality of the environment and minimise pollution, dereliction and the effects of vandalism should not lapse. EEC, derelict land and inner city grants, and others, may be available. The private sector should also be given the opportunity to participate in clean-up campaigns. Improvements to urban landscapes, such as pedestrianisation schemes, rationalisation of street furniture, the provision of more green spaces and town art are also very important. There is a need to minimise rural dereliction through the implementation of derelict land reclamation schemes and by countryside management. There should be a continuing dialogue with central Government, regional agencies, local authorities and the private sector.

There is a need, too, for improvement in the standards of various public facilities, including reception centres, interpretive facilities, and, most certainly, toilets. Access and facilities for disabled people should be provided. There is a need for additional convenient and secure car and coach parking, especially in seaside resorts and urban centres.

Continued support and encouragement should be given to the extension of measures which seek to protect natural resources—for example, areas of outstanding natural beauty, green belts and tree preservation orders—and the built environment, such as conservation areas and listed buildings. Natural resources include the paths and rights of way which have almost been forgotten in previous years. They are now being returned to use. Cycleways also need to be established.

I have been speaking of the expansion of tourism to make it available to those with means, but there are families that can never afford a holiday. As many as 10 million people in Britain have never taken a holiday, and many of these are deprived families who are most in need of a break. This was highlighted by the chairman of the Family Holiday Association at the launch of its "Give Them A Break Campaign '88." The FHA is the only national charity providing holiday grants for deprived families. It aims to help at least 1,000 families in 1988 by raising £200,000. The travel trade media have agreed to donate £50,000 worth of advertising space. The charity urgently needs cash and the trade is urged to help by offering discounts on holidays, fund raising, gifts, promotions and sponsorship. I make a plea to the holiday giants in the travel world to help in any way that they can.

It is 12 months almost to the day since I made my maiden speech in this place. The subject that I chose for it was tourism. To my knowledge, this is the only debate on tourism that we have had since then. Given that it is such an important subject, that may be a reflection on the House. In my speech 12 months ago I invited the Minister to visit Southport, and I am pleased to say that that visit took place yesterday. I am grateful for the Minister's interest in all aspects of Southport's holiday promotion. Not only that, we much enjoyed the day.

In the latest edition of *Tourism News* I noticed a large article on the recent tourism training initiative conference. The key address, which showed a great interest in training, was delivered by the Minister. What took my eye was a large and "cool" photograph of the hon. Gentleman in his shirt sleeves. That is the approach that is needed for the great tourism industry. We need people who can roll up their sleeves and get stuck into the task of helping a great industry. It is an industry that should be expanded, but currently the Minister appears to be fighting a lone battle, with little of no co-operation from those Departments that deal with road, rail and air traffic matters. I hope that the Minister can sort this one out.

11.29 am

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I shall make an uncharacteristically short speech. I shall concentrate on the weather, which is one aspect of tourism. I represent a major tourism constituency in the south-west of England,

and I am sure the House will appreciate that the weather is of the utmost importance to the success of the industry in that area.

Last January I arranged a conference at the well known Thurleston hotel, at which my hon. Friend the Minister was the key speaker. As well as the Minister, we managed to persuade the principal meteorological officer of the London weather centre to attend. His speech revealed a number of matters about which we did not know but which might have persuaded tourists from all over Britain and Europe to come to South Hams. Last summer, there were more sunshine hours there than anywhere else in Britain. For example, in July there were 220 hours of sunshine, which is equivalent to over seven hours' sunshine every day. In August there were 204·1 hours of sunshine, again about seven hours of sunshine a day. There was not only more sunshine, but less rain. In August there were only 13·2 mm of rain, when the national average was 77. In September there were only 55·9 mm of rain, whereas the national average was 86. Furthermore, South Hams had the highest temperatures in Britain.

With such a scenario, one would expect the national weather forecast to identify south Devon as a place to which everybody should flock, but not at all. The BBC and the ITV companies tend to pass over the south-west, and their forecasting is concentrated mostly on Dartmoor, also in my constituency, which has the least sunshine, the most rain and the lowest temperatures. Instead of presenting an accurate picture that would persuade tourists to come to one of the most beautiful parts of Britain for their holidays, they put out a forecast that makes most people choose to go abroad.

I am sure that the House will not have missed the point. What we need is a national tourist weather forecast on television or radio, so that somebody in Yorkshire, rather than listening to the Yorkshire forecast, or someone in Scotland, rather than listening to the local Scottish forecast, can dial a number or listen to a radio or televison station that gives a picture of the tourist weather. The only forecast that is correct is the Plymouth forecast, but people in the north cannot listen to the Plymouth forecast.

Mr. Barry Field: My hon. Friend may be aware of the fact that the Isle of Wight holds the sunshine record for the United Kingdom, but whenever there is a weather forecast on televison there is a wretched little raincloud situated right over the Isle of Wight. According to the BBC weather forecast it is always raining on the Isle of Wight, yet we hold the United Kingdom record for sunshine.

Mr. Steen: I should not have given way, because now we shall have a competition on the number of hours of sunshine in each area. I have here the figures and the diagrams. It may be that the Isle of Wight falls into the category of being sunny and rain-free, but I see a little raincloud on one of these maps, so the record may not be as good as my hon. Friend thinks.

My only request is that, bearing in mind the importance of weather to tourism, particularly on the south coast, my hon. Friend will consider whether the BBC and the ITV companies could do a trial run on a tourist weather forecast, so that people can see where the finest weather is. At the moment, forecasts give a blanket picture of the weather, rather than a detailed picture of where the finest weather will be.

I promised an uncharactistically short speech, and that I have delivered.

11.33 am

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on the excellent and diligent work that he has put into supervising the continuing progress of tourism. I have the honour to chair the Conservative party tourism committee and the all-party leisure and recreation industries committee. I am proud to disclose an interest as a consultant to the world's largest hotel chain, Best Western Hotels, which operates across the Atlantic, in the United Kingdom, in Europe and in many other parts of the world.

Various factors have allowed my committees to support the Minister on visits, one of which was to Amsterdam to open the exhibition "Taste of Britain", which is whetting the appetites of millions of Dutchmen for their visit to this country to celebrate the tercentenary of the accession of William and Mary to the throne.

We were also able to visit the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), who claims for his constituency the sunshine record of Great Britain. We saw my hon. Friend the Minister's intention to support the extension of the tourist season in yachting, which is to be built up and developed as a sector interest on that fair island. We noted with great interest the way in which the funding of this excellent intention is being supported by section 4 grants.

Over the next few years the tourism industry will have numerous events to celebrate. We are already celebrating the 400th anniversary of the defeat of the Armada, and in 1989 we shall celebrate the publishing of the most repeatedly published book in English, "The Natural History of Selborne". The year 1990 will be the year of European travel, which will give us an opportunity to welcome millions of Europeans.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Bevan: No, my hon. Friend has had an opportunity to speak already.

The year 1990 will give us the opportunity to redress the balance of the millions of English people who go to the continent by welcoming millions of Europeans here. The year 1992 will bring the single European market of 330 million people, and shortly afterwards the Channel tunnel will be completed, which will give us another opportunity to redress the balance of visitors. It is an exciting age in which to live, to be British and to see our share of the world market in tourism continue to develop.

The spin-offs of the success story are reflected in every form of shopping, and there is a premium on the supply of British goods, which is shown in every form of our marketing, retailing, wholesaling and manufacturing economy. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that our shopping position and the contribution that it makes to tourism is retained and that we are established as the premier retail shopping centre of the world, so that the world comes to our counter.

It is scandalous that, at a time when natives and tourists alike are spending more and more on soft drinks, and are being exhorted to do so by the responsible Ministers on health and safety grounds, our soft drinks firms, which have been reduced from five companies to two—Britvic Corona Soft Drinks Ltd., and Schweppes Ltd.—have

[Mr. Bevan]

restricted their brand names supplies and overseen an acceleration of costs from between 12 and 28 per cent. for mixers and from 16 to 35 per cent. for other products generally. That is well above the rate of inflation. It does no service to tourism. In fact, it drives up prices. Therefore, I hope that the Office of Fair Trading will look at that and that my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will investigate whether that is a cartel that will damage the further development of tourism and whether it is against the public interest.

As I said earlier, we benefit from tourism by over £10·725 billion a year. Of the 15 million overseas visitors to Britain, over 60 per cent. come from Europe and 22 per cent. come from North America. I should like to see the trend of visitors from North America encouraged further. I hope that Britain will continue to be regarded by the Americans as a GI bride of attractive proportions in a monogamous marriage. The number of Americans visiting the United Kingdom is twice those visiting France and Italy together. We are fifth in the league table of world tourism—we have moved up from sixth position—but we still have to catch up on the rate of growth shown by Italy. Nevertheless, we are in the forefront of the tourism industry, and this industry is of tremendous importance to Britain's economic success and development.

The moneys that we earn have been estimated to contribute some 6 per cent. of the total $130 million global sum that is produced by tourism. That figure is from the World Tourist Organisation. It amounts to about 4 per cent. of our gross domestic product. It is a success story of substantial dimensions and has occurred under this Government.

Mr. Sheerman *rose*——

Mr. Bevan: I notice that one of only two tourists sent to the House by the Labour party wishes to intervene.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman has now had time to reflect on his intervention in my speech. I hope he will accept that I was quoting from the *Employment Gazette*. I shall pass the document to the hon. Gentleman if it will help him. It shows that in 1980 we had a net balance in overseas travel and tourism earnings and expenditure of £223 million. I shall not give all the figures, but it shows that there was a predicted deficit for 1987 of £1,018,000.

Mr. Bevan: The hon. Gentleman is again playing fast and loose with his rather dubious and dirty statistics. He is ignoring the fact that the figures for 1986-87 reflect the terrorist attacks in Rome and Athens, which had a marked effect on the input of tourists to Britain and the fact that Britain ensured, by a report on aircraft safety, that the tourist figures remain improved. Away with the statistics. I urge the hon. Gentleman to increase the number of tourists coming to Britain and the House. He and his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) are the only two representatives of the official Opposition. His excellent Friend the hon. Member for Newham, North-West has done a great service by bringing two tourists from North America into the Chamber today. I thank him for that.

There are so many things that must be said. A vast increase in employment has been achieved by this Government. That has occurred not only in the tourism industry, but in the self-employed sector and has been of great benefit to millions of people. We are celebrating the 22nd month of reductions in the unemployment figures, and we are celebrating the exciting and continuing development of our economic story.—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Newham, North-West might not appreciate that, but the rest of Britain does.

Tourism needs to be co-ordinated. The Government might consider a joint portfolio between tourism and transport. Many enlightened and sophisticated countries already have such arrangements. As has been pointed out, it is important to ensure the dispersal of tourists around the United Kingdom so that 85 per cent. of them do not remain in London. That can be encouraged only by the development of transport links.

We have one of the finest canal systems in the world. In the west midlands some excellent work has already been done and there is great potential for developing a network of canals and making that sector of tourism one of the most attractive. The dirty and derelict Grand Union canal, which is 8 ft wide, runs through the centre of my constituency. I should like to see that developed as part of the canal network, and I should like to see the provision of boatels and amenities for the visiting boatmen.

We have the ability to push ahead with the dispersal of tourists by the development of railway lines by private initiative. That might involve a new look at privatisation and a return to sector railways such as the Great Western railway and the London Midland and Scottish. That would provide the incentives for the traveller to visit other parts of the country.

We can look, as has been suggested, at the dualling of the M1, to a motorway that runs up the eastern part of England and extensively on into Scotland. That is a necessity. The infrastructure could be provided by private money and enterprise, rather than be left to the public purse, which might not be able to do it with the same efficiency. Other countries do that with great success and they enjoy the infrastructure that we should have and need.

While I commend the excellence of the work of the BTA, particularly in representing us overseas, and the ETB and regional boards, I have two criticisms to make. First, the "crown" classification system has now become a joke and does nothing to encourage tourism. It confuses tourists and natives alike. They are used to the "star" system and they cannot understand why some hotels, such as the one I had the privilege to stay in the night before last in Falmouth, where we witnessed the excellence of co-ordination of the rescue services, should be awarded three stars by the Automobile Association and the Royal Automobile Club, and five stars by the crown rating system. There is no justification for that; nor is there any sanity in it. I note that hoteliers groups such as Trusthouse Forte and Crest will not operate the crown rating system. My group, Best Western, wishes to see a return to a proper qualitative merit star system such as that which operates throughout the United Kingdom. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider that in the next few months.

Secondly, although there has been a £30 million increase in the tourist boards' funding for the amenities that we require through section 4 grants, which is all to the good, it is amoral that the same body should act as a

consultant advising on the provision of money and also be the body making the money available, or that a subsidiary of that body should do so.

Mr. Gregory: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. Does the House understand that professional ladies and gentlemen working on behalf of tourist boards, and effectively funded by the taxpayer, are advising bodies on their applications for section 4 grants, while their opposite numbers, perhaps at the next desk, are ticking or crossing those applications? Is that not a form of collusion that should be ruled out?

Mr. Bevan: As I suggested, that is precisely what is happening and it is amoral. Furthermore, we need action to ensure that the private sector acts as the consultant if the statutory body under the Development of Tourism Act 1969 acts as the distributor of that funding. I hope that something will be done about that as soon as possible.

Other matters bring themselves into view. Recently, on a trip to the far east, I discovered the totalitarian ways of other countries, in this case Japan, on whose behalf we are urged to be multi-linguistic, and China. The Japanese are putting into circulation no fewer than 10 million of their people as tourists in the next five years, using a purpose-built fleet of ships. I suppose that such single-mindedness must be appreciated, but we must make certain that our peoples are given the chance to tour in a similar way and that we are no less single-minded, although I hope without the totalitarianism part of it, in ensuring that we provide the competition that will allow scope to develop.

After the excellence of negotiations with China on Hong Kong, over which the Prime Minister presided, and with the new rapproachement and glasnost that is being evinced on the Russian front, we have opportunities in tourism as never before to encourage the wholesale reception of peoples to our shores. We welcome this development with the Chinese and Russians, and with the Koreans, who are about to establish a direct air link from Seoul to London. We would welcome an opportunity to reciprocate. Let us build up the tourism trade between these countries.

Some of the ferocity of our tourists has resulted in an extraordinarily bad press—for example, during the recent football season—and this has been replicated in other forms of tourism. We have our areas of notoriety in many countries, for example in Spain and in Benitsis on Corfu, where the behaviour of some British tourists is so belligerent and pugilistic that the local residents are discouraged from coming over here as tourists. We have a job to do there.

Mr. Tredinnick: And in Frankfurt.

Mr. Bevan: My hon. Friend mentions Frankfurt. We have a job to do there, too. Perhaps the retention of passports could be extended beyond football hooliganism to behaviour elsewhere, and identity cards could be introduced.

We have problems to overcome. We are not a tidy nation, what with our litter and graffiti. Our graffiti is scandalous and we must find a way of dealing with it, if necessary by Act of Parliament or by intense community action to ensure that those who write it also remove it, which takes much more time, and face a fine so heavy that they will not repeat it. We must encourage the provision of beautiful buildings in our city centres, such as exist throughout the rest of the world. Britain will be visited for heritage as well as for other reasons. We must do everything possible to ensure that our proportion of the international tourist cake increases.

Air traffic control must commend itself to us and we must encourage the immediate replacement of the CAA's IBM computers with their modern counterparts so that proper and necessary air traffic flows ensure that tourism momentum is maintained. Moreover the report being produced by the Select Committee on Transport must be studied as there will be no profit if we allow air or even land congestion such that the waiting tourist faces long delays.

The computerised reservation system could alter the whole balance of tourism bookings. Computer reservation systems are a form of booking that have grown in America. It is predominantly controlled by the Sabre system of American Airlines, and to a lesser extent by the Apollo system which is controlled by United Airlines. A bias has been built into those systems so that mainly the products of those companies, namely, the aerial timetables, turn up on the screens. Our airlines are now retaliating by developing such systems as Galileo and Amadeus to protect their market share. Another system Holiday Designers, we are told, is without bias. Such systems can completely distort the traditional patterns of booking, the availability of services offered by the airlines with whom the booking is made, and the destinations to which the tourists are delivered.

In conjunction with our European partners, we must ensure that such booking developments proceed in a properly regulated manner and that obvious bias is avoided and market share is not distorted. When my hon. Friend the Minister makes certain that our share of world tourism grows to an even greater extent and benefits all sections of the United Kingdom, I am sure that he will take into consideration the importance of developing such a properly regulated computerised reservation system. I also believe that he will understand that, whatever progress is made, the British people wish to retain their own duty-free arrangements, which help to subsidise airport landing fees and keep those fees low. The duty-free facilities also give incoming and outgoing tourists the chance to spend their money how they like.

12.1 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I warmly welcome this debate on tourism, which is Britain's fastest growth industry. I declare an interest as parliamentary consultant to Consort Hotels, Britain's largest independent consortium of hoteliers. I praise the most energetic activities of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, who has responsibility for tourism. It was a pleasure to work with his predecessor, but I have not known anyone who has succeeded with such fast skates as my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee).

We have a good record for incoming tourists, although the number of American visitors this year is disappointing. We must not panic, however, about exchange rates. Last year's tourism figures showed that 15·6 million visitors came to the United Kingdom, which was 8 per cent. up on the previous record for the best year, 1985. So many fail to notice the tremendous overseas earnings from United Kingdom tourism. How many teachers recognise that

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

when giving careers guidance to pupils? Do they tell them that tourism earns 25 per cent. more than the aerospace industry and four times as much as the motor vehicle industry? At the same time, it is important that we break into new areas and new markets. The British Tourist Authority must address itself to the middle east and the far east—a number of my hon. Friends have already referred to Korea, Taiwan and Japan.

There should be a dialogue between the work of the BTA and our tourist information centres. Tourist information centres should provide local literature in a variety of languages. During the year I regularly visit such centres and I am amazed at how few provide any information in a foreign language. To be fair, such information may be provided at the overseas destination desk at the BTA office. It is also important that staff can communicate in the visitor's own language. In that connection, I should praise the newly created York visitor and conference bureau, whose five staff speak a wide selection of languages including Japanese. Who knows, perhaps Arabic will be next.

One of the main themes of my speech is a call for better co-ordination on Government policy. In political terms, we have a separate Minister with specific responsibility for tourism for each part of the United Kingdom. Although I understand that there is an interdepartmental committee, wide and costly divergence of policy occurs. Classification is an outstanding example of such divergence to which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) has already alluded. Northern Ireland has one well-established system. Scotland has developed another that is based upon qualitative assessment, and England and Wales are in the vanguard. That means that, for our citizens and for overseas visitors, the official United Kingdom accommodation system is in a muddle. That may produce confusion for tourists as it already has done for the trade. Surely the time is overdue for the appointment of a supremo for United Kingdom tourist policy.

The BTA promotes Britain overseas, but there is no one to co-ordinate policies within the United Kingdom. We need such a lead in the Civil Service—perhaps with the establishment of a quango—as well as in the Cabinet.

Tourism is extremely important to York and the region. Yorkshire and Humberside has witnessed a 16 per cent. increase in the jobs created by tourism. It is often not appreciated that such jobs are obtained at a third of the cost of fresh employment in other industries. Such jobs cost £3,000 per job to be created compared to £10,000 plus in other sectors.

York is blessed with an exceptional wealth of visitor attractions. We have York minster, the medieval halls of the livery companies, the Georgian splendour of Fairfax house, lovingly restored by York civic trust, the Castle museum, effectively the nation's museum of everyday life, and, in the modern age, the National Railway museum. York beckons the tourist to all these attractions.

The city has gone further and given marketing appeal to its discoveries. The internationally acclaimed Jorvik Viking centre started life as a response to those seeking information about an archaeological dig. It has spawned other centres, notably at Oxford and Canterbury, which interpret local history in an attractive and informative way. Plans are now afoot for an underground Roman museum, a 10-screen cinema and a medieval museum set in some of the streets of the city.

Such investment is splendid for York and its citizens. With a Socialist council, however, to obtain such an investment has been an uphill struggle. That council denies the importance of tourism to the economy. It will not acknowledge that most visitors come by car and plan accordingly and has even failed to fill establishment posts. Whenever possible, those gaps have been plugged by the private sector in the interests of higher employment.

Few subjects have raised such heat within the industry as the national tourist boards' crown classification scheme, which was introduced following the Government's tourism review of 1983. I am sure that at a number of levels —farmhouses, bed-and-breakfast hotels, inns and guest houses—the serviced accommodation has improved as the operators—usually the residential owners—recognise the potential business derived from a higher classification.

The hotel schemes operated by the motoring organisations are well understood by the trade and public, and they run on lines similar to those operating in the rest of Europe. The crown scheme, however, was introduced on a different basis and it concentrates on the facilities provided. That is an inadequate element upon which to make a decision on accommodation—the full range of services offered should be considered.

As a result distortions are appearing at the upper end of hotel classification. The filter above the three-crown stage has proved ineffective. In preparation for today's debate I have been doing my sums and I have discovered that there are now nine times as many four-crown and five-crown hotels in the United Kingdom as there are four-star and five-star hotels. Furthermore, more than 30 per cent. of five-crown hotels carry a three-star RAC or AA sign. That presumes that the visitor can distinguish between the plethora on the board when one adds Egon Ronay, Michelin and all the other signs. From the Isle of Wight we remember the days of the seahorse and the hearts of the heart of England. Many guests book accommodation expecting a standard of hospitality, comfort and service which frankly does not materialise.

To signify excellence, the English tourist board has devised the five crown category. I am surprised that to date only six properties in the whole of England fit the criteria for that, of which a single hotel, Chewton Glen, in Hampshire, is the only one outside London. At the other end of the spectrum, there has been little support for the one-crown awards. The English tourist board has confirmed only 30 hotels in that category out of a total of 3,020.

I am pleased that the English and Welsh tourist boards are to revise the criteria and introduce qualitative assessments. The launch of the crown scheme clearly dented the English tourist board's marketing budget. I question whether we are giving our main tourist board for the United Kingdom the support expected. Last year, domestic tourism was valued at £5·5 billion, 82 per cent. of which is earned in England. The English tourist board has a marketing budget of just £2·5 million. If expenditure on net working, classification and grading is deducted, a bare £1·9 million is left.

We should compare the sum for England with that of the Welsh board which has almost £2 million, and Scotland, which has slightly over that sum. Even the Highlands and Islands Development Board has a domestic

marketing budget for tourism of £1·8 million—and that is for a region which accounts for no more than 6 per cent. of domestic tourism. The board justifies that on regional economic grounds. However, the area's population of 360,000 is smaller than, say, Bristol, which is the eighth largest English city. The different sponsoring departments cannot justify that glaring disparity between England and the rest of the United Kingdom. If we are to have a dynamic tourist board for England, it must be given adequate resources to promote our resorts.

Mr. Sheerman: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not like Wales and Scotland to receive less of the budget. Does he agree that we want more money for all the boards, with a bigger proportion of the money going to the English region?

Mr. Gregory: I agree completely. There should be a partnership between private and public, but it must be led by Government sponsorship. There should be not a reduction but an increase in the marketing budget of the English tourist board if it is to do its work, not only in relation to resorts, which have declined so much in recent years and to which I have already alluded, but in the inner cities and the countryside, which need marketing expertise.

The English tourist board must be able to compete effectively with other destinations. Jersey, with less than 3 per cent. of the British market, has a United Kingdom marketing budget of more than £1·3 million. If the marketing strategy, which is entitled "A Vision for England" and is endorsed by the Department of Employment, is to become a reality, additional funding must be provided. I hope that that funding will be used partly for more effective sales literature, booked through the travel trade, to extend the season and to develop the tourist information centre network, which, at the moment, is missing from Liverpool Street, Paddington and Waterloo stations. It should introduce a grading scheme for holiday parks and self-catering holiday homes and should build up the already successful programme known as the "Great English City Breaks", which covers 14 cities.

This spring we have seen the usual closed doors on the major bank holidays, with a confused public outside, and the ice cream vendors doing a roaring trade. Similar scenes are repeated every Sunday morning outside our major museums and galleries in London. Commercially run museums such as the Royal Academy and the London Transport museum, and tourist attractions such as Madame Tussauds find it perfectly feasible to open on bank holidays and Sunday mornings. Even on weekdays, Madame Tussauds opens earlier during the summer. Is it simply a question of money? Certainly not. There is a tradition among museum employees and an in-built resistance in their trade unions against any change in work patterns.

However, when new museums, such as the Theatre museum in London, are established, it seems possible to negotiate new working patterns, opening in that case at 11 in the morning and on Sundays. Recently, the Natural History museum and the Geological museum have been able to be open from 1 o'clock. The National gallery has also been successful in reintroducing its summer opening on Wednesday evenings from July with musical concerts. I notice that Hampton Court palace is leading the way among our historic attractions by opening on Sunday mornings during the summer. Will the Tower of London follow? At the Science museum, the introduction of museum charges this autumn is likely to be accompanied by earlier opening on Sundays, possibly at 11 o'clock in the morning. That is a positive way to link the unpopular notion of charging for previously free museums with a direct benefit.

A quick look at our top 10 London attractions confirms that our best loved institutions such as the British museum, the National gallery, the Natural History museum and the Science museum are major tourist draws. Therefore, it is essential that their funding allows them to maintain and improve their collections, and that any money collected from entrance charges is used to extend opening hours and public facilities. I hope that my hon. Friend will look carefully at the question of opening hours for museums and persuade his colleagues in other Departments that the extra funding that now comes in should go to the direct benefit of those museums.

I should like to say a word or two about several other vital subjects relating to tourism. First, in 1992, what are the Government's plans to ensure that United Kingdom tourism maximises the benefits of the single European market? There are still too many restrictive barriers to trade. Can we encourage more hotels to quote in European currency units? Within 10 years tourism will be the largest employer in Europe and the most important money-earner —taking over from oil. We must aim to secure lower air fares, spread the benefits of tourism and encourage the development of the off peak.

The Minister rightly referred to the importance of the Channel tunnel. I know that he recently addressed the South East England tourist board—and I enjoyed his remarks—and wonder whether the troubles that he had the following day with the road network have encouraged him to talk to his hon. Friends at the Department of Transport, because if more tourists enter this country through the Channel tunnel, for which I am a great enthusiast, we must improve our road network. Will my hon. Friend consider increasing the funding of section 4 grants under the Development of Tourism Act 1969, especially for the south-east of England?

As a little aside, I must make a jibe about the problems encountered at Britain's busiest port, Dover. The tourist information centre there appears to be sited to work for the French and Belgian Governments. On entering Dover, one might expect to see the tourist information centre, but one cannot see it unless one turns one's car round and tries to leave England. One finds the tourist information centre on the route out of Kent and England. It is not on the road into Britain. The site of our tourist information centres, especially the one covering our busiest port, must be reconsidered.

Budget accommodation, especially in London, Manchester and one or two other cities, causes great anxiety. The need for tourist-class beds is evident and will become even more crucial with the Waterloo-Channel tunnel terminal. Only one third of two star London hotels in the AA list of 1981 still operate as hotels. The rest have become DHSS accommodation. The British Incoming Tour Operators Association has been studying the problem and is extremely worried about the shortage of budget accommodation.

In my remaining moments, I should like to mention bank holidays and career opportunities. What is the Government's current thinking about changing the May day bank holiday? It would be of real benefit to the tourist

[Mr. Gregory]

industry if we scrapped that bank holiday. I would replace it with a bank holiday in the late autumn, perhaps linked to the half-term holidays, or would add it to the Whit bank holiday to make a two-day break. That would eliminate the cost of additional closure in many factories and offices.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and am sure that he would expect me to intervene at that point. The whole idea of having a May day holiday is not for the convenience of tourists, but to commemorate and to pay tribute to the contribution of labour to the creation of wealth in this country. The hon. Gentleman might just as well suggest that we change Christmas to Easter and run all the holidays together.

Mr. Gregory: I should certainly like to commend a day for our great patriot Winston Churchill. That would be more appropriate than looking to the marks of Marxism.

Mr. Bevan: I support my hon. Friend's suggestion. Not only would a Churchill day be appropriate, but even more appropriate would be a national Trafalgar day. I also agree that a holiday in October, not a bank holiday but a public holiday, would extend the tourist season.

Mr. Gregory: That is a most helpful comment, and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider it. An autumn bank holiday would give a welcome boost to British tourism.

I was pleased to see greater emphasis being given to publicising the career opportunities and training that is available at all levels in the industry. In that context good work has been undertaken by the Hotel Catering Training Board, by the HCIMA and by the British Hotels Restaurants and Caterers Association. A series of career seminars organised by the association on a road show basis were held in four major cities, and two CRAC sponsored seminars in Cambridge and Nottingham in February brought the message home to careers advisers, teachers, parents and children.

It is splendid that about 800 community programme tourism approved projects provide places for almost 17,000 people. However, the industry still has a shortage of craft trained staff. Colleges are still turning out too many chiefs and not enough Indians. These youngsters are the seedcorn of the tourist industry. Let us nurture them and ensure that British people benefit from the growth of our fastest developing industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the House of my earlier plea for brief speeches.

12.21 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate, not only because it is almost a year since tourism was last debated, but because it is always exciting to talk about the challenges and opportunities facing one of Britain's fastest growing industries. That is precisely what tourism has become in the 1980s, even though the excitement about that has not pervaded the Opposition.

I welcome the chance to record my thanks to my hon. Friend the Minister, whose travels around the country promoting tourism have taken him to my constituency, where his encouragement was much appreciated. I also welcome the chance to express my admiration for the work carried out by Duncan Bluck and Michael Medlicott, the chairman and chief executive of the British Tourist Authority.

I should perhaps declare my own abiding interest in tourism, not merely as an occasional traveller and holidaymaker, but because, like countless other people, I found my first jobs in tourist activities. If my memory is correct, by my mid-twenties I had worked in five tourist jobs in Britain and all over the world. All that "DOD's Paliamentary Companion" will reveal is that subsequently I went to work for the president of American Express for three years in New York. The excitement and interest that tourism creates has never departed from my mind.

The growth of tourism in Britain over the past eight or nine years has been remarkable. Because the industry cannot easily be defined it is sometimes difficult—as the debate has shown—to grasp the fact that the gross domestic product generated by tourism is substantially greater than that of the entire automotive industry. That covers the industry from component manufacture through assembly to the sale showrooms, and applies to that industry not just in 1988 but in the 1970s.

Tourist spending is now about £18 billion a year. There is employment for 1·4 million people and 41,000 new jobs were created last year alone. Foreign currency earnings have reached about £6 billion from 14 million visitors, and that is on the back of flagship promotion schemes that enhance our image overseas. There is £1 billion of fresh capital investment in activities that are now developing throughout the country, well beyond the traditional golden triangle of English tourism of London, Windsor and Oxford. Those statistics are key indicators of tourism's contribution to the economy and they reflect a joint achievement by the Government, the official tourist bodies, local authorities and private enterprise.

On top of that success there is huge potential for future growth in a market in which tourism can compete for a greater share of the increase in leisure time and the higher disposable incomes that are rapidly becoming the norm. Both those factors have special significance in the retirement sector of the market, in which pensioners are more willing to travel than ever before. Many now have the added spending power of occupational pensions.

Demand for United Kingdom tourist facilities by overseas visitors is bound to gain some stimulus from the downward trend in real terms of air fares, and in the short term they will benefit from the renewed strength of the dollar. That will undoubtedly be an incentive to American tourists, who account for over 20 per cent. of the foreign revenue earned by the industry. However, none of that begins to compare with the enormous impact that is likely to result from the opening of the Channel tunnel.

We now have a travel trade deficit with our EC partners. For example, more than 8 million Britons travelled to France, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium in 1986 but fewer than 5 million visitors travelled to Britain from those countries in that year. The balance could be redressed to a large extent by the tunnel. In its first year of operation about 13 million vehicle passengers are likely to be shuttled through the tunnel, and many more will make rail journeys on through trains. That means that all the projections for an industry that has already expanded impressively and has created so many new jobs in the enterprise climate of the 1980s point to yet more investment and job creation well into the next decade.

As recently as February, spending by overseas visitors was 8 per cent. up on the same month last year, and 1987 was a record year for British tourism. Even if further growth is a safe assumption, or perhaps because it is so, it is imperative that everyone in the industry recognises that there are many challenges, as well as opportunities, ahead. Even though the market is growing worldwide, it is bound to become increasingly competitive. Our EC partners will want their share of the growth in demand and will be streamlining services, improving quality and augmenting facilities to meet the competition.

By 1992, conformity to EC standards for the industry will be essential if we are not to be placed at a disadvantage, particularly in the light of the qualifications highlighted in the sixth directive. When we look at that competition, we see that our transport infrastructure is clearly a vital challenge, and nowhere is that of greater importance than where it relates to the Channel tunnel. As well as the rail links that have been mentioned in the debate the completion of the south coast road from Dover to Honiton is vital if the tourist traffic coming through the tunnel is to be able to disperse throughout the country and not just to head for London and the golden triangle of tourism about which I spoke earlier.

While we are developing those transport facilities, we must expand the amount of budget, as opposed to luxury, accommodation. My hon. Friend the Minister has repeatedly promoted such budget accommodation.

Another challenge facing the industry is the process of change, and that needs to be highlighted. The market place for tourism will be changing constantly, and so will the labour market that provides the work force. Within the next decade the number of young people in their late teens will have dropped by about 1 million, and that is a pool of talent from which the industry often draws. It will mean that young people will have to be told about the attractions of work in tourism if they are to be drawn into it and are to be attracted to the training schemes available. There must also be greater emphasis on recruiting and training older workers. Employers will have to be flexible in their working arrangements so that customer demand can be met in an appropriately professional manner.

A few weeks ago, the suggestion that the United Kingdom travel trade—which focuses so much on the past, on heritage and on historic sites—would be subject to constant change would have met with scepticism, but change is universal. Customers face change at home and in the workplace, and they will look for it in travel, in accommodation, in the technology of bookings and payments systems, in promotion, and even in the presentation of the sites that they visit. It is not enough to be content with a glossy, stereotyped image of Anne Hathaway's cottage as the be-all and end-all of British tourism. I am pleased that so many people in the industry have put that behind them.

It is not enough for the National Trust to repaint its interiors in a standard Germolene pink and assume that the visiting public will be grateful for a glimpse of past grandeurs as the Trust chooses to present them. History must be brought alive in an authentic and stimulating fashion if market growth is to be maintained and competition from other countries met.

In my constituency, which is rich in historical sites, the National Trust is successful with Bodiam castle and with Kipling's home, Bateman's, but it is English Heritage that is at last making great strides with its developments of Battle abbey and with that most historic of sites where, in 1066, the Duke of Normandy won his encounter with King Harold. Private enterprise has already developed the Roman site of Beauport park and has done much work of value with fine houses which attract paying visitors.

The greatest prize in tourism to be won in East Sussex this year is Herstmonceux castle, which is up for sale. I have spoken in the House before about the withdrawal of the Royal Greenwich Observatory to Cambridge from Herstmonceux and wish simply to reassert the enormous importance to the castle's future of the right purchaser. I mean a buyer whose plans should include job creation opportunities locally and the proper custodianship of a wonderful example of 15th century architecture, with enormous potential as a tourist attraction, including the castle, the astronomy exhibition centre—which is to stay there—and the beautiful park of some 350 acres. Any suggestion by my hon. Friend the Minister about possible purchasers would be welcome.

There are many other challenges throughout the market place, whether in the form of the need of traditional coastal resorts to forge new identities by which to compete for visitors, or in the form of the need for industry to open its gates to young sightseers in particular, or for farmers to be suitably enterprising in farmland diversification schemes, which the Government have so sensibly encouraged. Perhaps the greatest remaining challenge is the need to attract more British businesses to invest in the modernisation and extension of tourism. The £1 billion investment already under way in marinas, hotels, timeshare apartments and better pubs and catering outlets still needs to be augmented. We need to convince institutional investors in the City, to persuade top management in our major companies and to convince young venture capital entrepreneurs that tourism is an exciting growth market in which they can participate.

Any success in tourism is based on people. When customers leave a site, they carry in their minds a dual impression, of the site and of the service that they have received. If we are to continue to compete effectively and to enjoy a growth market in tourism well into the 1990s, we need professionalism and the highest training and standards of service throughout the industry.

12.33 pm

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) spoke of the crisis in the tourist industry. I do not know what his interpretation of "crisis" is. It certainly does not seem to engender much interest within the membership of the Opposition parties to attend this debate.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am grateful to my namesake for giving way. It seems to me from consulting the Register of Members' Interests that the majority of Conservative Members are here in some paid capacity on behalf of the tourist industry, so they are all earning their fees. Let us get that straight.

Mr. Robert Banks: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should check his facts. I have no interest to declare in the tourist industry, and that applies to others of my colleagues.

It is quite ridiculous to refer to the crisis in the tourist industry. Perhaps the Opposition have used the word "crisis" too often because it has become a devalued word.

[Mr. Robert Banks]

I can well recall the Leader of the Opposition, six months before the last general election, referring to the impending crisis in the economy, which never happened, much to the chagrin of Opposition Members, but to the gratification of the electorate. That proved the point about how to win elections.

I believe that tourism in this country is in an extremely good condition. After all, it is the largest industry and employer in this country. In the past five years, it has expanded at a phenomenal rate and has provided many jobs. It is unfair to talk about the low pay of people involved in tourism. There is another way of looking at that. It provides many part-time and short-term jobs that people want. That is what is important. Employment opportunities have been provided by our successes in tourism. People are filling those jobs and are glad to have them.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman and I disagree about what constitutes a crisis. There is a £1 billion imbalance in our tourism trade. We may disagree about whether that constitutes a crisis but surely we cannot disagree about the fact that 30 per cent. of people who work in tourism do so for very poor pay. Why does the hon. Gentleman believe that, if a person is a part-time worker, he or she will work for a pittance? There are many part-time workers on the Conservative Benches who are well paid for that work. Why cannot that apply to the bottom level of the tourist industry?

Mr. Banks: Many people are pleased to have those jobs and they fulfil a need. If people were not willing to take those jobs, the jobs would go begging and the wages would go up. Wages have increased in the past few years, facilitated by the profitability of the industry.

I do not attach any importance to the figures concerning the number of tourists and the amount of money that comes into this country through tourism because it is a diverse industry from which we cannot accurately calculate the spin-off effects. When one starts to hoist up statistics, one invariably goes wrong because one cannot state precisely the number of jobs that come from the vast range of small firms and individuals involved in tourism.

We must bring more tourism to the north of the United Kingdom. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) is not here because I very much agree with him about the proposal to construct a new spinal motorway which will run up through Lincolnshire, Northumberland and even beyond to Scotland. There is great merit in considering a radical proposal to relieve the congestion on the M1 and the A1 and to build a new motorway system which could harness private enterprise and money by introducing tolls on some of the stretches. If the communications are right, we can start to introduce much larger schemes for the benefit both of tourists and others.

The industry as a whole has a great deal on which to be commended. Our standards have risen, particularly those of catering and service. The fact that local authorities now consider carefully how they can improve the environment to encourage tourists and make their areas more attractive has brought enormous benefits for the residents themselves. It is always important to remember that the residents must be considered. We must not simply create tourist attractions that will stifle the way in which people can live happily in an area.

All those people involved in the industry deserve great praise for what they have done and the opportunities that they have grabbed, but there are great opportunities outside London in Yorkshire, Northumberland, Scotland and Wales. If the communications are right, we can further encourage local authorities to gestate ideas and market projects and bring in capital to improve derelict areas. That applies to the inner cities. We must build in projects relating to tourism which should intermesh in the development of our inner cities. We will then disperse tourism and bring greater wealth to the areas where, in many cases, it is needed.

I welcome the debate because it gives us an opportunity to give recognition and status to all those working in this vital industry. Four or five years ago the phrase "Mickey Mouse jobs" was used to describe jobs in the industry. Conservative Members hotly contested that description. If this debate does one thing, it will lay that description to rest forever. A job in the catering and service sector of tourism is a long-term, sophisticated career opportunity. There is nothing "Mickey Mouse" about jobs in tourism.

12.40 pm

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate. I want to refer to the conference market, which is an important component of tourism. In doing so, I have no hesitation in declaring an interest as the director of a conference organising company.

The conference business is said to be worth £400 million to £500 million a year. That figure is based on direct expenditure without taking account of the very-hard-to-calculate consequential expenditure.

This country was very late to recognise the potential of the conference market. In the late 1960s and early 1970s we had not woken up to the tremendous opportunities offered by conferences. At that time, some countries in western Europe, particularly West Germany, recognised that conferences could bring in considerable amounts of revenue and put places on the map. Most middle-sized towns and cities in West Germany had a very well-established conference and exhibition facility at least a decade before we had such facilities in this country. We must therefore now consider the growth for the next decade of the conferences sector.

The greatest potential for growth lies not in the conference that seeks to attract 1,000 or more people but in the much more specialised and limited conference addressing a market of 200 to 300 people on a highly selective theme which will bring specialists from all over the world. Such an event does not require specially built conference centres which are so often like mausoleums with a great deal of space, but without the standard of facilities that one might find elsewhere. It requires facilities attached to good quality hotels where all the other attendant services one would normally require and expect may be on tap and not specially brought in.

It is astonishing that in London there are fewer than a dozen hotels capable of hosting to a top international standard—I emphasise "top international standard"—a conference of 250 to 300 people. There are many hotels in London which claim to be able to do that, and, if we look

at the figures, many hotels are said to be able to do so. However, if one wishes to arrange such an event, only a very few hotels can meet those requirements. As a consequence, hotels accept bookings three or four years in advance.

I identify that problem as the first of one or two pressure points which we must address unless we are to lose tourists and conference business in future. The events of 1992 and 1993 lend emphasis to the importance of addressing that requirement.

The pressure on budget hotel accommodation has been mentioned several times, but there is also a shortage of luxury accommodation in London, which is why the Carlton Tower hotel, which seeks to provide luxury accommodation, charges at particular times of the year more than £200 for a single room for one night. The high price may be justified in that particular case, where the standard of accommodation is commensurate with the price being charged. The danger is that mediocre accommodation may be offered to tourists and conference delegates, who will quickly discover that the high prices commanded are out of line with the hotel's services and facilities. That is the quickest route to discouraging tourists from visiting this country.

There are other pressures on hotel accommodation, and I shall mention briefly my own city of Gloucester. If one wishes to hold there an event such as a dinner for 150 people, one will be unlucky in finding a suitable hotel, for there is none in Gloucester capable of hosting an occasion of that kind. That presents a wonderful opportunity to hotel developers, who will find in Gloucester a ready market not currently being satisfied. I welcome the plans recently announced for a new hotel there; it is long overdue and will be greatly in demand. It could easily and appropriately be followed by other hotels before very long.

I wish to mention also promotional literature in the context of United Kingdom operators' package holidays to foreign destinations. However, the lessons to be drawn from my remarks apply equally to foreign tour operators offering holidays in the United Kingdom.

We are all familiar with glossy holiday brochures and with how the impression given of a particular hotel or resort may not reflect reality. Descriptions of resorts and hotels should always be carefully composed. Sometimes promotional literature falls short of a reasonable standard, and proves to be factually wrong in promising facilities which do not exist or are less attractive than described.

Such inaccuracies cause considerable disappointment and annoyance, overshadowing the good facilities that a hotel or resort may offer. It is far worse to hold out the prospect of a facility that does not exist than not to mention it. Tourists judge the facilities available against those promised for their money rather than against those actually provided.

Often, the fault may lie not with the hotel but with the tour operator. Sometimes operators make extravagant claims to justify extravagant prices, or they are over-enthusiastic in their attempts to attract people to a specific destination. Such a practice is not helpful to the reputation either of the hotel or of the tour operator.

We have all heard stories of the sea view that may be glimpsed only by those having a neck the length of a giraffe's.

Mr. Tredinnick: Certainly in Gloucester one would.

Mr. French: No, fortunately not in Gloucester, but everybody has experienced that in one way or another.

Last year an overseas hotel was offered as a five-star deluxe establishment. It had some good features, but many shortcomings. There was a children's pool, which was more reminiscent of the conditions prevailing in "Hi-de-Hi", with broken and battered furniture, cracked tiles, dirty water——

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a remedy in law through the vigilance of the trading standards officers and the Trade Descriptions Act? It is counterproductive for misleading literature to be circulated and promoted in this country from abroad because there is a remedy.

Mr. French: I entirely agree. I shall comment on the remedy that is available, if my hon. Friend will bear with me.

I was referring to the children's pool with battered furniture, cracked tiles, dirty water and one shower for several hundred guests. That was not an appropriate range of facilities for a hotel that the tour operator said was a five-star deluxe establishment. It was disappointing for the holidaymakers who had decided to reserve rooms in the hotel. It is even more surprising when, in that example, the tour operator was an otherwise respectable company, Thomson Holidays, which has subsequently refused to acknowledge that there is anything wrong with the hotel or its description.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) mentioned the tribunal system and other remedies that are available. I agree that in many respects those remedies will be found to be highly effective, and they are available to those who have grievances. But the very existence of such remedies encourages tour operators to allow individual holidaymakers to resort to the remedies that are available rather than to seek to satisfy the customer or client by acknowledging that they may have overdescribed the hotel or facility.

Therefore, it is vital for hotel operators in this country to ensure that promotional literature that is distributed by tour operators abroad about their establishment in the UK is written realistically and describes the facilities on offer exactly as they are. Whatever the standards offered, to claim that they are more than they prove to be will have only one consequence—disappointment for the holidaymaker and a reluctance to come back to the same resort or hotel.

That happens in respect not only of individual hotels but of resorts, cities and regions in the United Kingdom. It is difficult for individual cities to sell themselves directly on international markets in isolation. The need to be part of a larger promotional package, so that the efforts of this country's tourist industry are directed at promoting not only the United Kingdom as an attractive country to visit, but also the merits of individual regions and individual towns and cities.

Some towns and cities have an identity that is fairly readily appreciated. For example, most people have an idea of what Birmingham, Manchester, Brighton, Bristol or Torquay are like. Most people have a clear picture in their mind. The identity of my city of Gloucester is slightly more ambiguous and less clear.

I find in asking a number of people what their impression of Gloucester is that they have no clear idea,

[Mr. French]

other than to believe that it is a pleasant place to visit. They are unable to provide further information about the city. They may be aware that Gloucester has a fine cathedral. They may not be aware that it is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful in Europe. They are probably aware that Gloucester is a Roman town. They are probably not aware that it was where the Domesday book was commissioned, where Henry II was crowned king and where Parliament has sat. Most would be astonished to learn, thinking that Gloucester is rather inland, that it has an inland Victorian port which has been preserved virtually as it was, with 22 listed buildings within a conservation area that is designated as one of outstanding national importance.

The redevelopment of Gloucester docks is well under way. I predict that within the next five years it will become one of the greatest tourist attractions in the western part of England. Tourists who visit the site will see converted Victorian warehouses containing, among other things, the British Waterways Board museum, the Robert Opie museum of advertising and packaging, new restaurants, speciality shops, a marina and open-air live entertainment. They will find it to be a place thoroughly worth visiting.

The redevelopment is a classic example of the co-ordination between the public and private sectors which was mentioned earlier. It is the partnership approach that will achieve this remarkable result. Gloucester city council set the lead by moving its own offices into one of the first converted warehouses, the north warehouse. The British Waterways Board, as the owner of the overall site, and Pearce Developments, as the developers, have co-operated in planning and executing the rest of the site. The principle of public and private co-operation is being displayed in a most productive way. The docks will become a centre of thriving activity for tourists when they choose to visit them, as indeed they will.

Our approach to tourism as a whole, and especially our approach to attracting overseas visitors to the United Kingdom needs to be based on a strategy of offering quality. Above all, we must strive for an image of quality. I was about to say that we should adopt an image of exclusivity. We must not fall into the trap in which United Kingdom commercial and industrial life found itself in the post-war period, when every attempt was made to sell on price without placing adequate emphasis on quality. The same applies to tourism. It is too easy to emphasise how many people we attract from overseas to these shores. If the number increases year after year, it is too easy to claim that that represents a measure of success. That is a misguided yardstick that does not necessarily represent success. It may mean that an extremely large number of tourists come here, suffer maximum inconvenience and impose discomfort on those who live here and on other tourists.

We should be concentrating on attracting overseas tourists with high spending power. I would describe them as quality tourists. These are people who will come here and spend a lot of money. That is the type of tourist whom we should be trying to attract, and that is the way in which we shall derive the maximum benefit from those who decide to visit the United Kingdom. A visit here should be regarded as a prized opportunity, as a special occasion. We shall not derive the best from our strategy if we measure its success solely on the number of tourists who come. Our strategy must be based on what they spend when they arrive.

12.59 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) declared his interest and has a right to speak on behalf of the industry he represents. However, tourism is not just about well-heeled tourists coming here with their wallets stuffed full of money. It is also about showing our contry to lots of young people from other countries who come here to enjoy, to learn and to look, and will not necessarily have those wallets stuffed full of money. The hon. Gentleman must be aware of a wider dimension in tourism than the rather limited one that he was serving, although he was doing so in a capable fashion.

A number of Conservative Members have declared interests and are here to serve those interests, and I make that point not as a disparagement but to show that the good turnout of Conservatives is linked to that factor rather than to an impartial and objective interest in tourism per se.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): That is an unfair remark and quite disgraceful. My hon. Friends and I are here to serve the interests of our constituents. Whether, in our private capacities, we have connections with businesses that are involved in tourism is wholly irrelevant, and we do not need the House to promote those interests. We are here for our constituents. By making such allegations the hon. Gentleman does his own cause more harm, and makes his life unhappier than he will ever inflict by the shafts that he directs at Conservative Members.

Mr. Banks: I somehow feel that I shall live with that burden both today and at other times. I shall let hon. Members decide, in their own hearts, whether, if they were not serving a particular interest declared in the Register of Members' Interests, they would be here or on the motorway on their way back home. I shall let them decide that, but I do not want any lectures from Conservative Members, including the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), who I see is about to try to intervene, but to whom I shall not give way. I shall get into my speech.

I have sat here and listened to an awful lot of speeches and have done so to encourage some semblance of debate rather than witness a mind-numbing exercise in Government self-congratulation about what they have done for the tourist industry. I cannot see what they have done that would enable the Minister to come here and make such claims for the success of the industry. If putting out booklets like "Tourism 88" is all that he has done, I am surprised that there are so many to take part in the debate. I should be put off if I were confronted by an ugly mugshot of the Secretary of State for Employment. However, that is neither here nor there.

I welcome the debate, and I welcome the tourists who come to our country because tourism is not only an important industry, but plays a vital role in our cultural relations with other countries. For most people, particularly the young, travel is a mind-expanding experience, although the ability to travel is still denied to the great majority of people, both here and abroad.

The Government have done little to encourage tourism in the way that would enable the Minister to come here

and rightly expect the House to be grateful to the Government for their policies. They are riding on the success of tourism. This is a success story, and we are pleased to be associated with it, but it is not right for the Minister to claim that it is part of a great Government success story. People do not come here either to worship the Prime Minister or to see the impact of Conservative party policies. If they do, they need only go down to the Embankment or some other parts of London or other cities and towns to see the real social and economic casualties of the Government's policies. However, people do not come to see that. They come to enjoy the sights and to visit our museums, art galleries and theatres. They come to learn English and to savour the nation's history and cultural inheritance.

London is very much the heart of the tourism industry. I should like to confine my remarks to the impact on London services and on Londoners of being the heart of the British tourism industry. I shall voice a few criticisms, but any of the criticisms I make about tourists in Britain pale into insignificance when one sees the behaviour of some of the tourists we send to Europe and other countries. One can only shudder when one sees or becomes caught up with the drunken, foul-mouthed, semi-literate yobs who infest Spain and who are currently infesting parts of West Germany.

Mr. Tredinnick: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it would be right to confiscate the passports of those causing trouble abroad?

Mr. Banks: That is essentially for a law and order debate, which I am sure we will have at some stage.

The House should apologise for the image of the drunken yobs clutching a can of lager in one hand and a copy of *The Sun* in the other, staggering round Europe and being offensive to as many people as they can. We should apologise for the way they besmirch the reputation of Britain and then start looking at ways in which we can deal with that blot on our reputation.

"The Tourism Strategy for London" published by the London tourist board in 1987, said:

"London is one of the most successful tourist destinations in the world. In 1985, over 23 million people—foreign and domestic—stayed overnight in the city contributing £4,700 million to its economy, representing 4 per cent. of its gross domestic product."

It should be noted that

"Nearly 60 per cent. of overseas visitors visit London and it is widely acknowledged that London has a key role as a 'gateway' to the United Kingdom and is an important destination for visitors from the rest of the United Kingdom. It should also be noted that London may attract as many as 27 million visitors by the early 1990s."

One welcomes the contribution to the London economy made by that enormous influx of overseas and domestic tourists. However, one must also recognise that such an influx places enormous pressures on the everyday life of Londoners. I have said that we welcome visitors to our country, but the House needs to be aware of the pressures that that creates in London. We as Londoners, and they as tourists, deserve much better than we currently receive.

There is great pressure on the transport system in London. Anyone who visits Victoria, Waterloo, Liverpool Street or Paddington stations will see the impact of large numbers of tourists travelling around, particularly those who try to travel during the London rush hours. It gives rise to a great deal of bad feeling between the travelling Londoner and the travelling tourist. The answer to that is not an upsurge of xenophobia, which one tends to detect from time to time, but far more investment in London's public transport system, which, as we always say in transport debates, is grossly under-funded. We estimate that about £4 billion is needed to achieve a modern and efficient transport system in London.

Parts of certain London boroughs such as Westminster, Greenwich, Tower Hamlets, Kensington, the City, Islington, Brent, Camden and others have enormous pressures put on them by the sheer weight of numbers of people crowding in to see the sights. We should encourage visitors to come to the outer London boroughs. I should like more tourists to see the joys and delights of the London borough of Newham, of which there are many, not least the fact that we have a good Labour-controlled council and three Labour Members of Parliament. However, I expect that that is not the reason why people would want to come to Newham. We have the Theatre Royal and some exciting developments in docklands, particularly if the London Docklands Development Corporation listens to the wishes of the local people and uses the facilities of docklands to provide much needed sports amenities in the east end, which could be of international standard. That will draw some of the pressure away from central London. The pressure tends to be on a fairly small number of our London boroughs, and their taxpayers need much greater assistance than they receive from the Government to deal with tourism-related problems.

What are those problems? Litter has been mentioned, although I would not blame the state of London's streets on tourists. We tend to be one of the filthiest nations on earth, particularly around the area where I live in east London. It is no good blaming tourists or local councils. Litter is deposited by people who live in the area. The Prime Minister with her black plastic bag and litter stick, and with the Secretary of State for the Environment in tow, does not begin to address the enormity of the litter problem. Anyone who makes the journey by road from Heathrow airport to central London will realise what a depressing picture it gives of our capital city. We need to address that problem.

Traffic congestion is another problem. It is a London pastime wholly to ignore parking regulations. It is part of our sport. Labour Members have been pressing the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Transport to enforce parking regulations. The parking chaos and growing traffic chaos is greatly exacerbated by tourist coaches. Inadequate coach parks are provided. One has only to look from the Terrace to Westminster bridge, or go over Westminster bridge, to see young tourists spilling out of left-hand drive coaches into the middle of the road. That is dangerous to drivers, pedestrians and tourists. We need more strategically-sited coach parks in London.

The pressure on accommodation is a third problem. Large numbers of homes in central London have been lost by being turned into small and often sub-standard hotels. Bed-and-breakfast accommodation is reaching a crisis level, with between 30,000 and 40,000 people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, much of which is concentrated in Westminster, and Kensington and Chelsea. Unfortunately, they are being forced out of it as

[Mr. Banks]

the owners of the hotels want to encourage more tourists to take the accommodation, and that exacerbates our housing problem.

Tourists are probably unaware that about 50,000 people, many of whom are young and unemployed, sleep rough in London. They are the casualties of Thatcherism today. If visitors go the Victoria embankment, Spitalfields or the south bank they will see appalling sights that make a mockery of us claiming to be a civilised, caring nation, when we inflict degradation on so many people. It is a scandal that in 1988 we cannot provide a roof over the head of everyone who needs one.

The police are harassing those who sleep rough on the streets, especially in Westminster, because, they say, Westminster city council is saying that it is affecting tourism and it does not want tourists to see the problem. The council wants to sweep them away. It is pushing them around because they are an embarrassment and a shame which we do not want tourists to see. That is an appalling indictment of Government policies.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My intervention is somewhat unusual, as I have just entered the Chamber. I was listening to the 1 pm news on Radio 4, when I heard the dulcet tones of the Secretary of State for the Environment, at the Institute of Housing conference at Harrogate, making an announcement about the homeless. While I was listening to the news, I looked up at the screen and saw that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was on his feet. As he and I had taken part in the proceedings on the Housing Bill earlier this week—indeed, there was a two-hour debate on housing—I thought it right to inform——

Mr. Barry Field: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is a debate on tourism. Surely this is not a debate on the Housing Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) is correct. I believe that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is making not a point of order, but an intervention. If that is the case, we are debating tourism and I must ask him to relate his intervention to that subject.

Mr. Spearing: You will observe, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I was about to conclude my intervention. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West made a passing allusion to what happens close to this House and it is related to tourism. I believe that my intervention was related to that matter, but no doubt my hon. Friend will make his own case.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend is a close colleague in the London borough of Newham. As I said before he entered the Chamber, we are trying to encourage more tourism in the borough. If we had had our way we would still be debating housing, because if the Government had not got frightened and pulled up the stumps—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are on another debate and the hon. Gentleman must relate his comments to it.

Mr. Banks: I was just provoked on this particular occasion.

Mr. Barry Field: Quite right. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is a very provoking Member.

Mr. Banks: Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is a provocative fellow. I must remind hon. Members that there is a relationship between housing and the pressure for accommodation in London. There is also a direct link between that and tourism. My hon. Friend was right to emphasise that link.

The Minister has spoken about the wonderful job opportunities that exist within the tourism industry. I would not dispute that. He quoted two such job opportunities and one of them sounded considerably better than my present job—perhaps he would like to give me some details about it afterwards.

For the major part, however, the tourism industry is sustained by a great pool of cheap labour. We are talking not, about people at the top, but about those at the bottom who have to do the menial tasks. Many hotels and restaurants, especially fast-food restaurants—I especially single out McDonalds—function on the basis of sweated labour. There is little, if any, protection available to the employees, and the Government have done their best to take away what little protection there was. The rates of pay are exceedingly low, and a large number of people who work in such restaurants should not be doing so because they do not have work permits. Such things must be discussed in a debate on tourism and its impact on London.

Mr. Sheerman: Does my hon. Friend agree that the tragedy of young people working in London and elsewhere in the tourism industry is that the youth training scheme is collapsing within that industry? Far too many people between the ages of 16 and 19 years are now being brought into jobs and given no training. If it is right to compel young people to join a training scheme, it should be right to make all employers train young people between the ages of 16 and 19.

Mr. Banks: I entirely agree. My hon. Friend is well aware that if one goes around in the early hours of the morning and visits the back kitchen doors of some of our hotels, one sees people who have been sleeping rough queuing up to do a bit of washing up to earn money for the day. That is the reality of tourism in London.

Mr. Allason: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman has raised the issue of job training schemes, because a couple of weeks ago I visited a JTS and spoke to the people who ran the scheme as well as to people from the jobcentres. Apart from the enthusiasm of people on the scheme, the one message that came across was the fact that the trade unions had put every possible obstacle in the way.

Mr. Banks: Not true.

Mr. Allason: I am merely repeating the views of the people on those schemes who are trying to make them work. They spoke of opposition from trade unions. If the hon. Gentleman comes to my constituency I can introduce the hon. Gentleman to an important tourism-related scheme where the organisers are constantly having to do battle with the trade unions.

Mr. Banks: I shall certainly accept that invitation to visit the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I am sure that he

will guarantee me a jolly good time there. Although this is not an employment debate, these factors emerge in any debate on tourism and we cannot ignore them. Much of the trade union opposition to many of the so-called training schemes that are operating at the moment is that they are nothing more than cosmetic exercises to manipulate the unemployment figures. The trade unions are interested in real jobs, not only for the young, but for those who have passed beyond the training years as currently laid down in Government regulations. The hon. Gentleman must recognise that there is not, and will never be, trade union opposition to training. We need a far better skilled work force than we have at the moment. In fact, we spend less of our national wealth on training and retraining than do many of our western European industrial competitors. The hon. Gentleman must know that that is a fact. I should like to visit his constituency, but I shall be happy to bring with me a broader perspective of trade union matters than he has had up to now.

I am conscious of the fact that many Conservative Members are waiting to speak, but they must be aware that I have listened to their hon. Friends. There is no great massed rank of Labour Members waiting to speak in this debate and, "More's the pity"—I say——

Mr. Barry Field: Hear, hear.

Mr. Banks: Well, at least it gives me the chance of clocking up yet another speech, so it is double-edged.

Many tourists get a raw deal in London. That is the other side of the coin. I said earlier that Londoners want a fair deal from tourism, and outlined some of the problems associated with tourism in London. However, tourists need a fair deal when they come to our capital city. London is probably the highest cost city in the world, especially for accommodation, and much of that accommodation is sub-standard. I should like far more inspections of hotels and restaurants to ensure the decent minimum standards that one sees maintained in other countries. I have suggested in the past, and will continue to suggest, that we have a tourist police force, or a tourist inspectorate, specifically to deal with the enforcement of standards that will enable our visitors to have a decent time here in terms of both the food and accommodation that they can enjoy.

When one sees some of the kitchens of restaurants in London, one realises how rotten they are. If Government cuts were not putting so much pressure on the environmental health services of local authorities more of the necessary inspections could take place. I am sick, for example, of tourists lining up outside those disgusting greasy little hamburger stands where they buy hot dogs with botulin sauce, or queue up for horrid icecreams that are more like whipped terylene. Those are small matters, but they create an overall impression about life in London and the way in which we welcome our tourists. On many counts, we do not welcome them as we should.

We need good-standard, low-priced accommodation, especially hostels for the young. As has been said, we must encourage the young, as well as the well-heeled conference attenders with their expense acccounts to come to London. We need camping sites in London. We have one at Crystal Palace, but we need more. We also need at those sites the sorts of facilities that are found on camping sites in the south of France, where they know how to organise camp sites.

I am also concerned about the appalling tat that is sold as London souvenirs around the Palace of Westminster and in Oxford street. I refer to policemen's plastic helmets, which one finds are made in Hong Kong, and the T-shirts that say, "Souvenir from London" which are made in Macao. There is much plastic junk that seems to come from all over the world. It is a sad comment, not only on our attitude to tourism, but on our manufacturing industry, that we have to import so much junk. Surely we could make it ourselves. I am sure that we are as capable as any other country of manufacturing junk.

The Government should encourage the tourism industry to produce a range of high-standard souvenirs that would be fitting for a tourist to take home after a visit to the capital city. They could do that by giving much greater encouragement to the arts and crafts industries in London. They could provide more craft markets and implement the sorts of initiatives that the late lamented Greater London council was taking up in the days before abolition.

In his usual gruff fashion, the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) made some interesting points. The one that interested me was about sign posting. If illegal parking is a pastime in London, bad signposting is a national pastime. We seem to set out with the single intention of getting tourists lost in our cities. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh was quite right to draw attention to the need for better signs and for signs in other languages. Throughout London we need signs of the standard size and in standard locations. That would be of great assistance not only to tourists but to Londoners.

I have said that tourists come here to enjoy our theatres, museums and art galleries. Much was made of that in another Friday debate some weeks ago on the arts. When we hear that again in this debate, we realise what nonsense it makes of the ridiculous argument that somehow we subsidise the arts and they are therefore a charge on the public purse. They are an integral part of this very important industry and, far from complaining about the money that is invested in the arts, we need to make sure that they get far more money, because they are central to our tourist industry.

The question of charges for museums and art galleries usually arises in the context of visitors being admitted free, while we are charged abroad. I do not want to see us going down that road, because I am anxious to see Londoners retaining free access to those facilities. Perhaps we ought to think about a bed tax or a surcharge on hotels and restaurants. That would provide the additional funds for the tourist inspectorate that I mentioned and would generate enough income for us to pass some of the money to the art galleries, museums and theatres enjoyed by the tourists.

We do not need from the Government a self-congratulatory exercise, a sort of collective pat on the back, because they have not done enough to deserve that. We need a recognition that the tourism industry is vital, central, important and growing, and that it is the future. We need a proper strategy for tourism, but until we get a good Socialist Government we are not likely to see that.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members are as aware as I am of the pressure to speak in the debate. I am anxious to call every hon. Member who wishes to speak. The matter is in the hands of hon. Members and I rely on them to make short speeches.

1.27 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) crossed swords with me about which part of the United Kingdom has the best sunshine record. I pray in aid the House of Commons Library, which tells me that outside the Channel Islands the Isle of Wight definitely holds the current record.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) called for signs in other languages. If he were here now, I should tell him that the Isle of Wight would like signs in any language—even in English. We have failed miserably to convince Hampshire county council or the Department of Transport that the Isle of Wight exists. A motorist driving along the motorway corridor will not see a sign pointing specifically to the Isle of Wight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) mentioned the forthcoming celebrations of the defeat of the armada. I am delighted to tell the House that the Post Office is to publish a stamp featuring the Isle of Wight in the armada series. Of course, the armada was originally defeated off the Isle of Wight, not off Plymouth as so many contemporary historians believe.

We had a number of contributions by the Opposition, and I particularly welcome the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn), whose party is singularly absent from all-party committees dealing with leisure, recreation and tourism. The hon. Gentleman said that tourism was on the increase, and so it is—unlike the membership of his party.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has contributed to the debate. That is a 100 per cent. increase on our last debate on 22 July 1987 when, as shown in column 458 of *Hansard*, we referred to the fact that there were no Opposition Members present for the tourism debate.

Mr. Sheerman *rose*——

Mr. Field: The hon. Gentleman can look it up in column 458 of *Hansard* of 22 July 1987 and see the reference for himself.

Mr. Sheerman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is misleading the House. At one stage, I was the only Labour Member in the Chamber, but several Labour Members contributed to the debate. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not mislead the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: There is no point of order. None of our Standing Orders has been breached.

Mr. Field: There has been a 100 per cent. increase with the contribution of the hon. Member from Newham, North-West. On that basis, I suppose that it will take only another 200 years before the entire Labour party takes part in a tourism debate. In the turgid world of Socialism, that is pretty fast progress.

This Government, more than any other, have put tourism in the United Kingdom on the map. For too long, our history, natural beauty and heritage outside London and Edinburgh were the best kept secrets in tourism. My hon. Friend the Minister has changed all that. He is the most widely travelled of Her Majesty's Ministers—at least within the United Kingdom. His portfolio was created by a Conservative Government in 1981. The results have flowed into Britain, our banks and our resorts ever since.

I want to examine what I have called the three As of tourism—access, appearance and attitude. No other Government have done more to improve the ease of access for our tourists, whether United Kingdom citizens or people from overseas. We have privatised British Airways, allowing it to be competitive in price and service. We have improved our airports, both national and, through our local government policies, provincial.

On the ground, we have more motorway miles than ever before. We have encouraged the building of better rail access and new rolling stock, such as the Weymouth-Southampton-Waterloo line, which serves Cowes, Lymington and Yarmouth. We have more electrified lines than ever before. We even have privately sponsored stations. There is a brand new British Rail station on the Isle of Wight at Lake. We have a modernisation programme for existing stations and booking halls. An outstanding example is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin), with the Portsmouth harbour station. That gateway to the Isle of Wight, soon to be opened, is delightful. A number of private railways are increasingly being joined to take traffic from the existing British Rail network. There has been an interesting study into the possibility, with the Havens street railway on the Isle of Wight.

On the sea, we have privatised British Rail's ferries and, instead of scruffy ships selling crusty sandwiches, there are smart roll-on/roll-off ferries, such as those that serve the Isle of Wight, which are clean and carpeted and have smiling staff and good value, good quality food. Access has never been better to allow the record 15·6 million visitors who came to the United Kingdom in 1987 to move around and see Britain at its best.

No mention of access would be complete without a mention of our licensing laws. For too long, pubs shutting in the face of French, German and other international visitors at closing time has been taken as unwillingness to serve rather than the legal inability to do so. The Licensing Act 1988 changes that. Visitors now attend international events, such as the Cowes-Torquay-Cowes boat race, which starts from the Isle of Wight; the international Town Cryers festival in Shanklin; and the largest yacht race in the world, the Round the Island race. All our visitors, holidaymakers and spectators will be able to get a drink throughout the day at any time they choose.

I cannot leave the Licensing Bill without blowing my own trumpet just a little. Only three hon. Members lobbied the Home Office to relax the rules for the sale of wine during a vineyard visit, and I was one of them. As a result, there is a new provision relating to vineyards. Our excellent vineyards, such as those on the Isle of Wight, can now sell samples of their products during the normal day, which is both agreeable to the visitors and profitable to the proprietors.

I shall now turn to appearance, the second A. There is no point in having improved access and flexibility of travel if we have poor appearance. For too long, we have had scruffy, run-down, dirty, dingy and moth-eaten resorts. Too many of our traditional resorts have traded on past memories and traditions. All that is changing fast. Through the regional tourist boards, and with the backing of the English tourist board, tourist development action plans are being set up all over the country. The TDAP on the Isle of Wight is called "Island Pride". We planted over 120,000 daffodils last year, one for each resident of the Isle

of Wight. In Sandown, a few weeks ago, we assembled, with the south Wight borough mayor, councillor John Hunter, the Sandown town mayor, and Councillor Miss Heather Humby to clean up the town. We all donned white boiler suits. The mayor wore his chain outside his boiler suit and we walked about on the beach clearing up litter. It was a delight to see the young people involved in that.

Pride is not enough. We also need commitment. I am playing my part in that because I have agreed to present two trophies to the tourism development action plan team —one for the Isle of Wight resort that improves itself the most and the other for the most welcoming smile of any personality involved in tourism on the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman should take his right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) with him.

Mr. Field: I did. He came last Saturday and we had a most excellent celebration of a remarkable election victory with a 6,500 majority.

Appearance is more than just a question of being free of litter. It is more a question of facilities, such as all-weather attractions, including hotel indoor swimming pools—island hotels, which have recently installed them, are now fully booked—and, above all, en suite bathrooms and colour television in every bedroom. That is why section 4 funding under the Development of Tourism Act 1969 is so important. Expenditure on tourism has risen by over 20 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1986-87. That is another statistic that the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) could have obtained from the Library, as he did the employment statistics that he so misused earlier.

I was particularly pleased to have the opportunity of welcoming my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment to the Isle of Wight when he presented no less than £189,000 to island tourism projects. Under the island's tourist development action plan, the English tourist board will provide £50,000 over the next few years for the action programme, the Manpower Services Commission will provide £20,000 for local development projects to identify opportunities for trading and the Development Commission will give £50,000 to provide, among other things, advice for business, particularly on tourism initiatives, and to finance, support and advise the marketing initiatives.

I shall now deal with my final A—attitude. Here I believe that the Government can claim their greatest achievement. Having cut the apron strings of the nanny state in so many areas of daily life, the increased profile and awareness of job opportunities and earning potential from tourism are among the Conservative party's greatest success stories. You will not find the "We must be nice to tourists and visitors Act 1988" anywhere, Madam Deputy Speaker, but that is the effect that the Government's policies have had. People have realised that tourism equals real jobs. In 1986, 1,710 million people depended directly on tourism for their jobs. In my constituency, 25 per cent. of the working population depend on tourism for their jobs, but there is still room for improvement. With better training, emphasising the quality of service, the customer will be better received, feel more welcome and, above all, will want to return again and again.

The Isle of Wight is the United Kingdom's biggest tourist attraction, receiving more than 1 million visitors every year. We hold the country's sunshine record. In 1987 we recorded more bright sunshine than anywhere else, excluding the Channel Islands. We have more tourist attractions than any other area in Great Britain. One of the borough councils, since it became Tory-controlled, has even purchased a very successful Dotto train.

The Isle of Wight was one of the first holiday destinations in the United Kingdom to receive EEC approval for its clean beaches, as my hon. Friend the Minister has discovered for himself, when visiting Ryde, Cowes, Yarmouth, Sandown, Shanklin or Ventnor, one will be offered a warm smile, a friendly welcome, value for money second to none, beautiful scenery and an island community that has finally realised that future prosperity lies not with heavy engineering, but with tourism.

1.40 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): This is the first time that I have spoken in a Tory party conference; and I welcome the presence of three tourists on the Opposition Benches who have come to observe our deliberations!

When I see crowds of overseas tourists wandering around the streets of London, I view them with mixed feelings of gladness and sadness. I am glad that they have come to visit our country, and I welcome them; but I am sad that they believe that London is everything. The majority will go no further north than London. It is regrettable that they will return home without seeing some of the finest attractions that the country has to offer.

They will judge us by the high prices and the all-too-often dirty and litter-strewn streets which characterise so much of our capital city. If only they would judge us by the standards of places like York, Scarborough and Southport or areas like the Ribble valley, Pendle and Hyndburn. The latter areas may not automatically spring to mind as tourist areas, and they are not. However, they have a great potential for tourism. They need local and national campaigns to exploit that potential.

They need a national campaign to publicise the attractions and a local campaign by local authorities, individuals and companies to develop and market the attractions. That could give a major boost to the economy of north-east Lancashire. It would also relieve some of the pressure on the services in London.

A working group of officers of the local authorities in north-east Lancashire and the North West tourist board has recently drawn up a tourism action programme, and I welcome that initiative. It seeks to consolidate the area's existing share of the visitor market and develop new opportunities which offer the potential for growth.

The tourism action programme aims to develop an effective marketing strategy to secure the active participation of the private sector, develop new attractions, improve standards of visitor management, information and infrastructure and improve and expand training opportunities to meet the needs of tourism now and in future. In short, at last we have a coherent strategy for tourism in north-east Lancashire, something we have lacked for a long time.

The area has much to offer. it has a wide variety of scenery, including the rugged and beautiful moorlands of the Rossendale hills and the forest of Bowland. It also has attractive countryside around Hyndburn, Ribble valley, Pendle and Burnley. The older towns have industrial heritage attractions that are becoming more popular with

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visitors. Oswaldtwistle has such attractions and surely, with a name like that, it is easily marketable for tourists. That town was the home of James Hargreaves. I share the Hargreaves name, but I regret that I have nothing in common with him, except perhaps that I expect that I will die in poverty as he did. That will happen despite Opposition jibes that Conservative Members are here today to earn fat fees as consultants to the tourism industry. I am here today to represent the interests of my constituents.

Oswaldtwistle was also the home of Robert "Parsley" Peel, who is famous for early experiments in mechanical printing. It boasts a Victorian pottery, the only pottery in the north of England with its own source of clay. The Howarth art gallery in Accrington two miles away contains Europe's largest collection of tinted glass. If we add to the beautiful countryside and the attractions of historical and industrial importance the welcoming attitude of the friendly people, a good communications network, a wealth of country pubs and restaurants where good food is available at a quarter of the price in London, I believe that the area has much potential for further development in tourism.

With the new initiative which I have commended, east Lancashire is well placed to capitalise on growth markets such as day visits, business tourism and short holidays. Wigan pier, Oswaldtwistle and Accrington Stanley used to be music hall jokes. Wigan has exploited that joke to the full, and Wigan pier is now one of the north-west's most popular attractions. With enthusiasm and initiative the same could be achieved by Oswaldtwistle and Accrington Stanley. Any town that can export cocktail cherries to the Amazon, as Oswaldtwistle does, must have some initiative.

We must use that same initiative and enthusiasm in making people aware of what the area has to offer, and overcome the lack of confidence we sometimes display. We must publicise ourselves, and make more resources available for tourism development and promotion. We need to press ahead with planned key developments—the winter sports theme park in Accrington, the major footwear museum at Rawtenstall, the open air farming museum in Pendle, and the heritage centre at Stonebridge Mill, Oswaldtwistle. They are important because, although we can guarantee that visitors to east Lancashire will receive a warm welcome, we cannot always guarantee warm weather of the kind that seems to characterise south Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Allason: And Torbay!

Mr. Hargreaves: Those centres will provide ideal indoor tourist attractions, and I commend Oswaldtwistle civic society for the energy it has put in to establishing the heritage centre, although it still needs financial help.

Tourism and leisure offer ways of increasing investment and employment. I am not suggesting that Hyndburn or east Lancashire will ever rival Blackpool or Southport, but, if vigorously exploited, the Hyndburn area is one of tourist potential which could, even on a limited scale, increase investment and the range and scale of employment opportunities.

Many forms of financial assistance are available for tourism projects, but the majority of them are restricted to narrowly defined geographical or subject areas. In practice, east Lancashire is often disadvantaged by comparison with the aid available to other areas. Consequently, there is a need for changes in, or clarification of, the Government's and EC's guidelines. Particular difficulty is caused by the exclusion of tourism projects from the European regional development fund's non-quota textile assistance.

While welcoming the fact that many tourism development projects qualify for an average discretionary grant of only 20 per cent., developers in east Lancashire find it difficult to generate the remaining 80 per cent. of a scheme's cost. A review of the ETB's current level of grant aid would be helpful. Any increase that will help to attract tourists away from London would surely be well spent.

We must not only welcome tourists but also provide them with proper facilities. We set a poor example in the House. Visitors to the Palace of Westminster are usually constituents, who have to queue outside the Norman porch, sometimes in the pouring rain and unprotected. From replies given to my parliamentary questions, I understand that the situation is under review. I would prefer my constituents and other visitors to be under cover. I hope that a way will soon be found to help our visitors to enjoy better one of the country's major tourist attractions.

1.48 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): In the interests of brevity I shall shorten my remarks and exclude my comments about the need for continuity of signposting throughout the south and south-west. I shall also dispense with my congratulatory and craven remarks about the great improvement to our licensing laws. I briefly suggest that there should be a review of section 4 funding grants and the way in which they are implemented, and I shall curtail my remarks about British summer time.

I make it absolutely clear to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that I have no interest to declare in tourism other than representing my constituency. I extend to him a warm invitation to visit Torbay, and in particular a new job training scheme that has been the subject of several problems created by trade unions. The scheme, sponsored by Grand Metropolitan, has placed a large number of young people in jobs in local tourism industries. It has been hugely successful, but it could have been even more successful had there not been opposition.

There is considerable concern among those taking up places on job training schemes about the £10 given to them recently, £5 of which was immediately clawed back in transport expenses, which seems to be unfair.

I confirm the remarks that were made earlier in the debate that it would be counter-productive to have any sort of compulsion to go on job training schemes because it would inhibit the enthusiasm of the organisers and of those on the schemes. For many of those on the schemes, education requirements seem to be a great stumbling block. Up to 30 per cent. of the people going on some of the schemes seem to have considerable learning difficulties.

I commend three future possibilities to English Heritage. Some opportunities for tourism appear to have been ignored. I have recently visited several sites that might be exploited. There are London Regional Transport's disused stations. Some in London are of enormous historical importance, particularly beneath

Down street, which would make a marvellous tourist attraction. LRT would like a little encouragement for that. There is also another war room. The one that is now open under Great George street is enormously successful. There is a lesser known, more secret one lying derelict up on Dollis hill. It would be a tremendous tourist attraction, and I warmly recommend it. Finally, there is Bletchley park, where so much code breaking went on during the war. One of the most important huts there was destroyed recently, although British Telecom, which owns the site, offered one of those famous huts to the Imperial War museum.

I am grateful for your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker.

1.52 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): I welcome many of the initiatives by my hon. Friend the Minister, his hard work and his commitment to the interests of tourism in so many constituencies. He visited Portsmouth by train, and now we have a new station to prove it at the Southsea end. The improvements at Harbour Station were also mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field).

There is a sign in the station that my hon. Friend the Minister visited before it was renovated, which I hope is in the new station, and which gave good advice not only to the traveller but to the politician. It says in the smallest print imaginable on the railway timetable:

"Before alighting passengers are asked to ensure that a platform is immediately adjacent."

That is not in Japanese or in any other language. I hope that it has been retained in the new generation of station which we now see and which my hon. Friend the Minister did so much to promote.

The major factor of tourism—communications—has been mentioned often in the debate, so I shall not belabour it any more. When my hon. Friend the Minister visited Portsmouth, he saw a fine example of what can be done with serious concentration on developing tourism. It is an object lesson of national significance that one must have a theme if one wants to attract people to one's city. Portsmouth's theme at present is being the flagship of maritime England. It has built up a reputation in that respect over many centuries.

During the 1970s the city council understood that the contraction of the dockyard and the needs of our peacetime Royal Navy in the longest period of peace that we have had since the 19th century meant that there must be a more diverse economy and job base. There was not much moaning about what was happening, but there was action to make sure that, in the absence of more land for manufacturing—land is at a premium in Portsmouth—and with limited office space, the importance of tourism projects was marked. There has been co-operation with the private sector which has resulted in the creation of real jobs that are valued by those who undertake them. There is no scorning of tourist jobs for being part-time or not as well paid as some other jobs. They are jobs none the less, and they are created at little cost to the public purse. An interesting survey that was undertaken by the Portsmouth polytechnic resulted in an estimate that in 1986 tourism activity accounted for £150 million, nearly 10 per cent., of local incomes and jobs. It is forecast that further development of the naval heritage project and other schemes will generate over 3,000 permanent jobs at a cost of less than £2,000 in public money per job. The city council has established a tourist development action programme, which is co-ordinating the various initiatives.

We have heard about the prime duty of any Minister with responsibilities for tourism to arrange good weather for us. We have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French), who caused me to recall the nursery rhyme:

"Doctor Foster went to Gloucester
In a shower of rain.
He stepped in a puddle, right up to his middle,
And never went there again."

That is something that Gloucester will have to overcome, whereas we in sunny Southsea have a slighly easier task. The arranging of the right weather, for which the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) was once responsible, but when requirements were different back in the days of drought in the 1970s, cannot be guaranteed. This means that we must have wet-weather facilities. We hope that our restaurants will whet appetites, but if the body is to be wet it must be wet inside.

One facility that is being built in my constituency includes something called the Pyramids. It will be an inside water experience of the first order. It is a project that modern mummies will welcome, as well as some daddies. It will offer fine facilities and it will be opened by the Princess Royal when she visits Portsmouth in July.

We have heard about rail and road communications, but I wish to refer to the sea. In my constituency, and on the borders of the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths), who is my parliamentary neighbour, there is a thriving ferry port. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House have travelled through it and have sometimes given me the benefit of their experiences. They have told me that improvements could be made. There are three separate companies offering roll-on/roll-off facilities, and Portsmouth is the second largest port after Dover. It has a much better labour relations reputation. That became clear during the recent troubles, when Portsmouth never stopped its ferry operations. It offers more routes than any other port. There are links to Caen, Cherbourg, Le Havre, St. Malo, Santander, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Wight.

The standards on board the ferries must be high. I think that it was Dr. Johnson who once said that being in a ship was like being in a gaol, with the chance of being drowned. We must ensure that the reputation of ships does not go the same way as that of aircraft. The public feel that they are treated like cattle when they arrive at any airport or leave from it. There is the feeling that passengers are fodder for aircraft.

We must ensure in Portsmouth that we do not become the subject of the complaints that we sometimes hear about Her Majesty's Customs at other ports. I direct that remark to Treasury Ministers, and I hope that it will be taken up by my hon. Friend the Minister. When travellers arrive at a port, they must be able to go through the green channel without being challenged. They should be stopped only if there are tip-offs, along with occasional random stops.

We must ensure that when travellers arrive they do not have to wait on board, sometimes in the hold. There are exhaust fumes, and long waits are unpleasant, especially if there are young children in the car. I have four young children, and I know what it is like to be cooped up for half

[Mr. David Martin]

an hour in a car in the hold of a ship. One tries to keep children happy, while trying to ensure that they have enough air. This is a difficult experience, especially when it comes at the end of a trying journey. I hope that there will be co-operation from Her Majesty's Customs to ensure that ferry ports, and especially the Portsmouth port, are better served. There is a need sometimes for more staff at peak periods, but it is important that there is good management.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I give every encouragement to my hon. Friend the Minister to improve on the initiative, enthusiasm and energy that he has shown, so as to benefit all of us and the nation in future.

1.59 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): In introducing this debate my hon. Friend the Minister referred to a number of initiatives that the Government have taken and are taking to encourage tourism. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said, when I checked through my Adjournment debate on the tourism industry six years ago, I was encouraged to find that so many of the demands that I suggested the tourism industry had been making on the Government have been met by the Government.

The Government have responded to demands that section 4 tourism development grants be available nationwide and not just in assisted areas. They have greatly increased the available funding, which is going to smaller hotels and guest houses as well as to larger projects. The Government have made more helpful arrangements for rate support grant funding to be spent on tourism. They are abolishing the rating system, which is something that the industry has long demanded. The establishment of a single European market in 1992 will presumably harmonise VAT on hotels and holidays throughout the industry—again something that the industry has long wanted. The Government have reformed the licensing laws in response to the industry's demand. I welcome that, although I shall later refer to the trend on drink-related disorder in the tourism industry.

I asked the Government to reform the gaming laws to bring them more in line with those on the Continent. My hon. Friend the Minister will know that the casino industry is small in comparison with that of most other tourist countries, but it generates over £1·5 billion worth of business a year, a great deal of which goes to the Exchequer in taxes. One petty restriction in particular prevents casinos from attracting business from visitors from both home and abroad. That is section 12 of the Gaming Act 1968, which imposes a 48-hour rule, which prevents members of casino clubs from enjoying the same facilities in other casinos in areas such as my constituency of Bournemouth and other tourist and conference towns, which they may be visiting for a limited period.

As hon. Members will know, bona fide members of Conservative and Labour clubs have no such restriction preventing them from drinking in clubs elsewhere, provided that they abide by local club rules and show their affiliation card. The same should apply to casino club members, as it does in Europe, to which we must be losing an increasing amount of such business from visiting Americans, Japanese and other business men and tourists —the quality tourist to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) referred.

I shall refer now to some of the practical problems facing our traditional seaside resorts, of which my constituency, Bournemouth, is one of the best, as hon. Members know from attending their party conferences there. Later this year we shall welcome the Trades Union Congress to its first conference there for 45 years. For many years, our resorts have been facing formidable competition from those abroad with better climates than our own, and our rising prosperity will no doubt encourage that trend. Several resorts have given up the challenge. They have neglected their seafronts and piers, failed to invest in the future and have gone for the soft option of servicing havens for the retired, with inevitable stagnation for the local economy and loss of job opportunities. Others are attempting to realise the true potential of their seafronts. They have revitalised their piers and, in attempting to escape from being seasonal, are attempting to provide all-weather aquatic and leisure facilities, and have diversified into such markets as conferences, exhibitions and language schools.

Unfortunately, because of the irresponsibility of some inner city authorities, the Government have a certain mistrust of tourist authorities. This threatens to restrict these developments by an amendment in the Local Government Finance Bill to make partnership and barter schemes subject to the public expenditure audit. This has a devastating effect on boroughs such as my own, which seek to use operational assets—in our case the pavilion and its car park—to redevelop prime sites for the benefit of visitors and residents alike, with major investment from the private sector.

Such investment does not involve the council in mortgaging its future. It is designed to promote the economy of the town and its tourism industry in particular. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to make the same representations to his colleagues in the Department of the Environment as are being made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) and myself. We want to ensure that such new investment is neither affected by that amendment nor by a return to capital controls for individual schemes.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister accept my borough's concern, shared no doubt by other resorts and referred to by the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn), about the increasing trend of hotels and guest houses being converted to rest and retirement homes? That is being encouraged by rocketing values of property, and the attraction of early retirement from a labour-intensive business on a capital gain is understandable. However, it is resulting in the permanent loss of beds for visitors and must lead, in due course, to the permanent loss of visitors. That would threaten the viability of every tourist attraction. Because no change of use is involved, local authorities are powerless to discourage that vicious cycle unless they can determine that hotels remain as hotels. I hope that my hon. Friend will take note of those fears and discuss them with the resort authorities and his colleagues at the Department of the Environment.

I want to use this opportunity to express my continuing concern and that of all hon. Members representing constituencies whose police authorities accept the responsibility of the policing and security of party conferences at the fact that they must bear that cost

without special support from the Exchequer. In the past, we were all content to bear that cost. However, the Brighton bombing in 1984 changed everything. In Dorset, police costs in connection with the Conservative party conference in 1986 amounted to more than £1 million. Bournemouth borough council undertook additional expenditure of £39,000 on security measures. I have no doubt that Lancashire and Blackpool paid similar amounts last year and that Sussex and Brighton will do so this year, and so it will go on.

It is no longer reasonable to expect local ratepayers to bear such costs. It is not good enough to say that the towns have opted to attract conferences and so must accept the rough with the smooth. The cost of maintaining an effective security system to protect our national leaders must be a national responsibility and must be borne by the Exchequer. I hope that my hon. Friend will support the representations being made to the Home Secretary by some of our right hon. and hon. Friends who represent conference-town constituencies.

During the week that has seen the worst of the young British male abroad, we must not ignore the recent warning of the Association of Chief Constables about the trends towards public disorder in areas outside our inner cities, including seaside resorts and the countryside. Once a resort's reputation has been eroded by a few weekends of violence, it can take years to restore the confidence of elderly visitors or those with families.

As we all know, 90 per cent. of the problem is drink-related. We may need to consider following the lead of every state in the United States of America and raise the drinking age to 21. I cannot understand why the common sense of using identity cards is not more widely appreciated. I welcome the revised guidelines for dealing with young offenders with higher profile manual labour community service. The police must have sufficient manpower to deal with the problem, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's new initiatives will find a means to combat the problem that threatens all our communities.

2.9 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): More than 500 years ago a famous English tourist landed at Pembroke in Wales and made his way to my constituency of Bosworth. He was Henry Tudor, and there in 1485 he fought Richard III, smashed his forces and ended the Wars of the Roses—the 30-year feud which had divided England. He was crowned Henry VII and now, partly because of that big battle, we have a tremendous resurgence of tourist activity in Bosworth. It is of great credit to all the organisations in the county that that has come about.

It is important to encourage tourists to move away from London. More than half the expenditure of tourists occurs in London or in the so-called golden triangle—and by that I do not mean somewhere in Burma or Thailand, but Oxford, Windsor and London. In 1987, when a survey was conducted on tourists' habits, it was found that the reason why tourists do not travel away from London is principally the lack of time. If time is the key factor, we must address ourselves, as many hon. Members have done today, to transport problems. That is why I have been fighting to electrify the main line from St. Pancras to Leicester. It will be a key factor in our increasing tourist industry.

The Channel tunnel will also affect that line because if we are to have a further 15 million tourists a year we must get them through London and away. Therefore, not only the east and west coast main lines, but the midlands main line must be connected into the new St. Pancras-King's Cross terminal, which the British Railways (No.2) Bill has given authority to be built. That will be a key aspect of future tourism in the midlands.

There has already been a shift from London. Tourism in the regions—in East Anglia, the east midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside, and parts of the north-west —has increased by 7 per cent. in the past two years. That is double the rate in other parts. There must be good reasons for that, and I shall look into them in a moment.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) commented on the so-called low-paid jobs in the tourist industry. Surely it is better that people have work. In my constituency we have the Ashby canal. Through the community programme people who were unemployed have been put to work renovating the canal. It has been a tremendous success, not just because the canal has been cleaned out, but because it has brought people off the streets to do a useful and rewarding job.

In the east midlands, particularly in Leicestershire, we have seen a complete transformation in attitudes to tourism in the past two or three years. The county has begun to recognise the tremendous potential, not just of its great houses, such as Belvoir castle and Belton, but of other attractions, such as Rutland Water. It is the second largest man-made lake in England and one can go yachting and wind surfing on it or cycle round it. It does great credit to Leicestershire county council that it now has a professional tourism officer and that it is promoting the county, correctly, as the "heart of the shires," because we are the heart of the shires and we offer a tremendous amount.

Unfortunately most of the constituencies of Leicester city are on temporary loan to the Labour party from the Conservative party. I hope that the hon. Members now representing that city will forgive me if I praise the work of that city council. It is promoting the 700-year-old market, which is one of the biggest in Europe, and has a museum of technology and other attractions, such as the 14th century gatehouse, which are pulling in many overseas tourists.

The district councils are also pulling their weight. Bradgate park, within the district of Charnwood, is a tremendously popular local attraction. Hinckley and Bosworth district council, which serves most of my constituency, has taken tremendous strides to develop tourism.

Why is my beautiful constituency such a wonderful area to visit? Why is it such a wonderful area in which to holiday? Why is it such a wonderful place to take children?

Mr. Sheerman: Because it gets the most sunshine.

Mr. Allason: Because it has a wonderful Member of Parliament.

Mr. Tredinnick: My hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) and the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) make some kind remarks. My constituency is a wonderful place to take children. It is a wonderful place in which to learn and in which to relax

[Mr. Tredinnick]

in peace. Such peace may not be available to the local Member of Parliament, but it is available to my constituents.

Although I have been somewhat flippant, my constituency is unique because of the diversity of activity that is available to those who want to visit the area and enjoy themselves. Twycross zoo had 446,000 visitors last year, and I believe it is so successful because the council has given it rate relief to get going. It has become a major tourist attraction.

The battlefield at Bosworth has been transformed from being merely an area of farmland into a principal attraction. Last year 150,000 people visited the battlefield and enjoyed the history of the Wars of the Roses because of the vivid way in which those wars are brought to life. My constituency also boasts Mallory park motor and motor cycle racing circuit. A new hotel is being developed there.

It is interesting to note that Hinckley and Bosworth district council has bought and developed Burbage woods that abut the town as a leisure park. That park has brought untold pleasure to the citizens of Hinckley. During the election campaign I found light relief by getting up early in the morning and running around that beautiful area. in that way I escaped the barbs and jibes of people such as the hon. Member for Huddersfield, although of course I am not as senior as him. Those hon. Members who wish to take a break off the A5 should visit Hinckley because that town now has an attractive pedestrian centre with its own market. It is a pleasant way in which to break a journey north.

The constituency also has not one but two steam railways—the Shackerstone railway, and the charming railway at Cadeby. The latter railway was built by a vicar who, beside his natural instincts to promote the gospel, also enjoyed steam engines. It is possible to travel round the vicarage garden under steam and not by hot air as some might suggest; and, as I have already mentioned, the Ashby canal has been made safe and clean as a result of work carried out under the community programme.

It is important to consider the plight of farmers and the impact of tourism on them. I have many farmers in my constituency and they are worried about what they should do. This week we had a debate on set-aside. I believe that there is a tremendous scope for farmers to take in lodgers. They could take in older tourists—we are all aware that life expectancy is improving and that there are more older people than before—and could show them the farming way of life. That is one way in which farmers could offset the problems with which they are currently faced. I would certainly commend that to some of the farmers in my constituency.

I am proud to represent a stunningly beautiful part of England which, over the past two to three years—perhaps more—has started to realise the genuine and important potential of tourism. We have trains, motor racing, canals, history and battlefields. I advise those hon. Members who may be thinking of going to seaside resorts for their holidays—I mean no disrespect to my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), that rather than sitting on a beach and becoming lobsters, they would do better to tour around Bosworth, participating in all our activities, learning and having a tremendous time——

Mr. Allason: I do not wish to indulge in a history lesson, but my hon. Friend mentioned a particular tourist who trekked across to Bosworth. He should be aware that in Torbay we are about to celebrate the landing of King William of Orange who trekked across England from my constituency. I hope that my hon. Friend will bear in mind that his constituency is not unique in that respect.

Mr. Tredinnick: I thought for a moment that my hon. Friend was going to say that he is a voortrekker—as a William of Orange fan. His constituency also has strong historical connections, so we have something in common because we are here promoting them.

There is a trend in Britain away from the bucket and spade and towards looking at the heart of the country, which is fascinating, interesting and ideal for a long and pleasant family holiday.

2.22 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) on his contribution. I hope to demonstrate in my short speech how Basildon can vie as an equal tourist attraction. I should like to draw three main points to the attention of the House. The first two relate specifically to London. I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will be interested in them.

My first point relates to the Palace of Westminster. It is a magnificent building. All the constituents whom we bring here greatly enjoy its beauty and mystery. However, I am concerned that access to the building stops when we break for our summer recess. In the previous Parliament I suggested—I shall probably be greeted with howls of protest—that we allow the Palace to be opened to tourists during August and September and that we charge them a modest fee for being taken around.

I make it quite clear that I do not, under any circumstances, wish to place any further burdens on the magnificent staff who serve us so well. I am not suggesting that their holiday arrangements or duties should be altered in such a manner as to put pressure on them if the facility were granted. However, I am sure that it is well within the wit of the House to make arrangements to enable tourists to enjoy the mysteries and delights of this place. I hope that on future occasions in this Parliament, hon. Members will support me in proposing that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and his Committee should consider that suggestion.

Mr. Allason: Does my hon. Friend propose extending his suggestion to the restaurant and refreshment facilities?

Mr. David Amess: My hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) has made an excellent suggestion. It seems crazy that our facilities should gather dust during the summer when they could be used. I am reluctant to put any extra burden on the staff, who work incredibly long hours and no doubt receive poor pay, but this would be a great opportunity to entertain tourists.

Mr. Tony Banks: Perhaps we could meet on this point and serve all the interests that the hon. Gentleman mentions by having a much shorter summer recess and getting on with the job of holding the Government to account.

Mr. Amess: That sounds like an elephant trap. There is something in what the hon. Member for Newham,

North-West says, but, as hon. Members know, the idea that we all sun ourselves for 11 weeks on some desert island is very far from the truth.

My second point is also about London, and it deals with the Thames. I was born in the east end of London in the constituency of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. It is a matter of great concern to me that the Thames is not used to its full potential. During my relatively short lifetime I have seen a decline in the use of the river. The Rhine and the Seine are wonderful examples of how rivers can be used, and I am sure that we could do a great deal more with the Thames. Two and a half years ago the House held a regatta which we all enjoyed. I hope that some enthusiastic new hon. Member will turn his attention to organising a similar festival on the river in which we can all join.

As hon. Members may know, the London tourist board has this year identified the Thames as a major asset and suggested that it should be developed for the benefit of visitors, but especially of Londoners. Since 1986 the management of the river has not been entirely clear. The Thames water authority and the Port of London Authority have specific duties, but the boroughs bordering the Thames have assumed additional functions. the unfortunate result is that development on the river has reached an impasse.

I wonder how many hon. Members know that 3·5 million passengers take trips on the river each year? The London tourist board thinks that rather inadequate boats are used. I do not know whether it is a coincidence, but on a recent trip I heard disparaging remarks as the boat floated past this place. The river authority, the Thames water authority, grants licences for only one year. The London tourist board would like to see that extended to five years.

The Thames should be seen not only as a tourist attraction but as part of the transport infrastructure. Thamesline, a private company, is already operating commuter services. Those and other services can only be successful in attracting passengers away from the roads and on to the river if comfortable piers and other services are provided. It is a great shame that the skyline is somewhat blocked by a development that leaves a great deal wanting. I hope that children in London schools can be encouraged to make more use of the river.

I shall conclude by speaking about my constituency. A few weeks ago we launched a campaign called "I love Basildon." The purpose of that ongoing campaign is to demonstrate what a wonderful town Basildon is. I think that it is the finest new town in the country. I go further and say that it is the finest town in the country. Much as I approve of tourists travelling to Hampton court and the Tower of London, I should like them to see part of the new Britain; and that is why I want them to flock to my constituency.

Basildon has the largest covered shopping centre in Europe and magnificent medieval churches, such as Saint Mary's, Holy Cross and the church of Saint Nicholas. We even have a marina, a zoo, all types of wildlife, an attractive theatre, wonderful walks and marvellous leisure facilities. We have three hotels: the Crest, the Watermill, and the Campagnille, which has opened recently. Basildon is only 30 miles from London. We have access to the M25, the A13 and the A127 and are strategically placed for the new Channel tunnel. A great deal has been written about Basildon. I am interested only in the positive aspects of it. I hope that tourists will flock to Basildon.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Luccombe Village (Government Assistance)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): It has been a long week. We have had almost two all-night sittings. In the first, I asked questions in the DHSS debate, then flew to the Isle of Wight, parachuted into Bembridge airport for a charity jump, and returned here for the all-night sitting. My day yesterday ended at 3.45 am today.

I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for coming to reply to this Adjournment debate. He will be aware that a number of villagers from Luccombe have travelled from the Isle of Wight to listen to our deliberations. I know that my hon. Friend and his advisers are anxious to assist in alleviating this difficult problem, if possible. I should like to quote from a report written by the acting county secretary and solicitor, Mr. Felix Hetherington, and made to the public protection committee of the Isle of Wight county council, which met this morning. The report stated that a landslip in Luccombe village which occurred in February this year had led to a number of houses having to be demolished, together with further houses being identified as at risk of further movement. The Luccombe village residents association believes that work can be done to arrest any further major landslips and so protect those properties currently threatened. They have approached all the public authorities for assistance in dealing with this problem—all to no avail. That is why I called for this Adjournment debate and was delighted when granted it.

Luccombe village is one of the Isle of Wight's loveliest spots. When one lives in paradise, as we all do on the Isle of Wight, singling out one part as especially lovely will give some idea, I hope, of just how pretty and peaceful it is. The village lies to the west of Shanklin on top of a cliff overlooking the Channel beside a chine that runs down to the beach. The problem is that the area at the top of the cliff has, historically, shown some instability. I must stress that point. It is the result of the action not of the sea at the bottom of the cliff, as is the usual problem, but of surface water running through the clay cliff face. This phenomenon is well known in various parts of the island.

There was a large land movement to the east of Luccombe village in the 1800s. When I say "large", I am talking of an area that fronts the Channel for a distance, to give my hon. Friend the Minister some idea, probably equivalent to that along the Thames in front of the Houses of Parliament, between Waterloo and Lambeth bridges, extending inland as far as the Army and Navy store in Victoria street.

In the early 1950s, a similar slip occurred. A number of houses were abandoned then and have since fallen over the cliff. On that occasion, my predecessor but two, Sir Peter Macdonald, raised the matter with the then Minister of Health. Eventually some help was made available for the remaining village in the form of a new road.

We are not looking at a village of 24 home owners who expect that solutions will be found for them. Indeed, under the energic leadership of Mrs. Frances Longman, they have formed themselves into the Luccombe village residents association and have actively pursued every opportunity to find a solution to this problem. Unfortunately, already two villagers have had to leave their homes. One is 81-year-old recently widowed Surgeon Rear-Admiral William Holgate. I assure my hon. Friend the Minister that he is as doughty and as independent a fighter as one might expect him to be from his distinguished career.

In a word, one by one, every avenue explored has turned out to be a cul-de-sac. That is why I have raised this matter on the Floor of the House today on behalf of the village.

Before I ask my hon. Friend to comment specifically on the three points that I shall put to him, may I draw his attention to two remaining facts. First, South Wight borough council has been extremely helpful in commissioning an engineering report on the problems and possible solutions. Because some of the properties have lost their sewerage facilities, the council has agreed to approach Southern Water for a first-time sewerage scheme for the village. I understand that that scheme will also include a small amount of surface water drainage. That will obviously assist in solving the problem, but it will not tackle the root cause.

The second fact is that my hon. Friend said in his letter to me of 19 May:

"the responsibility for remedial measures rests with the landowners and their insurers."

That is not a practical solution because the remedy is a land drainage scheme costing £300,000. Those homes that are threatened, but are still habitable, have nothing to claim from their insurers. If they notify their insurers, the insurance companies may simply refuse them cover for that risk the following year.

The largest landowner concerned is the National Trust and it is already struggling to meet the considerable demands on its resources to protect the land holdings on the north shore of the island around the estuary of the Newtown river. I understand that its policy is to commit its funds primarily to the preservation of buildings in its care, and one can readily see that it will gain no specific advantage from the expenditure of £300,000 to drain land that is currently in agricultural use surrounding the village. I do not believe that there is any way in which it can be encouraged or compelled to incur such expenditure.

The first of the three points that I should like to raise is the possibility of a special rate being levied to pay for the work. That suggestion was put to me by Miss Ivy Triggs, who is now a blind villager and has lived in Luccombe pretty well all her life. She tells me that she orginally took up that point with Sir Peter Macdonald. The villagers tell me that, as pensioners, none of them can afford, even jointly, to raise such a sum, but that they would be prepared to pay an additional amount in their rates to save their village, if a way could be found for the borough council to have that expenditure made available.

That brings me to my second point—the possibility of the cost of the land drainage scheme being built into South Wight borough's grant-related expenditure allocation, as it is obvious that this borough council, because of its small size and the precedent that it would create on the island, cannot possibly afford to expose itself, so to speak, by going it alone.

My hon. Friend may tell me that GREA cannot be committed in advance and that he cannot depart from that principle. Just in case he does that, I must tell him that, in my experience as chairman of a council housing committee, I had a case in which the Department of the

Environment gave an undertaking in writing to my local authority that future GREA, to meet a problem, would be available, although the problem was in no way relevant to the problem facing Luccombe village. That experience shows that, in extremis, the Department of the Environment is capable of making a future commitment for GREA.

Mr. Barry Field: Some of the surrounding land, although admittedly a very tiny part, is common land, the ownership of which is vested in or exercised by the borough. I understand that the villagers have contacted Lord Denning, who suggested that the Water Act 1973 and the Local Government Act 1972 may be helpful. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister can shed some light on these points.

"Physician heal thyself" is very much part of my personal philosophy in life. However, I simply ask the Minister to put himself in the villagers' shoes. Luccombe village is threatened. The engineers' report states that it is imperative that the work is carried out before the wet of autumn and winter. Where do we turn for help? The solution is beyond the pockets of the villagers, counciliors, and the local borough. There is no claim for the insurers until the dwellings have moved, and then it will be too late. This debate may even now sadly remove the insurance cover from those dwellings. I sincerely hope not. I look to my hon. Friend the Minister and his expert team to point out our salvation in this difficult problem.

2.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) has set out thoroughly the problems facing parts of Luccombe village on the Isle of Wight. He has shown admirable concern for the plight of his constituents who are affected. I congratulate him on raising this matter and on the clear way in which he has presented the issues. It is well known on both sides of the House that in the time that he has represented the Isle of Wight he has earned himself a first-class reputation as a very able and vociferous advocate on his constituents' behalf.

The Isle of Wight is a very pleasant and scenic place, blessed with a mild climate. It is perhaps appropriate that I should stress that, especially as this follows a tourism debate. Those features have made the Isle of Wight a firm favourite among holiday makers, who visit the island to enjoy the dramatic coastal scenery and excellent walks along the coastal paths. Those same attractions influence people to select the island as a suitable place for retirement. It is not surprising that the scenery and sea views exert a very strong influence on them when selecting property for purchase.

The village of Luccombe, set away from the main road between Shanklin and Ventnor, is on a promontory overlooking a coastal path and, as my hon. Friend has said, has National Trust land to the east and is framed by farmland to the west. It has all those characteristics that are held in great regard. It is very sad that the same geological circumstances and natural processes as have moulded this southern part of the island, and which are continuing today, blend to clause problems which are difficult to remedy.

I must explain the geological background. The southern coast of the island is particularly prone to large-scale and frequent landslides. They may be triggered by coastal erosion, heavy rainfall or construction activity afffecting planes of weakness within the ground. They may be new or may remain from past movements. The huge coastal landslide complex between Blackgang and Dunnose has produced the famous and scenic terraced effect known as the undercliff. However, Luccombe village is situated to the north-east of this structure and slippage around the village behaves in a different way because of its contrasting geological setting.

The village is located above steep ground, descending towards a cliff line cut in physically weak geological layers. One of those layers is the gault clay, which is known colloquially on the island as "blue slipper" because of its common association with landslides. The water retention properties of the clay and the tendency of material to move down the slope towards the sea indicate that, although regrettable, it is far from surprising that landsliding has occurred at Luccombe. The history of movements at Luccombe, including the loss of several houses in the 1950s to which my hon. Friend referred, gave warning of what might be expected. The January 1988 movements, which commenced on the seaward side of the village, have led to the serving of dangerous structures notices and demolition of properties as well as the closure of the cliff path. I understand that several other houses ae now at short-term risk. Services, including a water main, were disrupted by the movements, and water from those may have exacerbated the problem. Damage and loss on that scale is clearly a very serious blow to a small village such as Luccombe and to the property owners concerned.

My hon. Friend has pressed the case for Government assistance. Although I am sympathetic to the problem that he has raised, preventive, precautionary and remedial works for landsliding are in law the responsibility of the landowner, although a local authority may have an interest within its roles as a highway authority and in safeguarding public safety. I understand that the South Wight borough council commissioned a site investigation of the slipped area close to the village and that the resulting report suggested that drainage works costing about £300,000 might stabilise the landslide. I have yet to see a copy of the final report, but I have asked officials to request one from the council

I am to a certain extent surprised that a copy is not to hand for me to study. This is an important point. I want to see precisely what are the conclusions of that report. It may be only an interim report, and there may be a final report still to come. I want to see what remedial action is recommended and how the cost is calculated. Perhaps most important of all, does the recommendation state that if certain works were to be undertaken the problem would be solved? I am bound to ask those questions, and I am sure the residents, too, are bound to ask them.

Despite the report that my hon. Friend has mentioned, he asks me to extend an existing research project commissioned by my Department to include Luccombe. While it is true that the scope and objectives of our report and the character of the landslide complex are rather different from the circumstances at Luccombe, and while, in addition, the time scale of that exercise does not fit in with the stated need for urgent action on remedial works, I am in these exceptional circumstances ready to consider whether to do so would serve a useful purpose. However, I must first see the report that has been commissioned by the South Wight borough council.

[Mr. David Trippier]

I must make abundantly clear what I am offering. I agree to consider the consultants' report commissioned by the borough council. If I think that it would be useful and that I can help with a study commissioned by my Department, I will help. I am not saying that there could be Government assistance for those remedial works which are, as I have already made clear, the landowners' legal responsibilities.

I have gone to the trouble—as my hon. Friend would expect—of examining possible sources of funds and have consulted my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who has the responsibility for matters relating to coast protection and land drainage. The derelict land grant funds administered by my Department apply only to remedial action on land damaged by human activities. The European regional development fund applies only to land within assisted areas, as defined by the Department of Trade and Industry, and there is no reason to believe that that is likely to change in the future.

I have considered the appropriateness of grant-aid for coast protection works. That aid can be considered only when landsliding is caused by coastal erosion or threatens existing coast defences. There are no coastal defence works below Luccombe village, and it seems that recent movements have occurred well back from the shoreline. If the council believes that the landslide is caused by erosion, it should make an application to my right hon. Friend. He will consider carefully any proposal put to him on its merits, but, given the high costs of coastal defence works, the value of any property and services at risk would have to be very substantial to justify any allocation.

Another possibility relates to proposed remedial drainage works. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food allocates grants for land drainage but they are made to alleviate flooding, not land instability. It is worth noting also that if the recent movements at Luccombe village are contained within part of a larger landslide system, limited drainage works would probably not be effective, although they might have a temporary effect in slowing or halting the movement. It could well be that such expenditure would be wasted because of subsequent activity lower down that same slope. Only a comprehensive survey of the area around that recent landslide, and especially of the slopes below it, would determine whether that is the case.

Therefore, I regret that it is unlikely that there are sources of central Government funds that can be used for remedial works. If we were to open the door even just a tiny bit, there are many other areas, even in my constituency in east Lancashire, where we have that problem and where at no time have Government funds been used to remedy the loss that has been sustained.

Mr. Barry Field: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for what he has said. I am sure that the possibility of extending the survey, about which I wrote to him, will be useful. My hon. Friend has just mentioned opening the door even a crack, but I am sure that he will appreciate that that is precisely the dilemma faced by the borough council. The problem is not confined to Luccombe, although it seems to be the most aggravated. It seems that it is in no way associated with coastal erosion, which has further aggravated the problem of trying to get assistance.

Mr. Trippier: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point, which I understand. I can see the difficulties that South Wight borough council would have with such a suggestion, because it would affect the council in many other areas, not just in Luccombe. If I dare say it to him, I have that problem on a much wider scale throughout the United Kingdom. It is not common for the Department of the Environment to assist with the survey that I suggested and to extend it, but I can see that there is a great problem at Luccombe. In view of the representations made by my hon. Friend, I ought to be prepared to consider that at the appropriate time, but let me have a look at the report from the council first.

My hon. Friend made three further suggestions, of which he was kind enough to give me notice. The first is the possibility of a special rate being levied on the village, which I understand the villagers will be prepared to pay. Special rates can be levied in some circumstances, but that is a matter for the borough council to consider. Of course, if all the landowners concerned are prepared to pay for any necessary works, that is for them.

Secondly, my hon. Friend suggested that the cost of the drainage scheme could be built into the GREA for the borough council. I am not aware of the Essex example that he quoted. However, assessment for rate support grant is dealt with on a common basis across the country and is not based on actual expenditure, so it is not possible to accommodate the specific type of case that he mentioned. If my hon. Friend wishes to come back to me on that and to write more specifically about the example that he quoted in the debate, I should be delighted to hear from him.

Thirdly, my hon. Friend drew my attention to certain provisions in the Water Act 1973 and the Local Government Act 1972. I understand that Lord Denning has advised the residents that there may be a solution under those Acts. Whenever the name of Lord Denning is mentioned, it strikes fear into the heart of any Minister. I shall need to tread carefully, but I have to say that the lawyers in the Department of the Environment cannot immediately—I choose my words carefully—see the relevance of those references. If my hon. Friend would care to explain that aspect in greater detail by letter or by coming to see me, I shall be glad to look at it.

None of that detracts from the fact that the Department of the Environment takes these matters seriously. The substantial problems caused by land instability are recognised. We propose to issue advice to local planning authorities, aimed at ensuring that appropriate account is taken of land instability in the planning of land use, development control and planning decisions, so that development is not carried out on suspect ground unless the necessary precautionary and remedial works have been undertaken.

I hope that draft guidelines will be issued for public consultation during the summer. The effect will be to reduce the number of problems affecting future developments, although I accept that difficulties will remain for properties that have been built in locations subject to landsliding. However, many of those problems can be avoided if caution is exercised, for example by avoiding imprudent excavation or unwise types of drainage in particularly unstable areas.

I have listened carefully to what my hon. Friend has said and I have been in correspondence with him. If he wishes to pursue this matter still further, I have no doubt

that he will come to me quickly with the report from the South Wight borough council. I understand his concern and I sympathise fully with the difficulties that have been faced by the Luccombe residents. It appears that there is no immediate Government device available to deal with the remedial works, and I think my hon. Friend understands that. I hope that the policy framework that I have dealt with in the latter part of my speech, which is being developed by my Department, and the results of the supporting research, will make such unfortunate circumstances less common in future.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 20 June 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

DARTMOUTH-KINGSWEAR FLOATING BRIDGE BILL
Lords amendments agree to.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Tyre Treads

1. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how many European Community states conform with the draft directive for a minimum tread depth for tyres; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): First, I present the apologies of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who is at an important meeting of Transport Ministers in Europe.

One, Luxembourg.

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that helpful information. How much longer are we going to wait before we agree to the EEC draft directive? Does it not make a shambles of the Government's policy of being seriously concerned about road safety when all the organisations concerned with road safety have said that a minimum tyre depth of 2 mm is appropriate—yet we shelter behind this lower figure? When will my hon. Friend take their representations into account?

Mr. Bottomley: I apologise to my hon. Friend for the way in which I answered him the last time that we debated this issue. If any of these organisations want to send the safety case to me, we shall of course consider it.

Mr. Dalyell: Many of my constituents work in Uniroyal. What is the cost of the Government's review of the safety regulations? What figures does the Minister have?

Mr. Bottomley: The cost is estimated at about £70 million a year. The real question is what the benefit is. All the research has demonstrated that this may make a marginal difference at more than 50 miles an hour on roads with smooth surfaces; other than that, there is no safety advantage in having a lower or higher tread depth.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Is it not the case that many of the countries that have deeper tread depth requirements also have, as a representative truth, far more days of snow a year that we do? Is that not a major consideration, and is not tread pattern in many cases of great importance, too—not just tread depth?

Mr. Bottomley: There is a good deal in what my hon. Friend says. It is important to realise that a Government of any political persuasion in this country would want to do what is effective. Going for higher tread depth in this country would not be particularly effective. I have told my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) that if one of the tyre manufacturers wants to put forward a serious safety case we shall, of course, consider it.

Transport Policy

2. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his Department's policy towards quantifying the relative environmental, energy and safety advantages of rail transport and road transport in formulating transport policy.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): The Government's policy is to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness by increasing choice and competition and by removing distortions between transport modes so far as possible.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Minister aware that some local authorities are now conducting studies to bring back rail links that were cut in the Beeching era? They include West Lancashire, Sefton and Lancashire county councils. If the hon. Gentleman is aware that they are endeavouring to carry out such studies, will the Government help with these initiatives, and if so, how?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is referring to the Burscough curves, which are the subject of a report that has been commissioned by the Lancashire county council from British Rail. The first part of that report has been delivered and the balance will be delivered early next month. It is a matter between British Rail and Lancashire county council.

Mr. Adley: Does my hon. Friend recall telling me some time ago that he was satisfied that the investment criteria for rail were the same in this country as in France? May I assume that he has studied article 14 of chapter 3 of the French Internal Transport Act 1982, with its stress on social and environmental issues as major factors in decisions on rail investment? How does he square his statement with that legislation?

Mr. Mitchell: If my hon. Friend looks carefully, he will see that on that occasion I was referring to the TGV line which is proposed from Paris to the Channel tunnel mouth and to the Belgian border. It is a requirement of the French Government that it should be a commercially viable proposition.

Mr. Cousins: Does the Minister agree that the advantages of rail depend upon long hauls without transhipment and without delay? In that respect, why does he not commit himself to through travel from the north of England to Europe via the Channel tunnel with customs clearance en route for both freight and people?

Mr. Mitchell: That is a requirement of the Act for people and it will be implemented in due course. Under

section 40 of the Act, British Rail has embarked on a series of consultations designed to discover the best places for assembling freight for the very purpose about which the hon. Gentleman speaks.

Mr. Key: Will my hon. Friend look carefully at the complex decision-making processes of investment in British Rail, such as apply to the line from Waterloo to Exeter via Salisbury? Is he aware that I and some of my hon. Friends discussed this matter with British Rail and were astonished to discover that when considering matters such as double tracking British Rail is not required to undergo any kind of cost-benefit analysis for investment criteria?

Mr. Mitchell: I agree with my hon. Friend. Like him, I have a constituency interest in the circumstances affecting that line, which is below the standard that British Rail wishes to achieve. I am assured that an investment proposal will be put to me later this year. I look forward to it and hope that it will arrive as quickly as possible.

Mr. Snape: Does the Minister accept that if environmental, energy and safety advantages of rail transport were accepted we would have a railway system as well financed as that in the rest of Europe? As our railways suffer from a supine and incompetent management, and a sponsoring Department that is largely indifferent to rail's advantages, the Minister's Department will continue to squander billions of pounds on supposed road improvements which will have the effect of moving a traffic jam a few miles further up the road.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman alleges that the environmental benefits are not recognised by the Government. They are recognised through section 8 freight facilities grants. Rail transport can bring substantial environmental benefits, and section 8 is designed to get regular flows of unsuitable goods off the roads. Since 1983 there have been 62 grants worth over £26 million, and they have removed about 1 million lorry journeys a year off the roads. That is worth while and is an example of our recognition.

Road Construction

3. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what efforts his Department takes to ensure that new roads are designed to be environmentally sensitive.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We minimise the impact of new roads on the environment by careful design. We fit schemes into the landscape, plant tress and screen traffic. We take special measures to protect wildlife.

Mr. Couchman: My hon. Friend will know of the laudable financial commitment of Kent county council, Gillingham borough council, the city council of Rochester and Medway, English Estates and the Rochester bridge trust to a new relief road running round the north side of the Medway towns. When his Department considers this proposal, will he recognise that the environmentally sensitive answer to crossing the Medway is a tunnel rather than a high-level bridge? Will he commit his Department to such a crossing, even if it is more expensive initially?

Mr. Bottomley: I hope that we will get a touch of private funding for the Medway crossing. That has been a tradition in the past. Of course, we shall take environmental considerations strongly into account. As today is the birthday of Professor Bell of Kew, of Professor Southwood the zoologist, and of my hon. Friend the Minister of State who leads the Department in "Transport and the Environment", we will take that very much to heart.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The Minister recently had a deputation about the urgency of the need to improve road communications between Manchester and Sheffield. Is there anything that he can say about action to be taken on an issue of so much importance to both cities and to the north's gateway airport in Manchester?

Mr. Bottomley: As I said to the right hon. Gentleman at our meeting, we want to improve the top road, and there are great worries about any proposals in the national park.

Mr. Hanley: In expressing my gratitude to my hon. Friend for his original answer, and for the birthday greeting to my excellent constituent, Professor Bell, may I also mention a serious matter to him? The surface that is eventually put on the roads, especially motorways, in Britain, has a great bearing on the subsequent noise emissions from those roads. Does he insist on the quietest possible road surface, or does money come into the argument?

Mr. Bottomley: No, and yes.

Settle-Carlisle Line

5. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the organisations and individuals who expressed interest in buying the Settle to Carlisle railway line prior to 16 May.

Mr. David Mitchell: No, Sir. Such information is commercially confidential. However, British Rail has adopted a positive attitude and has now appointed Mr. Chris Lewin to interface with those in the private sector who are interested.

Mrs. Golding: I thank the Minister for his reply. I am sure he will be aware of how many hon. Members are seriously disturbed about the proposals to privatise that line and the effects not only on the people but on tourism in the area, and the possible knock-on effects on other lines used for tourism. May I remind him that on 26 May my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) asked whether the consultation period on the timetable could be extended for a year? Will he now consider that proposal?

Mr. Mitchell: I wish to make two points to the hon. Lady. First, the period from now until, at the latest, November is for the Secretary of State's further consideration as to whether there is new evidence. After that there will be a further four months, so there is a long period.

Secondly, I went on the line myself last Saturday and was one of the many people who enjoyed the benefits of a trip on it. I do not think that either I or the other people needed it to be subsidised.

Mr. Waller: My hon. Friend should be congratulated on the personal and positive commitment that he showed on Saturday in travelling on that line with me and many other people. Given that that line is very different in its

nature and scale from other privately run railways, will he confirm that any private operator who came forward would not be required to conform with the slow running requirements involved in a light rail order?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend has raised an interesting question. There are three alternative ways in which it will be possible for a private operator to operate. British Rail could set up a subsidiary for disposal to the private sector and the powers to operate the line could be transferred to that subsidiary. It could be transferred by a private Act, by order of the Secretary of State under the Transport Act 1981, or by a light rail order made by the Secretary of State. The 25 mph restriction to which my hon. Friend referred applies to the last of those three.

Mr. Snape: Does the Minister accept that more than 22,000 objectors to the closure were deeply offended by the Minister's original comments when he made the deplorable announcement? They do not want to see a toy-town railway or someone playing with trains to amuse himself. That line forms an integral part of the transportation needs of an isolated part of the country and its closure will mean that many people will be deprived of any method of transportation for much of the year.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that that is referred to as a secondary line going north. It is a duplicate line. British Rail does not have duplicate lines for most of the network, and it does not need one here.

Heavy Vehicles

6. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made in taking action against overloaded foreign heavy vehicles entering the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: During the present financial year the Department's traffic examiners will weigh nearly 50 per cent. more foreign lorries than last year. In addition, we propose during the next few months to install automatic screening equipment at the major ferry ports.

Mr. Chapman: I welcome that development. However, will my hon. Friend confirm that it still means that fewer than 5 per cent. of such lorries are weighed? Given that a recent survey showed that more than one in five are found to be overweight, would not the best deterrent be, not only more screening and weighbridge facilities, but for the courts to impose much more severe fines for what are serious and dangerous offences?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes. It is worth recognising that most foreign lorries are regular visitors, so, even though the one in 20 figure is low, the chances of a regular visitor who overloads being caught are fairly high.

I do not have ministerial responsibility for the sentences that magistrates impose, but I notice that the fine imposed, instead of the maximum £2,000 fine, is usually about 10 per cent. of that, so the deterrent value is not as high as a higher fine.

Mr. Spearing: How far does the action that the Minister will take follow the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor General's report? Will the automatic weighing be for every vehicle and every axle, even if it is a coarse weight? Would it not be better to do that, and is it not sensible to weigh every axle as it comes off the boat?

Mr. Bottomley: That is obviously true. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question is contained in the reply from the Department to the Committee.

Mr. Irvine: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the new screening devices, which I am glad to hear he proposes to introduce, will weigh the vehicles in motion as they pass through the ports, so avoiding congestion?

Mr. Bottomley: That is the point of screening.

Mr. Cryer: Is not the administration involved in the screening and checking of on-road vehicles, which hon. Members on both sides of the House will endorse, an enormous expense? Would not the Government be better off spending money and effort in transferring road weights to rail, to make sure that the freight goes on rail in preference, and, in so doing, helping to keep railways, such as the Settle-Carlisle line, open? That is a magnificent main line route to the north and it can carry——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not call the hon. Gentleman to ask a supplementary on the previous question.

Mr. Bottomley: We recognise that the hon. Gentleman would have liked to get in on the previous question. In answer to this question—*[Interruption.]* The hooligan tendency is putting on a lot of pressure. The answer is that between the section 8 grants and the Channel tunnel there is more encouragement for heavy freight to use the railways for longer journeys, and that is to be welcomed.

Motorway Roadworks

8. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans have been made to limit the extent of motorway road works during the August bank holiday weekend 1988.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Wherever possible, roadworks involving lane closures are suspended during bank holidays and other peak holiday periods. Some roadworks are unavoidable at these times. Sometimes temporary removal of a large contraflow can be more disruptive than leaving it in place.

Mr. Franks: Is my hon. Friend aware that certain parts of the country, including my constituency, have local economies that are largely dependent on tourism? In granting further contracts for motorway repair and maintenance, will my hon. Friend bear that in mind?

Mr. Bottomley: We shall go on doing the best that we can, and we hope that that will be better than previously.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Does the Minister understand the anger and frustration of hundreds of thousands of motorists caught in traffic jams over all holiday periods, not just the August bank holiday? People have complained to me about the incompetence of a Department that simply cannot get roadworks done in such a schedule as to allow holiday traffic to go to and fro at the busiest time of the year.

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, but we have two advantages. First, we are spending money on doing some of this reconstruction. Secondly, we do not have the hon.

Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) saying that he wants all the money for some other mode of transport. We go for an effective balance.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Does the answer that my hon. Friend has just given refer to the replacement of central barriers as well as lane repairs? I believe that the lane rental procedure does not operate for central barrier repairs, which are therefore taking a great deal longer.

Mr. Bottomley: I should like to see reward and penalty extended to most aspects of work on roads, all the way from potholes through to major motorway reconstruction.

Channel Tunnel

11. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet received the report from the safety advisory committee about the construction of the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department has formally received two annual reports, but no reports on specific questions. Reports from the safety authority can be made to the Government. In general, they have been made and will continue to be made to the Intergovernmental Commission.

Mr. Taylor: Has my hon. Friend read the extraordinary report by Dr. Richard Haworth of the geological survey about the potential serious seismic risk which could affect the viability and safety of the Channel tunnel? Will he assure me that the safety advisory committee will examine the report? Secondly, will he assure us that the House will be told of the results of the inquiries?

Mr. Mitchell: I have not read the report, although I have read some accounts of it. The authority will be considering this matter. If there is anything untoward that arises from it, I shall ensure that it is reported to the House.

Mr. Tony Banks: Question No. 7 was not taken, but will the Minister tell me whether there will be any facilities for toads and hedgehogs to go down the Channel tunnel and cross the Channel safely?

Mr. Mitchell: There are 150 toad crossings on various roads in Britain. I cannot help the hon. Gentleman about the Channel tunnel, where special steps will be taken to ensure that rabid toads are not able to cross.

Mr. Adley: Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that in any discussions on safety within the advisory committee he will not be consulting Mr. James Sherwood or Sir Jeffrey Sterling?

Mr. Mitchell: I can assure my hon. Friend that the machinery for consultation on safety, which was set out in the Channel Tunnel Bill, which was subsequently approved as an Act in this place, is being adhered to closely.

Mr. Snape: Does the Minister recollect that way back in 1830—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was a Minister then. Does he recall that in that year Dr. Dionysus warned that anyone travelling through a tunnel at more than 30 mph would be asphyxiated? Will he assure the House that Dr. Dionysus is alive and well and is representing English nationalism in Southend, albeit through an imported view from Glasgow?

Mr. Mitchell: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. The belief that passengers passing through Brunel's tunnels to the west country would be made deaf were proved to be wrong, and fears about safety will be proved wrong in this instance.

12. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what amount of room the various statutory authorities will need reserved for their purposes in an international train using the Channel tunnel; and whether this will have any implications for rolling stock construction.

Mr. David Mitchell: Customs and Immigration authorities are currently discussing their requirements with British Rail. Any agreed on-train requirements will be taken into account in the specification for the Channel tunnel rolling stock.

Dr. Marek: Will the Minister give the House an assurance that there will be on-board inspection on all trains using the Channel tunnel? Will he confirm, or deny, unconfirmed reports that Customs and Excise and immigration authorities require the equivalent of two carriages for their various tea rooms, searching rooms and interview rooms? Will he persuade them to conduct inter-frontier controls in the way in which they take place between France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy and other continental countries, where their equivalents of Customs and Excise and immigration have about 35 places, not 150?

Mr. Mitchell: It is a requirement that there should be facilities for searches on trains travelling to the north of London, subject to agreement between British Rail and the authorities concerned. It has been our view until now that the appropriate way of proceeding with trains travelling south through Waterloo would be to provide the necessary facilities at Waterloo itself.

The United Kingdom concentrates its checking at its frontiers. We do not have identity cards, as most continental countries do, and we do not carry out internal spot checks as they do. For that reason, our demands are somewhat more than those of continental countries.

Mr. Watts: Will my hon. Friend explain to the Customs and Excise and immigration authorities that there is no need to make passengers disembark to be checked? If on-board checking works perfectly well on the continent, surely it can be made to work equally well for our purposes.

Mr. Mitchell: I note what my hon. Friend says.

Mrs. Dunwoody: If there is any real difficulty, will the Minister explain to Customs and Excise that one way in which it can facilitate movement is by creating customs posts elsewhere, particularly in the north-west? I suggest that Crewe would be an excellent site.

Mr. Mitchell: For freight, British Rail is in the process of consulting about bases in the north which would be suitable for inland clearance depots and for the collection of freight for shipment through the tunnel. I hope that the hon. Lady will take some encouragement from that.

Mr. Ashby: Will my hon. Friend explain to Customs and Excise that there is now a Common Market, that there is a Single European Act, which comes into effect in 1992, that it is time it woke up to that fact and started to behave as we expect to be treated in other countries, and that it should start to be sensible about these things?

Mr. Mitchell: Some controls will still be needed after 1992 to counter drug smuggling, terrorism and things of that sort.

16. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from British Rail on facilities for incoming travellers on trains using the Channel tunnel, or at the Waterloo station Channel tunnel station, or at terminals for Channel tunnel trains at Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham and Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The chairman of British Rail has written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State suggesting that the Government should consider the case for having on-train customs and immigration controls on those trains that will terminate at Waterloo, as well as arrangements as provided for in the Channel Tunnel Act on those trains serving destiations to the north of London. We are currently considering the matter in more detail with British Rail.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the Minister aware that when the NUR group of Labour Members were the guests of the chairman of British Rail he produced an unanswerable case for the contents of that letter? Is it not the fact that, on this issue, Transport Ministers are foreseeing, prudent, wise, imaginative and understand the problems, and that the stick in the mud Home Office is being very unreasonable, but the Home Office is the senior Department and carries more clout than the Department of Transport?

Mr. Mitchell: I cannot accept that description of the Home Office, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not expect me to. Having said that, I must say that I have noted the consensus in the House for more progress to be made more quickly on how on-train operations will be mounted.

British Rail (Privatisation)

17. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received concerning the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: Three letters. I am making it clear to correspondents that I have no plans at present, but I am considering long-term options for the future, and the possibilities of privatisation are not ruled out.

Mr. Bennett: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Will he bear in mind the recent privatisation of the Japanese state railway, which means that it now joins the other 11 private companies in Japan that are run by free enterprise? If that is going too far, will my hon. Friend consider establishing some form of track authority, so that we can at least have some private competition back on British Rail?

Mr. Mitchell: I am sure that experience in Japan will be taken into account, but there is a property feature, which is somewhat unique, in that case which may not be appropriate to British Rail. The possibility of having a track authority will be examined with British Rail if we decide to go down that line.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: What negotiations is the Minister having about the possible impact of privatisation on rural communities, which are still suffering from the cuts made by the Beeching axe? Is he aware that we will refuse to accept any further cuts?

Mr. Mitchell: There has not been any suggestion that the subsidy provided for the provincial network, including Scotland, should be at risk in any way. There have been substantial improvements in rural services, many of which now use modern, fast sprinter trains. When I travelled on some Scottish routes recently I found ScotRail's morale much higher than it was a few years ago and that the standard of service provided for the customer is much better. ScotRail is looking much better than it used to.

Mr. David Curry: Does my hon. Friend agree that the urgent need is for British Rail to get out and sell the privatisation of the Settle-Carlisle line? Does he also agree that one chap sitting in an office hoping that somebody will turn up, knock on the door and ask whether he happens to have a railway to sell is not a substantial marketing effort? Will my hon. Friend ensure that BR sets out to succeed, bearing in mind that BR is in a heads-we-win tails-you-lose situation, because if the line is not privatised there is a risk of its being closed?

Mr. Mitchell: I understand that British Rail intends to market and shortly to advertise for those interested to come forward. There are two potential ways forward. First, if the Secretary of State is minded to confirm his announcement, what I call in shorthand a "Mr. Big" might come along and develop the whole line commercially as a tourist project. Secondly, there might be some co-operative local effort to ensure the future operation of the line. If what I have characterised as a Mr. Big appears, it would be highly desirable for him to make his presence known as soon as possible, preferably within the next month.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Secretary of State suspect that the prospect of privatisation is the reason why new seats have been placed on British Rail's main line stations from London to the north-east? Is he aware that all the seats are red, except at Grantham, where they are blue? Will he explain that phenomenon? If it is because of the Prime Minister's connection with that town, does he not feel that her attachment to the railway system is so meagre that it does not deserve consideration?

Mr. Mitchell: The Prime Minister told me how much she enjoyed her journey on British Rail on one particular occasion. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has drawn attention to the improvement at stations along the east coast main line. I travelled along that line on Sunday and I was impressed by the smartening up of the stations and the general improvements.

Mr. Paice: When considering privatisation, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the tremendous success during the last few years of the Government's investment in British Rail, especially in the sprinter services and the electrification of lines? Will he also bear in mind that there is a need for a dramatic increase in investment and that perhaps only a private entity could provide the level of funds required?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is being a little unfair to the Government. I have approved every investment proposal that British Rail has put to me since 1983. It is true that I had to send one back because I was not satisfied with it, but after British Rail reworked the arrangements for the operation of the Royston to Cambridge line I approved the proposal. Therefore, no proposals from British Rail for investment have not been approved. I do not believe that the private sector could have provided better investment. Of course, it is only by sucking it that we shall find out.

18. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if there have been any discussions between his Department and British Rail staff concerning the possible sale of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have no plans for the privatisation of British Rail, but my Department is discussing long-term options with British Rail, including the possibilities of privatisation, and having regard to the need for systems of regulation and subsidy to loss-making services.

Mr. Allen: Is the Minister aware that there is anxiety in the midlands about the future of the east coast line and fears that it may be privatised now that it has been electrified, which may lead to the midland line becoming defunct? Will he reassure all the people in Leicester, Loughborough, Nottingham and elsewhere that the line to St. Pancras has a long-term future into the next century?

Mr. Mitchell: I have no reason to believe that British Rail has any plans to downgrade the midland main line. The hon. Gentleman will know that that line has had substantial investment in resignalling and that the current HST service runs as fast as the track will allow. Electrification would not make it any faster.

Mr. Gow: Although, in the past, many people may have believed that British Rail should remain in public ownership for all time, is my hon. Friend aware that the climate of opinion and the experience of recent years have transformed that belief? Is he further aware that many people would welcome the privatisation of British Rail? Will he bring forward a measure to that effect in the next Parliament?

Mr. Mitchell: As I said earlier, we are examining long-term options for British Rail. Those options include the possibility of privatisation, but I cannot give my hon. Friend the answer that he seeks until the options have been properly and thoroughly investigated, and I certainly could not do so this week.

Mr. Boyes: When considering the long-term future of British Rail, will the Minister join me in praising the efforts of the catering staff on trains? They are working in very difficult circumstances, often with a shortage of manpower, food and many things that customers want. The responsibility lies with the Government, because they are cutting back on the cash that enables British Rail to provide a proper service. It is unfair that the people at the sharp end are the catering staff, who are answerable for the Government, when they should not be.

Mr. Mitchell: I am happy to join the hon. Gentleman in referring to the improvements that have taken place, not only in British Rail catering, but through the introduction of private-sector trolley operations on many British Rail routes. Both give a good standard of service, substantially higher than it used to be. I made use of those services over the weekend and was much impressed by the facilities available at York station, on which I compliment British Rail.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Birmingham Pub Bombings

61. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General what action the Director of Public Prosecutions has taken following the completion of the investigations by the City of London police into contacts between the two principal Crown witnesses at the appeal of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings: and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): As a result of information that came to his attention the Director wrote on 30 March to the Commissioner of Police for the City of London to ask him to make inquiries into two matters connected with the appeal of William Power and others, heard at the Central Criminal Court last November and December.

The two matters were the disappearance of personal papers belonging to Dr. Skuse, one of the witnesses at the hearing, and the possibility that Dr. Skuse had discussed the case, before he had completed his evidence, with another witness who had already been released. The investigation into those matters has not revealed any evidence of criminal conduct.

A further allegation has been made, by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), that during the course of the appeal hearing Dr. Skuse had been in contact with Police Sergeant Ray Paton, who gave evidence at the original trial of those convicted of the bombings but was not a witness at the appeal hearing. The hon. Gentleman's immediate source for that allegation has only recently been disclosed to the police, and accordingly the allegation is still being investigated.

Mr. Mullin: Will the Attorney-General tell the House what explanation Dr. Skuse and Mr. Reade have offered for the two long telephone conversations that took place between them on the night of 17 November, very shortly after Dr. Skuse left the witness box? Does he agree that it is very unusual for the two principal Crown witnesses in a case of this magnitude to be liaising with each other?

The Attorney-General: I can answer the hon. Gentleman to this extent. I understand that Dr. Skuse has said that the only matter relevant to the trial that was discussed on those two occasions was the whereabouts of papers that he had mislaid and later believed to have been stolen. It is normal for a witness, before he has finished his evidence, to be directed not to discuss the case if any substantial matter is involved. The hon. Gentleman will have noted that Dr. Skuse had completed his evidence on 17 November and was not subsequently recalled. It was a few minutes before midnight on that day that he made the first of the two telephone calls.

Mr. Fraser: The Attorney-General says that there is no evidence of criminal conduct. If the telephone calls had been made to another witness, in breach of an injunction

by the court not to discuss the matter before giving evidence, that would, as I understand it, be contempt of court, and hence a matter that ought to be referred back to the Court of Appeal. Is that correct?

The Attorney-General: The question is hypothetical in the light of the facts that have been established. Whether anything said in breach of an order made by a court would constitute contempt would depend on all the circumstances of the case, including what was said and the stage that the proceedings in question had reached.

62. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Attorney-General what were the terms of reference given by the Director of Public Prosecutions to the City of London police when asking them to inquire into contacts between the two principal Crown witnesses at the recent appeal hearing of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 17 June 1988, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Smith: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell the House whether he is satisfied with the way in which those terms of reference have been discharged? Does he agree that it is a tragedy that the commendable vigour and energy that my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) has put into pursuing the truth in this matter do not appear to have been equalled by those charged with the responsibility for conducting those inquiries? Will he tell the House specifically why the police did not interview the ITN journalist, Chris Jameson, who reported having seen Dr. Skuse and Superintendent Reade together? Does not this whole matter still leave profoundly important questions unanswered? Should not the right hon. and learned Gentleman ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to publish a detailed account of the inquiries that have been undertaken and the reasons why no prosecutions have been made?

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions is satisfied with the way in which the investigations by the police into potentially criminal conduct have been carried out. I see no reason to dissent from the view formed by him. I reject the assertion that the inquiries have not been carried out with proper vigour. That is about as far as I need to go in answer to the question. I shall not dilate on the attitude of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South to the appeal hearing that was conducted over six or seven weeks in November of last year.

Family Courts

63. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Attorney-General what recent information he has about the cost of introducing an integrated family court.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I understand that the Lord Chancellor will shortly be receiving a copy of the report commissioned by the Family Courts Campaign examining the cost of a family court.

Mrs. Bottomley: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the needless costs of our present system is that it frequently exacerbates the human misery and difficulties associated with divorce and family break-up? Can he confirm that the preliminary findings of the report of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy for the Family Courts Campaign show that substantial savings are to be made overall by the introduction of an integrated family court—largely in terms of legal aid and matrimonial care orders? More than that, will my hon. and learned Friend say when his Department will come forward with its costings, to show that it is serious in its intention to move towards an integrated family court?

The Solicitor-General: As my hon. Friend knows, conciliation is currently the subject of research by Newcastle university, and studies are also in progress in the Home Office and the Lord Chancellor's Department into the requirements for staffing, resources and welfare expertise in relation to wardship and care proceedings at each court level. The report of the Cleveland inquiry is expected shortly and, following a study of that, the Government hope to come forward with further announcements on the development of a family court.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Is my understanding wrong? Did not the then Lord Chancellor, now Lord Havers, suggest last year that his Department hoped to produce conclusions on the prospective costs of the various options for a family court system? Was it not hoped that that report would be brought out by the beginning of the year? What has happened to that report, or has it already been produced?

The Solicitor-General: I think that my hon. Friend has not really had an opportunity to keep up with developments. The Lord Chancellor made it clear that the first priority was to get the child care law right, but a number of studies have been in progress and he hopes to come forward with further announcements on the development of the family court following the receipt and study of the Cleveland inquiry report.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

64. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Attorney-General for what reasons the Director of Public Prosecutions asked the Commissioner of the City of London police to establish an inquiry into contacts between the two principal Crown witnesses at the recent appeal by those found guilty of the Birmingham pub bombings.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer that I have given to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin).

Ms. Ruddock: I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for that answer. Further to the points made by my hon. Friends the Members for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), is the Attorney-General aware that the case is beginning to stain the entire fabric of our judicial system? Would it not be better for him to admit that British justice would be better served if he faced that fact and honestly admitted that something has gone seriously wrong in the Birmingham bombings case?

The Attorney-General: I have dealt with the questions that I have been asked, save that I did not answer part of the last question on why, in the first instance, inquiries were not made in relation to Police Sergeant Paton. The

reason is that the immediate source of that information to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South was disclosed to the police only recently.

On the latter part of the hon. Lady's question, my feeling is that the hon. Member for Sunderland, South might now usefully consider broadening his search for justice in this case by identifying those whom he claims he knows were responsible for the bombings and ensuring that steps can be taken to bring them to justice.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many of us supported the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) in the appeal procedure? It was the longest appeal in the history of this country. Is anything to be gained by trying to disparage and discredit British justice? No one had a fairer trial. No one had a fairer appeal. Is it not time that the Opposition looked at the IRA, instead of being its greatest supporters.

The Attorney-General: I regret efforts to undermine confidence in the outcome of an appeal that was conducted with all the qualities to which my hon. Friend referred.

66. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Attorney General what were the grounds for the Director of Public Prosecution's decision to ask the Commissioner of the City of London police for an inquiry into contacts between the two principal Crown witnesses at the recent appeal on the Birmingham pub bombings trial.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I have just given the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin).

Dr. Reid: With respect to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, another question was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) and he did not answer it. It relates to why the witness to alleged collusion between two witnesses during the trial was not interviewed by the police. Will he assure the House that that witness will be interviewed? Do not the amply-sized nostrils of the Attorney-General's office even now begin to detect a whiff of scandal associated with the case? Is this not the fourth police inquiry into various aspects of the case without due result? Will the Attorney-General ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to publish the details of the investigations, so that Parliament and the public can be satisfied that British justice has been done in this case?

The Attorney-General: There has been no witness—to use the hon. Gentleman's expression—to collusion between witnesses in this case. The immediate source of the information to which the hon. Member for Sunderland, South has drawn attention was identified recently. He has been away on holiday. He was interviewed today on his immediate return. That is why I said that investigations into the matter are continuing.

On the more general part of the question, I greatly deprecate broad and general assertions that a carefully conducted inquiry, on the reference of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to the Court of Appeal, has been characterised by qualities that have not resulted in justice being carried out. That is much to be deprecated. Attempts to undermine confidence in the administration of justice in this country are harmful.

On the remaining part of the question, it is not the practice of the Director of Public Prosecutions to publish the details of police investigations.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

74. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the value in current prices of Her Majesty's Government's overseas aid in 1979 and 1987.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): Gross public expenditure on overseas aid, at current prices, amounted to £939 million in 1979, and £1,283 million in 1987.

Mr. Lloyd: Will the Minister confirm that, in real terms, every year since 1979 the amount of aid has been below the 1979 level? Will he confirm that last year, at 0·28 per cent. of gross national product, the figure hit an all-time low? Why was that?

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Gentleman had tabled a different question asking about constant rather than current prices, I should have given him the figures that he wanted. As it happens, I am pleased to confirm that the aid programme is increasing in real terms by 3·4 per cent. this year.

Mr. Lester: Will my hon. Friend confirm that this week, in addition to those figures, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the structural facility of the IMF loan, in which Britain has given a sixth of the capital and has been the first to provide it? Will he further confirm that in the discussions of the Group of Seven conference any solution to Third world debt problems will be in addition to the aid programme?

Mr. Patten: First, there is a difference between the position now and that of the late 1970s. In those days we were a main beneficiary from the IMF, whereas nowadays we are a main contributor to its programmes to help the most indebted countries. I confirm that the costs of our debt initiative would represent a net addition to the aid programme. I am delighted that we appear to be making good progress in Toronto, although we shall want to see the programme implemented in full as soon as possible. Nevertheless, progress seems to be good.

Sir Russell Johnston: The Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a great deal of credit from both sides of the House for his initiative on this matter. Nevertheless, will the Minister assure us that this is not simply the Government facing up to writing off bad debt, but is an earnest of their intent to change the direction of their policy and to contribute more in future towards overseas aid than they have done to date?

Mr. Patten: As I have confirmed now and previously, the costs of the extremely important debt initiative of the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the most indebted countries in Africa will represent a net addition to the aid programme. We have made it clear again and again that there is no point in initiatives to deal with African debt unless one spends more money. The initiative that my right hon. Friend has launched, and for which he has deserved credit, covers re-scheduling and writing off aid loans, which we have already done to the tune of £260 million for 14 African countries. It also covers a cut in the interest rate

for countries pursuing sensible economic policies. I hope that we can reach agreement on an initiative along those lines at Toronto, or at the latest by the autumn.

Mr. Wells: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the increase in the overseas development budget that he has managed to get from the Government. May I hope that he will redouble his efforts this year to ensure that we maintain that progress? Can he tell us how much of that increased budget he has allocated to Africa? In particular, can he say what difficulties he is experiencing in disbursing that increased aid, especially to countries such as Ethiopia?

Mr. Patten: In answer to my hon. Friend's question before that on Ethiopia, I can tell him that we shall be spending most of our increase in aid this year on enhancing our programmes in Africa, particularly our support for structural adjustment and economic policy reform. Our major assistance to Ethiopia has been for the emergency, on which the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs has recently produced such a good report. In the past 18 months we have committed £45 million on that operation. I fear that the long-term weather forecasts suggest that we may have to spend a good deal more.

75. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to reach the Pearson target for overseas aid and expenditure.

Mr. Chris Patten: Her Majesty's Government accept in principle the United Nations' target for aid of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product, but, like previous Administrations, have not set a date for reaching it.

Mr. Anderson: It is not very good for those in desperate need that the Government accept the target in principle. Before the Government get lyrical about this year's so-called increase, had they not better accept that that increase is on a record low and that they inherited a proportion in excess of 0·5 per cent. of gross domestic product, and rising? When the Minister next meets the Prime Minister—he will recall his predecessor's complaint on leaving office that he never met her—will he gently remind her that when she next gives a sermon in Scotland, or elsewhere, she might remember that loving one's neighbour includes one's neighbour in the Third world?

Mr. Patten: On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I am bound to say that confidence in the ability of a Labour Government to run the economy in a way that would enable them to support a large aid programme is not widespread. I am not sure whether such confidence is widespread on the Opposition Benches. As for the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I am delighted that this year we shall be spending about £95 million more than the likely outturn of our aid programme last year.

Dame Peggy Fenner: As the direction and use of overseas aid are as valuable as the percentage, may I have my hon. Friend's assurance that part of it will be directed towards the burden shouldered by women in the developing countries?

Mr. Patten: I wholly endorse what my hon. Friend said. Not only must we do all that we can to ensure that we support the role of women in development, but we must continue to support the poorest countries through our aid programme. As my hon. Friend will know, last year's OECD report commended us for spending more than the average spent by OECD countries on helping the poorest.

79. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Countries' aid budget as a percentage of gross national product exceeds the figure of 0·28 per cent. in 1987, or in the latest available year.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1986, the latest year for which official estimates have been published, the net official development assistance of the following member countries of the OECD's development assistance committee represented more than 0·28 per cent. of their GNPs: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Miss Lestor: I thank the hon. Gentleman for the speed with which he read out the list of names, but I remind him that the figure of 0·28 per cent. is only slightly more than half the proportion of GNP spent on aid by the Labour Government, who left office in 1979. The Minister talks about the amount having been increased, but he omits to mention how that amount has fallen as a proportion of GNP. As Britain is now 15th or 16th in the list of OECD countries, and as the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer repeatedly stand at the Dispatch Box and say how well off the country is, could we not expect more of that wealth to go to the Third world? Instead, the amount is declining at a time when the countries that we visited are in desperate need.

Mr. Patten: I am delighted that our economy is growing strongly enough to enable us to increase our aid programme in real terms. I am also delighted that our economy is sufficiently strong for us to make such a major contribution to the IMF's enhanced structural adjustment facility and for us to have taken the lead in dealing with the debt problems of the poorest African countries. When the Labour party was in government we borrowed money from the IMF, rather than lent it money to give to others.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is unfortunate to measure aid in terms of percentage of GNP, because a British Government who produced a low GNP would inevitably create a higher figure?

Mr. Patten: I have no doubt that, without increasing the aid programme, if the Labour party were in government there would be an increase in the percentage of GNP devoted to aid, since the growth rate would fall rapidly.

Council Tenants (Purchase Advice)

3.33 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the need for Government advice to council tenants on the purchase of their houses in the light of the activity of property speculators."

Last Friday, Dundee's two daily newspapers—the *Courier and Advertiser* and the *Evening Telegraph and Post*—carried reports of an investigation which revealed growing concern that property speculators were attempting to take over the ownership of the homes of elderly council tenants in the city through manipulation of the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1984.

The manipulation takes the form of speculators approaching elderly tenants—in one case a woman in her eighties who was living alone—with what appears on the surface to be a generous offer. The speculator promises to give the tenant the cash needed to purchase his or her council home under the Act. The tenant is then told that he or she can stay in the house, rent free, for the remainder of his or her natural life. In return, the speculator is guaranteed ownership of the house when the tenant dies.

A number of serious and important issues are raised by this matter, most importantly the prospect of property speculators preying upon elderly people whom the speculators believe do not have long to live. There is also the question whether such vultures are acting within the law. If they are, what do the Government intend to do about it? There is also the question of the abuse of the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act, which was intended to provide massive public discounts to sitting tenants and not massive profits to property speculators at ratepayers' expense. Some of those speculators stand to pick up £22,000 council houses for as little as £7,000 by their methods. There is also the question of hard-pressed pensioners who have been on the receiving end of the recent rent and social security changes. They are particularly vulnerable to such sharp practice.

For those and for other reasons, Mr. Speaker, I beg you to recognise the urgency of the matter and to allow a debate so that the House can explore this issue fully and openly and resolve it in the interests of the people whom we were sent here to represent.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the need for Government advice to council tenants on the purchase of their houses in the light of the activity of property speculators."

I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman has said about this matter, but I regret that I do not consider that it can be appropriately raised under Standing Order No. 20. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House, but I hope that he will seek other ways of keeping the matter before the House.

Points of Order

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have often deprecated reflections upon the integrity of hon. Members. You were in the Chair, Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) referred, in an intervention, to Labour Members being among the biggest supporters of the IRA. We loathe the IRA, which is a murderous organisation. You will be aware that I, among others on the Labour Benches, have constantly attacked—and I will continue to do so—the terrorism of the IRA. Only last week we saw the sort of action in which the IRA indulges.

Would you be willing to accept, Mr. Speaker, that those of my hon. Friends who raise, rightly, what they believe to be a miscarriage of justice are in no way justifying the evil activities of the IRA? In those circumstances, is there not an obligation on the hon. Member for Selly Oak to withdraw immediately his accusation?

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My remark was prompted only by the sense of frustration when seven questions—obviously all done together—are tabled to draw attention to a matter that has been dealt with before. Does not the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) realise that the only people to whom such questions give comfort are members of the IRA? That is what I said, and that is what I meant.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not judge the comment of the hon. Member for Selly Oak as being a reflection upon the integrity of hon Members and it was not out of order. However, I fully accept that the language that we use in this House is very important and that no reflection upon the integrity of hon. Members should ever be made.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not believe that the hon. Member for Selly Oak can ascribe his frustration as being reason enough for suggesting that my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and other Labour Members were giving aid and succour to the IRA. The hon. Member for Selly Oak is a fairly reasonable bloke, even though he writes for *The Sun* from time to time. I believe that you, Mr. Speaker, should invite the hon. Gentleman to withdraw his slur.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If it is the intention of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) to seek to correct a miscarriage of justice and fight the IRA, is it not incumbent upon him to inform the Attorney-General of the names of those he believes to be guilty of the outrage?

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is becoming an extension of Question Time. I hope that the hon. Member for Selly Oak was not impugning the honour of any hon. Member. If he was giving us his opinion that anything that happened here gave comfort to the IRA, that is one thing; but if he was impugning the honour of another hon. Member I am sure that he would wish to withdraw his remark.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I recognise that there is passionate regard for the issues that we all support from time to time. If any hon. Member, especially the hon. Member for Sunderland, South, assumes that I thought that he was an IRA supporter, let me say that that was furthest from my mind.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not find the statement that has just been made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark)——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman has made a withdrawal. We cannot allow an extension of Question Time.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on another matter?

Mr. Dalyell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It raises the general issue of scrutiny of the Law Officers in the House. With changing circumstances, is it not deeply unsatisfactory that the Attorney-General should be scrutinised for only 10 minutes and the Solicitor-General for Scotland and the Lord Advocate not at all in their individual capacities? Is there any way in which the general issue of the scrutiny of the Law Officers can be looked at, because surely a period of 10 minutes is deeply unsatisfactory, despite the great efforts that you have made, Mr. Speaker, to allow a full 10 minutes, which is appreciated?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member knows that I am not responsible for the allocation of Question Time. He should raise the matter through the usual channels, where it might be corrected.

BILL PRESENTED

Food and Environment Protection Act (Amendment)

Dr. David Clark, supported by Mr. Brynmor John, Mr. Ron Davies, Dr. Norman A. Godman, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Ms. Joan Walley, Ms. Joan Ruddock and Mr. Martyn Jones, presented a Bill to amend section 1 of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 to provide that all amendments or variations of emergency orders must be laid and expire unless approved by Parliament before coming into force: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 July and to be printed. [Bill 179.]

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), further considered.

New clause 7

USE OF VIDEO RECORDINGS IN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS ABOUT SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST CHILDREN

'.—(1) When a person is charged on indictment with an offence involving the sexual abuse or molestation of a child under the age of 14, a video recording of an interview with that child shall be admissible as evidence; provided that the Judge presiding over the trial of such a person shall after consultation with Counsel appearing for the defence and the prosecution determine how much of such a video recording shall be shown to the jury.

(2) At the time the jury sees such a video recording the child who is alleged to have been the victim of such sexual abuse or molestation shall be present in a room in the vicinity of the court and shall be visible and audible to that jury by means of video-link; but the child himself shall not be able to see or hear the proceedings in the court.

(3) For the purpose of enabling the accused person or Counsel for the defence or prosecution to test the evidence contained in the video recording, a prescribed officer of the court shall be present in the room with the child and shall, at the direction of the Judge, relay to that child questions that either of those Counsel with the consent of the Judge wish to put to him.

(4) To enable these questions to be put to the child and his replies to be received within the hearing and vision of the jury, the prescribed officer shall be provided with—

(a) an aural receiver through which he can hear the questions that Counsel wish him to relay to the child, and

(b) such anatomical drawings or exhibits as the Judge shall order to be produced for the purpose of enabling the child to answer the questions put to him.

(5) For the purpose of this section a prescribed officer of the court shall be a qualified social worker, child psychologist or probation officer.'.—*[Sir Eldon Griffiths.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

3.41 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take new clause 21—*Admissibility of video recording as evidence*—

'.—(1) Video recordings shall be admissible as evidence in criminal proceedings concerning sexual offences against children from such day as the Secretary of State may appoint.

(2) The Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument make such regulations as he thinks necessary regarding the use of such recordings.'.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The clause is in my name and those of hon. Members from all parties on both sides of the House.

When we debated the Bill in the week before last, emotions were running high and they divided the House. This is another subject that is worthy of emotion, but I believe that those emotions unite the House.

I should like to start with something close to one of those warnings that are issued by cinema companies and by some television companies when they broadcast matter that is perhaps hard for sensitive ears to hear. I should like to demonstrate to the House just how extensive and evil is

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

the problem of child abuse. I shall relay to the House some specific cases that have been researched for me by women members of the police service in all parts of the country. I have to warn those of a squeamish disposition that some of the evidence is disturbing.

The first case that I want to draw to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister is of a three-year-old child. The stepfather had been touching the child, who was a bright little girl and able to talk, and when interviewed she spoke using graphic language about this man

"gobbling her and her gobbling him"

and

"pretending to f. . . her" .

She used very graphically the anatomical dolls that were provided to her for the purposes of the interview. That three-year-old child used the male doll on herself and lay down with the doll lying on top of her and put the doll's penis into her mouth.

The case was thoroughly investigated by the police with the aid of the social workers. Unfortunately, it could not be taken to court because of the age of the child and the lack of an admission by the offender.

The second case is of a little boy of four. The suspect was an adult male. The little boy graphically used the anatomical dolls and gave an explicit account of buggery. I remind the House that the child is four years of age. He inserted the male doll's penis into the boy doll's anus and he would not give up until it really went in. That four-year-old child spoke to the police officers about the male doll's penis not being as big as it should have been. This case, too, could not be brought to court because of the child's age.

The third case is of a three-year-old boy who was persistently sexually abused by his mother and a female neighbour. There was evidence of physical abuse by cigarette burns on his body and of sexual abuse by having objects pushed into his anus. The mother and the neighbour were interviewed and refused to make any admission, but the medical evidence clearly substantiated the case. No prosecution was possible because of the age of the child.

I have, from all parts of the country, hundreds of precise, researched, documented examples of the sexual abuse and even torture that is perpetrated on large numbers of our children, but little, if anything, can now be done about it because our laws and rules of evidence are inadequate.

I turn now to some of the comments on these types of case that have been made by practising police officers and social workers who investigated them and took part in the original interviews with these abused toddlers. In this House, we rightly maintain a cool, clinical detachment; we examine these matters as we should, and form a judgment on what is right under the law. I thoroughly approve of that. However, I am sure that the House will understand that the policewomen who have to deal with the cases immediately cannot perhaps look at them quite as coolly.

The first case, with the comment made on it, is that of a two-year-old child. Her parents are separated and her father had access at the weekends. While visiting her grandmother, this two-year-old baby was being bathed and said, "Don't touch me like daddy does." She then gave a graphic description of her father putting his fingers into her vagina and anus. The medical evidence substantiated that complaint. When interviewed, the father would not admit the act, and the Crown Prosecution Service could not prosecute because of the age of the child. The police officer's comment was:

"Video"—

a recording of the child being interviewed—

"would have shown the child describing very vividly what had occurred."

Under our rules that evidence cannot be placed before the court.

Another example with a police comment is of a three-year-old boy who was the subject of prolonged indecent assault by a 22-year-old female nanny who cared for him during the day. The assault included anal penetration. The medical evidence substantiated the allegation, but the CPS could not prosecute because of the lack of admission and the child's age. The police officer commented:

"Video would have shown child describing what had occurred, and child could not have known of words and details"

—he was only three—

"if not personally experienced assault."

I offer another example with a police comment. It concerns a four-year-old girl with gonorrhoea. She was admitted to hospital for tests because of a minor infection and gonorrhoea was duly diagnosed. The doctor stated that she had caught it through sexual transmission. Inquiries were made, persons were interviewed, and the cohabitee of the house in which the mother was living was discovered to have gonorrhoea. The child maintained that the cohabitee had put his penis beside her private parts —what the police describe as dry intercourse. The cohabitee was interviewed. There was no admission. There was only the medical evidence, and that was insufficient because the child was too young to testify. The comment of the police officer, in this case a senior officer, was that "video would have been superb."

I shall give another example with a comment. It concerns a 13-year-old girl. She was the subject of buggery and incest by her father, with the mother aiding and abetting the offences. The medical evidence corroborated this, but there was no admission and, although the parents had been charged by the police, the Crown Prosecution Service would not take the case to court because in the view of the service the 13-year-old could not have stood up to cross-examination. I shall quote precisely the comment of the officer in charge of the case. He said:

"Video recording would at least have ensured a prosecution."

I could provide hundreds, indeed thousands, of examples of cases in which the view of highly experienced police officers—women police officers for the most part —and of the social workers who had interviewed the children as quickly as possible after the offences were discovered is that without video evidence such cases cannot be brought to court. The abuser gets away with it; the children continue to suffer.

I shall conclude this part of my speech with one or two child abuse cases referred to a police station in one force area. The force area is Lancashire and the cases were referred to that one station during the months of January to March of this year. For reasons that the House will understand, I shall again obscure the details. During the first 12 weeks of this year this one police station had reported to it no fewer than 42 child abuse cases, and 14 of them led to court proceedings. Of the 28 cases that in the

end had to be marked, "No further action", the police are convinced that at least 17, of which 12 were very serious —11 of them committed against babies—could and would have been placed before the courts if video recordings had been admissible.

I conclude this evidence with a few other cases in the Lancashire force. A four-and-a-half-year-old boy was masturbated by his stepfather while he was bathing him and he made the child return the masturbation. The medical evidence showed severe bruising of the child's private parts. The child was too young to give evidence and the comment reads, "Video would have helped."

Lastly, I shall outline the case of a 12-year-old deaf and dumb girl. She had started to attend a special school but continued to live at home. She had not disclosed before what had been happening to her, but as soon as she was able to communicate she said that her father had been coming into her bedroom at night and touching her private parts. She was medically examined. She had bruising on the inside of her legs where force had been used. The Crown Prosecution Service would not prosecute because it said that the child, being deaf and dumb, would not make a suitable witness.

The police believe that, in this case, a video would have allowed the child to convey to a jury and a court of law what she conveyed to the police and social workers. Even though that child cannot communicate, being deaf and dumb, she can and does use sign language. It can be but a matter of opinion that if that child had been, with the aid of a video, brought before the court, notwithstanding that she was deaf and dumb, the judgment of the police would have been vindicated and a prosecution could have been brought and would quite likely have succeeded.

I have said more than enough about those cases. I also have cases from the Cheshire police, the Avon and Somerset police, the Greater Manchester police and the Metropolitan police; and so it goes on. We have a serious evil on our hands and the House has a duty to tackle it.

I acknowledge the Government's efforts in outlawing the possession of pornographic material involving children, in checking the criminal records of many of those people in jobs with regular access to children and in improving liaison between the police and the caring agencies in investigating cases of child abuse.

I very much welcome, on behalf of the police service, the clauses in the Bill that advance the cause of protecting innocent children. I welcome clause 31, which provides for children to give evidence via a live closed-circuit television link. Clause 33, which provides for the abolition of the requirement that the unsworn evidence of a child must be corroborated, is an important step forward. I welcome clause 44, which provides for an increase from two years to 10 years as the maximum prison term for the offence of child cruelty. I welcome clause 35 and its provision to enable the Attorney-General, with the leave of the Court of Appeal, to refer a case to it where the sentence appears to be unduly lenient. That could well be so in a case of child torture.

The Government cannot be criticised for failing to address themselves to this serious problem, but, unfortunately, all the advice available to me is that those welcome moves simply will not do the trick. The crux of the problem, as the police service sees it, is that, since the decision in the stated case of Regina *v.* Wallwork in 1958, it has been virtually impossible for a charge to be brought where the prosecution would have to rely—I stress the word "rely"—almost wholly on the evidence of a toddler. I quite understand and agree with the reasons that led that court to express its disapproval of bringing a child of tender years into court to give evidence, but I believe that, as the Police Federation says, the invention of video recording means that technology can now come to the aid of justice.

The Home Office, to its credit, has consulted about the possibility of admitting video recordings and has taken a keen interest, as has my hon. Friend the Minister of State, in the Bexley experiment, which I need not describe to the House. He has seen that experiment, as have other hon. Members, but what has been the outcome of the consultations and the experiment?

The response to the Home Office's consultative paper on that matter was overwhelmingly in favour of admitting video recordings. The police, the British Medical Association, the Council of Circuit Judges and 20 other respondents welcomed the proposal, and only three groups were against it. I can assure my hon. Friend that the chief superintendent in charge of the Bexley experiment believes intensely that the time has come to allow video recordings to be used, under proper safeguards, as the House will wish to ensure. It is worth quoting the conclusion of the Bexley experiment, which was this:

> "Further consideration should be given to the introduction of legislation to permit the criminal courts to accept video recorded interviews of children as evidence."

4 pm

I have spoken about the views of the police and will speak now about the views of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. I know that others more closely connected with it than I will want to refer to its comments. It says this:

> "Many perpetrators admit their guilt when confronted with the testimony of an early video recording of a child's evidence . . . The American experience suggests that this may occur in a very high proportion of cases . . . The video recording . . . could significantly minimise the accumulation of stress before the court hearing by reducing the number of times the child has to repeat her story . . . It may also lead to a reduction in the pressure on the child from other members of the family to change her evidence."

There is considerable experience of children retracting their evidence when subjected to prolonged family pressure. The NSPCC says:

> "The children come under great stress . . . to sustain such strain, to delay the opportunity to begin treatment and to put bad experiences behind the child until after being called to give live evidence is to inflict great cruelty, risk permanent psychological scarring, and hazard the reliability of the evidence. It is far preferable to video record the child's story in a properly structured way as near as possible to the time of the incident."

I agree with that.

Originally I tabled this new clause on behalf of the policewomen, but it now has the unanimous support of the Police Federation and, I believe, the entire police service. We agonised and worried over it for nearly two years. I accept that anybody not blessed with the advice of parliamentary draftsmen will not get it right. I have been a Minister and I know the difference between amateurs and professionals when it comes to drafting.

We have sought to achieve three aims. The first is to safeguard the rights of the accused. No man should be sentenced unless he can, through his counsel, test the evidence brought against him. I believe that my new clause achieves that. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, I

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

want to safeguard the child against the traumas of court appearances and cross-examination and the possibility of division being struck between what he said at one stage and what he said at another. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister and in particular my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary feel deeply about that. It is to their credit that they do so. Thirdly, the new clause is structured to allow justice to be done and to bring evil men and women to court.

Stage one of the process that I now propose is that, when a person is charged on indictment with an offence involving sexual abuse or molestation of a young child, a video recording of that child made as soon as possible after the event is discovered should be admissible as evidence, but it should not be admissible as evidence raw. Rather, the judge, the defence counsel and the prosecuting counsel in chambers should examine the video and determine what parts of it are extraneous and might involve other people, and what parts could properly be brought before the court. The judgment that has been made available to me is that, confronted with that evidence, many a defence counsel would change his client's plea to guilty, and the case would not need to go to the courts. Certainly that has been the experience of many of the states in America. That is the first stage of the judge and two counsel looking at the video and deciding which parts of it should go forward.

Lest anyone should imagine that this is unprecedented, let me remind the House that some years ago we insisted that all police interrogations should be audio recorded. I resisted that move and I was wrong to do so. Now that all police interrogations are audio recorded, experience has shown that extraneous matter thrown into those interrogations by some old lag who will take the opportunity of aspersing a Minister or someone like that must be removed. It is removed by agreement beween defence and prosecution, with the concurrence of the judge. I propose exactly the same procedure in respect of video recordings.

If the defence decided not to admit the offence and insisted that the case should go forward, as is the right of any accused, we have provided, in the remainder of the new clause, the means whereby a test can be made of the evidence. The jury would be able to see the video recording. The child would be in an adjoining room with one-way see-through glass so that the jury could see the child but the child would not be exposed to the panoply of the court. This, I can assure the House, is technically very easy to arrange. It is done all the time.

It would then be possible for the defence, with the consent of the judge, to have questions put to that child, transmitted by a prescribed officer of the court, probably a social worker, with whom the child felt comfortable, and the jury could see those questions being put to the child. That would safeguard the proper interests of the accused. Above all, we should be dealing with justice.

Let me now make a few comments on some of the arguments addused by my hon. Friend the Minister in his resistance to this new clause in the correspondence that he has courteously exchanged with me and the Police Federation. He said that he is not persuaded that material that has been

"video recorded for investigative purposes should be routinely admissible."

We are talking not about it being routinely admissible, but about it being made available to the judge and the two counsel in chambers so that they may determine what shall or shall not be brought forward. It is our contention that this would lead to a number of guilty pleas.

Secondly, my hon. Friend said something that I find hard to swallow. He feels that experienced prosecutors would find it more difficult to establish a rapport with the child if they cannot take the child through the entire story. He is a curiously experienced prosecutor if he is unable to do that. In any case, if he is the prosecutor, he would have the inestimable benefit of that best evidence, that fresh evidence, of the video recording. We have provided the interlocutor precisely to enable the rapport with the child to be maintained. That will be someone with whom the child is comfortable and whom it trusts. He or she will be able to put the questions to the child in a manner and in language that will not disorient or disturb it under the direction of the judge.

At the heart of my hon. Friend's objection and that of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is the feeling that pressure on the child will be increased if small inconsistencies can be picked out between the child's video account, in the earlier stages, and the later account in court. That problem exists anyway. The child is, in any event, confronted with the original witness statement, which is the basis of the prosecution and such evidence as it is, one way or another, required to give in the court. The opportunity for the defence to divide the child's testament between what it said originally in a written statement and what it says in court is available to it in any event. The only difference is that a video recording would be virtually an unarguable account of events. It would be made not long after the commission of the crime and it would be subject to the judgment of the court, which means the judge and prosecuting counsel. None of the arguments of my hon. Friend is convincing to me.

The House has been patient in listening to the log of appalling events that I have outlined. If the new clause is defective—probably it is—I shall be happy to withdraw it in favour of new clause 21, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims). New clause 21 is shorter and simpler and is an enabling provision. I should be prepared to withdraw new clause 7 in favour of any new clause or amendment that my hon. Friend the Minister might with to introduce.

The Bill is passing through the House and we have a mischief in our land with which we must deal. Let the Government at least take powers within the Bill to introduce a system of the sort that I have outlined as, when or if the Home Secretary, after experiment, examination and consideration of the technicalities and the costs, is satisfied that it is ready. There is precedent for that. I resisted the introduction of audio recordings of police interrogations and the House insisted upon it. The Government reluctantly accepted the idea but said that they were not ready at that time to introduce such a system. They said, "We are not yet ready. We shall have to ascertain precisely how the system will operate." Six experiments were conducted throughout the country to ensure that audio recordings could be made fairly, objectively and efficiently. The power to introduce audio recordings was included in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

I ask the Minister to insert in the Bill the power to allow video recordings to be admissible as and when he and my

right hon. Friend the Home Secretary are satisfied that such recordings can be made efficiently and well. I ask for this for innocent children, not on behalf of the NSPCC, which wants it, not on behalf of circuit judges, not on behalf of the media, which are behind it, and not as a response to the great mass of public opinion. We owe it to children. I ask the Government to back the sense, if not the language, of the new clause.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): The House will be aware that I have the privilege of sitting on the central executive committee of the NSPCC, which warmly supports the proposal that video recordings should be accepted in the courts in child sexual abuse cases. If I do not develop the argument at great length, it is because my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has already done so extremely effectively. The relative brevity of what I have to say should not be taken as a reflection of the strength of feeling within society, nor of my personal views on the issue.

The Government have already recognised how difficult it is for a child to give evidence in court. The Bill establishes the principle of a video link, which we shall be discussing later. Surely the next logical step from that is to recognise the value of a video recording of an interview that is made soon after the offence has come to light.

4.15 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds has given a number of dramatic examples. The problem is that we do not know the extent of child sexual abuse. We suspect that many cases are not reported. Father, stepfather, grandfather, uncle and sometimes even auntie involves the child in some sort of sexual activity and then says, "This is our secret." That is so often how it remains. It is extraordinary to note the number of adults who have, so to speak, surfaced and told of how they experienced child sexual abuse when they were young. This has happened in recent months since child sexual abuse has become much more widely discussed.

Another reason for our lack of knowledge is the lack of a national register of the cases that come to light. A more limited register is kept by the NSPCC, which last week released some figures. The figures revealed that the number of cases of child sexual abuse that were added to its register in 1987 increased over 1986 by 21 per cent. The society estimates a national figure of about 7,000 cases a year. Whatever the figures and whatever the extent of the problem, once the offence—or offences; more often than not, it is a long story of offences—is committed the damage has been done. To what extent can the damage be repaired? That depends upon others apart from the court. Surely it is incumbent upon our society that we do all that we can to prevent a repetition of the offence once it has come to light. That will be achieved by the conviction of the offender and by a sentence that will preclude, or at least lessen, the chances of him reoffending.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds said, many suspected offenders are not even charged, let alone convicted, because the prosecution is unable to proceed without the most vital evidence, which is that of the child. There may be several reasons for this. A child's memory is naturally short and it may be as long as a year before the case comes to court. In the intervening period the child may be subjected to many family influences that are designed to persuade it to change its story. Even if that is not the case, the child will probably have been treated by a social worker or someone of that sort, who will try to get the child to forget the experience to which it has been subjected. However, when several months have passed, it may be asked in court to remember certain incidents. However strong the suspicion or case against the person responsible for abuse of a child, the parents of the child may be unwilling to subject it to a court hearing. That is entirely understandable.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Is that a valid argument? Under the new clause the defendant would be entitled to cross-examine the child in any event. If for some reason the child is not willing to give evidence, the prosecution will be in difficulties in any event. Is my hon. Friend aware that, in cross-examination, the cross-examining counsel does not pick questions out of the air? One has to take witnesses, especially child witnesses, through a sequence of events. The comment that it would be less traumatic for the child if the proposals in the new clause were accepted does not hold water and I ask my hon. Friend to reflect on whether they are bogus. In cross-examination the child will be taken all the way through the allegations.

Mr. Sims: I do not accept that it is necessary to do that, especially if there is a video recording. I accept that the ability to cross-examine may have to be available, and I shall come to that. That does not alter my argument that in the present circumstances parents are understandably reluctant to allow a child to appear before the courts. It is not difficult to imagine what the effect on the child is of the court setting, let alone being taken, as my hon. Friend suggested, in detail through the incidents which he or she has found so distressing. At the moment, after an offence has come to light, the child can be interviewed by a police officer and a written statement, which is available to the court, made. It is now possible for tape recorded material to be available to the court, so why not a video recording?

The problem with a written statement was mentioned in the Bexley experiment, which reported:

> "Traditional methods of police interviewing, including the taking of a written statement, presented obvious difficulties. Even where the interviewer was able to develop sufficient rapport with a child to discover the nature of the offence, transposing the child's words into an acceptable form of written statement had evidential shortcomings, particularly where the child's vocabulary did not extend to recognised adult terminology. Police officers were often accused by defence lawyers of putting words into the child's mouth and interpreting the child's language incorrectly."

That is the problem with written evidence. The great advantage of the video recording is that it captures the words the child uses and the gestures, expressions and the spontaneity with which he or she speaks. It enables the child to demonstrate what happened by using dolls far more effectively than is the case with words. Once a video has been done, it can be shown to others involved in the case who would otherwise have to subject the child to a series of similar interviews.

It is argued that if a video is accepted as evidence, the child will have to be available for cross-examination. I accept that, but that is already the case with a written statement. I suggest, however, that a video would be far more difficult to challenge. The evidence from the United States is that a high proportion of offenders, when faced in

[Mr. Sims]

the early stages of an investigation with a video which they know can be produced in court, change their plea, thus avoiding the need for a trial.

Using videos in court is now being introduced in Canada. Videos are already used here by the NSPCC, for example, other than for court cases. I have had an opportunity to see a couple of them. We have also had the Bexley experiment. It was interesting and enabled the police and social services to work together. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has seen the Bexley experiment in action as well—I had the chance to see a video taken during an interview.

The NSPCC and Bexley experiment videos have been extremely valuable for those trying to discover more detail about a case and pursuing it, but they cannot be used to secure a conviction. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds said, even though a case may be strong, there cannot be a conviction because a child is unable to give evidence.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds has set out in new clause 7 a detailed way in which the proposal could be implemented. He has tried to meet some of the legal and practical objections. I congratulate him and the Police Federation on their ingenuity, but I suspect that, when my hon. Friend the Minister replies, he will be able to draw attention to some technical imperfections. That is why I have tabled new clause 21, which is simply an enabling clause. It establishes that video recordings can be admissible as evidence, and it enables the Secretary of State to make relevant regulations.

I suggest that my new clause offers the way for the Government to accept the principle while leaving them free to decide on the details of how videos should be made and used. Having had an opportunity to study the subject, and having visited the Bexley experiment and discussed it with officers, I realise that there are important details to be considered.

There is the legal issue of how far leading questions are acceptable and how much of the video is acceptable. The judge can decide that having viewed the video beforehand. There are practical issues such as how many microphones there should be. It is not possible to keep a child still while giving an interview, and it is all very well to hide the microphone in a pot of flowers on a table, but the child may prefer to lie on the floor.

It is probably a good thing to have more than one camera. One of the difficulties which emerged in the Bexley experiment is that a child often turns his or her back on the camera or it is unclear what the child did with the dolls to demonstrate the alleged offence. It is not always possible to see clearly the expression on the child's face. The camera does not necessarily cover the whole room, so it can be suggested that there is somebody outside the camera's view who is indicating the answers that the child is required to give.

The ideal arrangement would be a fish-eye camera which covers the whole room and a separate camera, perhaps operated behind a one-way mirror, which is directed at the child's face and follows him or her. Both pictures could be shown on the screen. One could be superimposed or there could be a split screen.

All of these matters can be considered at leisure so that, when regulations are drawn up, they cover every eventuality. All that is needed at present is that the Secretary of State should take the necessary powers. I urge him to do so by accepting my new clause.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): Yet again I rise to speak on behalf of young children who are or have been subjected to sexual abuse and violence, of adults who have been scarred by the perverted desire of some men —and some women—to abuse small children, and of the families who suffer from the effects of these cruel abuses, and to ask that the House supports a change in the law which I and many informed people believe would redress the balance in favour of innocent children and those who have been wrongfully accused whose cases, because of our restrictive laws, are never brought to court.

We should consider what the Bill provides to make it easier for young children to give evidence in court. It provides for the giving of evidence by live video link. At the moment, children must tell their stories in open court in the presence of the defendent. They often break down in tears or are struck dumb with fright. The video link would enable the child to give evidence from another room in the court. The court would be able to see the child, but the child would be able to see only the person who was speaking to him or her from the court.

The Bill also abolishes the law on corroboration. At present, no court may convict on a young child's evidence, or even on the evidence of several young children who give the same story, unless it is corroborated by a person of an age that the court thinks makes that person capable of giving sworn evidence. By its very nature, sexual abuse often takes place in secret between a child and the perpetrator. The abolition of this rule is long overdue and will enable the child's evidence to be heard and considered by the court. The Government must be congratulated on making some important changes, but they should be seen as only small steps in the overall need to redress the balance and to protect the innocent.

What else needs to be done? First, let us consider the case for the admission of video recordings as evidence. It seems obvious that a child's evidence is best obtained as soon as possible after the event. It would be a distinct advantage for a court to be able to see and to hear the child's first full coherent attempt to explain what he or she had been subjected to, with every hesitation, gesture and tone of voice safely recorded. Surely such evidence is as important in arriving at the truth as that given many months later by a child in open court, who may have forgotten some details or been influenced by suggestions. I am not one of those who believe that many children easily forget what has been done to them. I believe that they find it very hard indeed to forget.

It has been suggested that a video recording would be detrimental to and increase the stress on a child. What is the reasoning behind that? The supposition is that it will be necessary for a number of tapes to be made—one for evidence, one for the social worker and one for the psychiatrist—thus causing the child to retell her story a number of times. In fact, that objection is unrealistic, because the child is already questioned repeatedly by the police, social workers, doctors, lawyers and so on.

Need there be a number of tapes? Why does the Minister assume that there must be? Could not a tape be made that shows the child being put at ease and questions

being asked by properly trained people who are acceptable to the court and aware of the use that will be made of the tape?

4.30 pm

Many people may wonder whether a training programme has been considered. It has, and much work has been done by social workers, police and doctors working together. A training programme has been introduced that includes self awareness in attitudes to joint working, sexual abuse, procedural and legal aspects of child sexual abuse and the technical skills of interviewing. Most of those who have attended that training programme feel strongly that a joint investigative approach reduces the trauma for a child.

Is it not feasible for a judge, in conjunction with the prosecution and defence, and having seen the whole tape, to determine how much of the video recording should be shown to the jury as admissible evidence, but with the added safeguard that an unedited tape could be available to the prosecution, the defence and the judge?

If a video tape is unclear it should be banned, but it is not an answer to ban all tapes including those done fairly. It is thought by some that a video recording would remove the right of the defence to cross-examine the child. Why should they think that? Is it that they do not realise that the video recording is only part of the evidence presented to the court and is not the whole case? Of course, the defence must maintain its right, under the direction of the judge, to cross-examine a witness. How could the interests of justice be served if that were not so? After all, it is justice that so many hon. Members on both sides of the House want, for both the child and the accused.

It is said by some, including the Minister, that evidence given on a video recording could conflict in some details with the evidence given in court and therefore cause additional stress to the child while being cross-examined. If that is so, we must ask ourselves what is more stressful to the child. At present, she must repeat in court, from memory and without help, the story that she originally told to the police months earlier. The proposal is to use the original video statement in the child's own words, admissible to the court as part of the prosecution evidence and on which the child could be cross-examined. That is surely a fuller and more reliable statement than that which the child manages to utter in the witness box.

People may be worried that the child giving live evidence could be cross-examined on discrepancies between what she said in court and what she said on a tape, but that is an evil already with us under the existing rules of evidence. Those who fear the planting of evidence by questioning on an uncontrolled video should consider whether a nine months' delay in the case coming to court should be a greater cause of concern because of the opportunities to plant evidence in that child's mind. Is not a video recording taken as soon as possible after the event, in a manner admissible to the court, a better protection for both the child and the accused? Surely it must be. Is it not more satisfactory, in seeking the truth, that a judge should be able to decide whether undue pressure was put on a child when she first told her story? Surely it must be. That is what a video recording will achieve.

There has been much support for a change in the law. Of those who responded to the Home Office consultation paper issued in May 1987, only one organisation was positively against the proposals, and one person felt unable to comment. The remainder were in favour. They included Baroness Lane-Fox, of the all-party children's group, John Spencer, tutor in law at Selwyn college, Cambridge, the British Medical Association, Cambridgeshire social services, the London Boroughs Association, the Council of Her Majesty's Circuit Judges, the Justices' Clerks Society, the Criminal Bar Association, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Children's Legal Centre, Dr. Barnardo's, the West Yorkshire police authority, the National Children's Home, Rotherham metropolitan council, the Inner-London Juvenile Courts Panel, the NSPCC, the National Council of Women of Great Britain, the National Children's Bureau, the Police Federation, the Association of Educational Psychologists, the British Psychological Society, the Association of County Councils, the Health Visitors Association, the Greater Manchester police authority, the British Paediatric Association, Somerset county council, the Metropolitan police and the London hospitals' college consultant in child and adolescent psychiatry. That is a great cross-section of people, but in fact many more individuals support the proposals.

I want to deal with a child having questions put through a third person during cross-examination through a video link. Let us consider a six-year-old child whose private parts are covered in sexual warts. Her mother's brother, whom the child has alleged buggered her on several occasions while baby sitting, is also found to have the same type of sexual warts on his private parts. There is clear evidence that the mother's brother is molesting the child. The accused is aware of how frightened the child is of him, and also that unless he admits the offence there is no chance of the case being brought to court. Therefore, he does not admit the offence. The little girl is taken from her family and put into care, but the man is still at large, free to molest and infect other children.

Where is the sense in a law that allows that to happen? Would it not be better to have a video recording of the child being gently questioned? It is to be hoped that the accused, having been shown the video and knowing that it would be acceptable to the court, would admit the offence, thus allowing treatment for him and giving the innocent child the opportunity to return to her home and family.

In Texas, video recordings of children's evidence have been shown to the accused, of whom 221 out of 235 have consequently admitted the offence, thus saving the child any further stress. The American *Bar Association Journal*, volume 70, contains a report from the Minneapolis police stating that during the first two years of video tape interviews of child abuse cases it never lost a case and no child had to be called by the defence to testify. In the third year, 60 out of 75 defendants in cases of child abuse pleaded guilty as soon as they saw videos of the interviews.

If the young child was nevertheless brought to court, would it not make sense to make some provision for questioning to be put through a third person by video link, at the discretion of the judge, if the judge found it difficult to put the questions to the child himself? I accept that the method proposed for third-party questioning in the new clause is not necessarily the best, but it nevertheless raises the need for consideration to be given to the matter.

It is of course necessary to consider the question of competency. At present, under the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, a child must understand the duty of speaking the truth as interpreted in Wallwork (1958) 42

[Mrs. Llin Golding]

Criminal Appeal Reports. That precludes the court from hearing any child of five or under and makes it very difficult to accept the evidence of a child under eight. That abstract idea of duty to speak the truth can, and does, present problems to a child who is old enough to describe her experiences, but too young to grasp a concept such as duty.

It is time that we moved on from 1933 and scrapped the competency requirement. In Scotland the courts are able to listen to children down to the age of three. Why should that not apply in England and Wales as well? If the Government cannot bring themselves to go as far as that, the wording should be altered to make it easier for young children to be listened to. There is no evidence to support the idea that they are less capable of telling the truth than adults. Many adults are very good liars and will happily lie their heads off for their own ends, but no one ever suggests that they should not be allowed to give evidence. Why should the law make it more difficult for children?

The law as it stands cannot be said to give justice to young children. No one knows better than the child who has been beaten, starved or sexually abused what was done to him, and by whom. All that my hon. Friends and I ask is that young children should have the chance to be listened to. We should make provision in the Bill to enable them to give their evidence, and to let the judge and jury decide on the guilt or innocence of the accused by hearing all the evidence. Surely that is what justice is about, and I beg the Minister for the sake of all our children to make provision for it in the Bill.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I wish to speak only briefly on this important debate.

I followed the arguments presented by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding). It would indeed be difficult to find anyone who opposed the principle of the new clause. I also listened carefully to what was said by my hon. Friends the Members for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims). My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst and I are both magistrates. We understand that this is a complicated issue, and that we may do immense damage and defeat the very object that we are trying to secure if we are not careful. Immediately attractive though this idea is, I have serious doubts about it.

There is a danger that what is being proposed may end up making things much harder for the child victim rather than improving his lot, which I know is very much on hon. Members' minds today. First, the use of the new technology in video recordings is still very much in its infancy, and the technology itself is changing almost by the month. We are contemplating a change in the law when the technology is not yet perfected. Secondly, associated with the change in technology is the need to ensure that the police are trained in its use, which is a very skilled technique. I very much doubt whether the criminal investigation departments of the 43 police forces in England and Wales will easily be able to absorb the changes that the new clause seeks to make.

I believe that the way forward is as proposed by the Government, and that the proposal to enable young children to give evidence in an anteroom of the Crown court by live television link, rather than in the court room itself, is a major and welcome advance. I am sure that the whole House will endorse that.

4.45 pm

The cardinal principle in proceedings before a jury in the Crown court is that those who seek to secure the prosecution must produce the evidence. I see no alternative, in certain circumstances, to the child being available to answer questions in the way that we now understand the jury system and Crown court procedure to operate. I do not see how that can be avoided.

The Bexley experiment has been valuable. It has enabled the police and the social services department to work closely with others concerned for the welfare of the child. An interview thus obtained is probably natural, and suits both the needs and convenience of the variety of practitioners who have different parts to play in the proceedings and, in particular, the welfare of the child. If we change the nature of the interview, there is a danger that it will become more formal, because those recording it are bound to have in the back of their minds the knowledge that it could well be used in criminal proceedings before a Crown court jury. If it becomes more formal—as the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme has suggested—the whole purpose of the interview will be damaged, and that cannot be what we intend in wishing to improve the welfare of child victims.

Such an interview would probably have to be edited to remove the part that would not be admissible as evidence before a jury. There would then be a problem over the editing. Learned counsel for the defence would be bound to say, "The bit that is missing is the vital bit that would help to secure the acquittal of my client." That conflict lies at the heart of the problem, and I do not see how it can be avoided.

For all those reasons, I feel that my hon. Friend the Minister should think very carefully before agreeing to accept the new clause.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Many of us were here late on Thursday night to follow a tantalising and fascinating debate, which I watched from the Strangers' Gallery. That was an extraordinary experience. This debate, while it may be calmer, is none the less extremely important.

We are dealing with one of those problems and scourges of our time which may be ineradicable but which preoccupy us all. Having lived through the events in Cleveland last year, my knowledge and experience come from personal observation. At an early stage I set for myself a context in which to examine such issues. First, we had to prosecute the perpetrator; secondly, we had to protect the child; thirdly, we had to protect the innocent family. Those principles, not necessarily in that order, should be the goals and priorities of people considering the issues of child care law.

This is a timely debate because, as the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) has said, the NSPCC issued its figures a few days ago. It is also a year ago this week that the Cleveland child abuse crisis broke across the nation, and in two or three weeks time we shall obtain from Lord Justice Butler-Sloss a report which, I am sure, is awaited with great interest by hon. Members on both sides of the House and by the public.

I am irritated by the number of false prophets who tell us what is in that report when it has hardly reached the Minister's desk. The only information to which I am privy is that it is 700 pages long in typescript; no doubt its size will be reduced in print. As far as I know, there are no leaks of the report. We are looking forward to the recommendations, which will be helpful to the Government. The child care reform White Paper issued in January 1987 provides further guidance. It is my earnest hope that the Government will produce a child care law incorporating the recommendations of Lord Justice Butler-Sloss and the recommendations and conclusions of the White Paper. I am grateful to Lord Justice Butler-Sloss for deciding to return to Cleveland to tell us her conclusions about what happened in 1987 and, it is to be hoped, how we may avoid a recurrence of those appalling events.

As I said at the time, what happened in Cleveland was about a particular diagnosis of reflex anal dilatation and not about the issues of child abuse referred to by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), who gave the House a series of categorical cases in chronological order to show what child abuse is about. In Cleveland, we were dealing with a controversial diagnosis, how that diagnosis was handled and what conclusions might be drawn from that. We await the report.

In the meantime we are discussing the new clauses. It may help if I refer to some of the Cleveland families' experiences. During the long saga that afflicted both children and parents there were video sessions with children. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds was referring to the video that could be used in criminal proceedings. In Cleveland, we were considering videos that would be used in civil proceedings in giving evidence before the High Court. Children and social workers were confronted with a dilemma that was different from the one to which the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds referred. In the cases to which he referred, there was clear evidence of sexual abuse that the child had reported and the problem was how to collate it—whether on the basis of a police statement as at present or on the basis of a video that could be used before a court. In Cleveland, we had an extraordinary situation in which a medical diagnosis had been made and social workers were then called to obtain a disclosure from the child. That was extraordinarily difficult if, as happened in many cases that ended up before the High Court, the children were found not to have been sexually abused at all.

One child of seven had about seven interviews, four of which were general interviews with a policewoman, one was with a consultant paediatrician and two involved non-directive play therapy. Three video recordings were made, of which two survived. A social worker destroyed the tapes rather than have them shown to a judge in a court. One can see how delicate and sensitive an issue video evidence is and how it must be treated with the utmost caution.

On one of the videos a social worker was seen to suggest to a child who refused to make a disclosure that what happened in her family home might have happened to her while she was asleep. The social worker said:

"You are going to be with foster parents for quite a while, OK, you know that, don't you? Whatever happens, you have got to be with foster parents. Even if they do not tell us, we are not going to let you go back. I'm going to fight really hard for you not to go back home, OK?"

One can imagine the feelings of a seven-year-old child in the world of video evidence with sometimes a police officer present and sometimes not, but with a social worker trying to make her feel at home. Even so the child felt terribly alone and isolated and insisted that she had not been abused by anyone. A girl who was described as having a sunny disposition became sullen and nervous as time passed. In a civil sense, the issue in Cleveland was who had control over the family—was it the social services or the doctors, or did control lie within the family unit?

We have to disentangle the cases of clear sexual abuse that the hon. Members for Bury St. Edmunds and for Chislehurst and my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) described from those civil cases where the child categorically refuses to say that he has been interfered with, in which no evidence goes to court and the family is cleared.

In another case in Cleveland, a boy was interviewed four times and a girl three times. There were several interviews before the first video recording was made—not counting the police interviews. There was an unwitnessed and unrecorded interview with a doctor and there were interviews with a child psychiatrist and a social worker. All of those took place before the child was led into the room where the video recording was to take place. One must ask what kind of pressure may be put on a child before he gets into the video room and before the video camera begins to record. What will a defence counsel make of that in court?

The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), who has experience as a magistrate, referred to those difficulties. It is incumbent upon a counsel to seek to elicit all the evidence in the interests of the accused whom he is defending. In Cleveland, there was a background of different interviews before the child entered the room in which the recording was to be made. There were cases in Cleveland when, regrettably, after six months of disclosure sessions a child would finally ask, "If I say my father did it, can I now go home?" That was recorded on the video.

Most of the video evidence in Cleveland never saw the light of day in a court of law; once counsel for Cleveland county council saw the evidence, it was ruled inadmissible and it was withdrawn. One of the social services representatives in the cases that went before the court suggested that those cases would have been won if all the evidence had been presented, but the evidence could not be presented because it was inadmissible. There had been leading and menacing questions and the children had been threatened so that the whole exercise was inadmissible as evidence.

In dealing with children's evidence, we need to understand its significance in a case wholly unrelated to the events in Cleveland. Three children had been sexually abused. When they disclosed this to their teacher at school they named the wrong perpetrator—their uncle rather than their stepfather. They did not want their stepfather to be removed from the family home. One child's evidence was very clear and the description of what had happened could not be refuted, but the child had given the wrong name. The man was arrested because the evidence was clear and only later, when the child was threatened with further abuse by the real perpetrator, did he say who had really committed the abuse. The consequences were dramatic. The man hanged himself in Durham gaol. That was the terrible tragic consequence of being wrongfully named by the child, who was seeking to protect his stepfather.

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

When we raise the emotive tone of our discussions of child abuse and consider the human drama experienced by the child, we must also consider the human drama of the parents, who may be entirely innocent but whose family life has come under serious attack.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North referred also to technology. It may be that technology and the law are outstripping the skills of those who might carry out video recordings. The police and some social workers have such skills, but I notice that the new clause refers to qualified social workers. In Cleveland, there was a lack of skill, common sense, and proper approach to family life and children. There must be some doubt about whether the necessary skills exist at the moment.

5 pm

It is rather nonchalant of me—I did not examine the Bill during all its stages—to make recommendations to the Government on how to handle the new clauses. I am grateful to my learned Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) for joining us. I read with interest his speeches on these matters in Committee. He urged caution. I have often referred to the Cleveland child abuse crisis in relation to the Salem witch-hunts of 1692, when innocent people were obliged not only to defend their innocence but to prove it before the people of Salem. Nineteen members of the Salem community were hanged by law and one pressed himself to death before the unhappy events came to an end. They came to an end because the puritan elders of Salem urged exquisite caution upon the citizens, the judiciary, and so on. I urge the Government to exercise exquisite caution when dealing with these matters.

The Cleveland child abuse inquiry report will be available in two weeks. No doubt the video evidence that was used in the proceedings will be the subject of some recommendations. Although we all might welcome the extension of video evidence in relation to abused children and their traumas, my final word to the House is that exquisite caution might be the order of the day.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): I am sure that the House will agree that the sexual abuse of children is one of the most evil crimes that society must face today.

I listened with great interest and care to the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell). I agree that there is a need for caution in these matters so that one does not lightly enter into prosecutions if there is no foundation. I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that there is a clear distinction between circumstances in which no allegation has been made by a child but when, for misguided reasons, people actively look for cases of child abuse—that was the case in Cleveland—and the problem that was highlighted by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), in which children may have made accusations and been investigated by the police, and the police are absolutely satisfied that the accusations are true, but our present judicial procedures prevent prosecution and conviction of those who are guilty of such evil crimes.

My support for the new clause is based upon two or three cases in my constituency. They were brought to my attention by parents who were distraught at the knowledge that, because of our legal procedures, no prosecution could be brought against those who have perpetrated evil crimes against their children. I concede that some of the measures within the Bill go a long way to facilitating prosecution when it is justified. In particular, I refer to the removal of the requirement for a child's evidence to be corroborated when the child is too young to give evidence on oath and the introduction of the facility for a child to give evidence through a live video link to avoid the distressing experience of having to give evidence in open court and facing the person who committed the offences.

We should go one step further and admit into evidence a video recording of an interview in the police station, close to the time when the offence was reported—we may then have a contemporaneous account from the child—with the safeguards in the new clause, so that the admissibility of the video recording may be considered by a judge in chambers before it is shown to the jury. Also, there should be a facility for a child to be cross-examined, through the video link, on the evidence contained within the video recording.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there are two great dangers in having two films? The first set is made shortly after the event when the child is in a highly emotional state. He or she is wide open to suggestion, and is shown various things and makes various comments. A little while later, when he or she is over the trauma of whatever did or did not happen, the child is interviewed in respect of the court case, cross-examined by way of the video link, and so on. What will happen when the child is shown that there are glaring differences between the two sets of allegations? That is dangerous not only for the defendant but to the child in the long term.

Mr. Watts: If in the initial interview a child made comments or accusations becase he was led or coerced, it would become apparent to the judge and counsel from viewing such evidence. If there were subsequent discrepancies between that evidence and that which was obtained at a later date, it would, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, cast doubt on the veracity and validity of the evidence. I do not resile from that.

I approach these matters with the benefit of not being burdened by a legal background. My concern is that, when such crimes are committed, we should not so load the balance of our judicial system that prosecutions cannot be brought and convictions cannot be secured. With this Bill, the Government have gone a long way towards redressing the balance. I should like the Government to go a little further along the lines suggested by my hon. Friends the Members for Bury St. Edmunds and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims). If we are serious about dealing with this evil crime, we must make sure that our judicial procedures permit prosecution and conviction.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie). In this instance we should agree that the interests of the child are paramount. That is easily said. Various pieces of legislation dealing with children and adoption and fostering state that the interests of the child should be paramount. In the children's hearing system in Scotland the interests of the child are paramount, but in England the interests of children who may have been most bitterly and repulsively reviled are not paramount. That seems strange. If the interests of the child are paramount, justice is much more likely to be served. There may well be children who make false accusations and incorrect

statements, but they are also victims who need considerable assistance. What causes a child to make such accusations against people? We need to consider this matter consistently from the child's point of view.

What would be the use of video recordings in proceedings about sexual offences against children? We must think about the physical surroundings of a court for a child and how intimidating and bewildering the proceedings are. That adds to the stress and complex emotions experienced by a child victim. During the debate hon. Members often seemed to imply that we are talking about isolated instances of sexual abuse that occur on a one-off basis. The normal pattern is of continuing abuse, which may go back for several years, and which may be endemic within the family. A court is an austere setting, with strange people in unfamiliar dress.

My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) spoke of the lack of skill of social workers. That may be true in some cases, but is it any wonder, considering that we attempt to train them for this complex task within one or two years? Perhaps we should talk more about the lack of skill among lawyers. They may well have been trained for many years, yet be singularly inept at using their professional skills to obtain the truth from a child.

A child will find it difficult to understand the functions of all the people in the court, will not understand the proceedings and the language, and is likely to be intimidated by the objections, arguments and motions of counsel. Above all, the child will have to face the accused —the alleged perpetrator of the offence—which will be the most daunting experience. The child may be afraid of, or angry with, the accused. The child may even love the accused, or be bound up in all those complex emotions and feel intense guilt. It is intimidating to have to describe sexual experiences in front of the accused while feeling all those emotions. I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) describing various cases. To hear that language in this House and to realise how awkward it is here brought home to me how intimidating it must be for a child to find the appropriate words.

The timing of a court hearing or trial will often be many months after the event, and it may be difficult for a child to open up after such a period, or to remember and repeat the details of the offence. If the interests of the child are to be paramount, it is important that the child should heal and recover from those experiences. If there is anything that we can do by not forcing the child, many months after the event, to open up those wounds again, we should take that opportunity.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is the defendant's right to cross-examine any witness in court? I have the most profound reservations about the new clause because it places an intermediary between counsel, the voice of the defendant and the voice of the prosecutor, and the child. Surely any person accused of these filthy crimes has every right to test the evidence, to put questions, and not to have them interpreted or changed by an intermediary.

5.15 pm

Mr. Worthington: This is a foul crime to be accused of and to have committed against one. The interests of the accused must seriously be taken into account and I agree that that would include the right to cross-examine. One of the most powerful facts in convincing me that this is a good new clause is the number of trials that would not take place because the quality of the evidence of the child would make it clear to the accused that he did not have a chance of getting off. If we can avoid children being cross-examined unnecessarily because we can get better evidence, we shall be adding to the amount of justice in society.

Many of the objections about the technology are stone age and Luddite. People who have become used to pen and paper will not accept that a better quality of evidence will be available through video. No doubt when, in the past, we were talking about written statements some lawyers said that this new-fangled thing, the slate, could not be accepted.

The Scottish Law Commission has recently produced valuable research evidence on this theme. Kathleen Murray has looked at the use of videos in the United States of America, and she states:

> "The child's demeanour, facial expressions and gestures are preserved. If the interviewer's behaviour or the child's story is later questioned, the recording can provide a verbatim account of the early interview. The tape can be used by others involved in the case and thereby spare the child from repeating accounts of the alleged abuse."

That is a powerful case.

The advantages of the proposal is that the child would be in more sympathetic physical surroundings. I accept that the presence of video cameras is not automatically homely, but such surroundings would be considerably more homely and relaxed than the atmosphere of a court. I hope that a child would be interviewed in a room with child-sized chairs and removed from the awesomeness of wigged and gowned judges and counsel. The child would also be spared the intimidating nature of motions, objections and arguments.

Lawyers may try to make people feel at ease, but inevitably when they play on home ground they constantly forget and lapse into language that is intimidating or obscure to others. Under the proposal, a child would be interviewed by a person specially trained for the purpose. That is extremely important. Those skills are precious and the interview needs to be done sensitively. My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough, in saying that many social workers do not have these skills, is making the point that it is a skilled business to get a child to relax and go over painful experiences. If skilled social workers do not exist in sufficient numbers, it is likely that others with such skills do not either.

Another difficulty is that the memory required from a child in court is, in psychological terms, an advanced form of memory. It is asking the child to recall. Many small children do not have the skill—nor do many adults—to recall in logical order what occurred. It is a different skill from the skill of recognition or reconstruction, where the child's knowledge can be liberated if the surroundings or the stimuli are appropriate. We must create circumstances that will free the information held by the child, and intimidation and stress can reduce a person's willingness and ability to retrieve information from his memory.

Mr. Bermingham: Why does my hon. Friend believe that a child who is videoed immediately after a dramatic event, who may have been removed from his home circumstances and who is suffering from considerable pressure and emotional upheaval will have a better memory than a child who has been allowed to get over the

[Mr. Bermingham]

shock of separation, is spoken to gently, is counselled and later asked to give evidence, perhaps by way of a video link to a separate room?

Mr. Worthington: It is likely that the earlier the memory is called upon, the more it will be accurate. I have had only one experience of being in a court, when I was called as a witness to a drunken affray. Several months later, in court, I identified a distinguished member of the legal profession as one of the people who had committed the crime. That brought home to me the fallibility of memory over a long period. Especially with children, an account given soon after the incident is more likely to be accurate. But, of course, I take into account my hon. Friend's point about emotions.

Mr. Devlin: Any practising member of the Bar would tell the hon. Gentleman that often people who are interviewed immediately after an event have a very jumbled idea of exactly what happened. I am sure that it would be even worse with children. The difficulty with the early video is that there will inevitably be questions which lawyers would have wished to ask, or points with which they would have taken issue, on which the child cannot be cross-examined.

Mr. Worthington: We are after the most accurate reconstruction of events. If we can have the freshness of a video that is made at an early stage, it will add to the quality of evidence. In any event, the later recall can be tested in court. The vividness of the video that is recorded early will be very important.

For years society has failed to consider seriously the evidence of children. We have given pre-eminence to legal practitioners and, as the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds said, allowed them, through their procedures, to cause massive injustices to occur. The advice given by legal practitioners about the quality of evidence that they will allow has caused massive injustice, especially to the most vulnerable and insecure. We must also acknowledge the commonly held belief that the evidence of children, especially girls, is less to be trusted than that of adults. Recent research discounts the arguments about the fantasies of children, but because some people have held those beliefs about fantasies, we have allowed injustice to occur.

Taking Kathleen Murray's point, the Scottish Law Commission believes that the evidence from what has gone on in the United States and elsewhere is that interviews should take place as soon as possible, and that they should be as few as possible. That is another problem. I expect that many hon. Members used to play the party game where one has to tell a story, which then goes from person to person and one does not recognise the story that comes out at the end. That may occur if a child is asked to repeat a story many times. Its accuracy may diminish. We should also ensure that the interviews are carried out by trained people and, if possible, always by the same person.

The Scottish Law Commission produced a discussion document containing two options that are currently being considered in Scotland. The first was:

"Where an accused has been charged and a child is likely to be required to give evidence in a criminal trial the procurator fiscal should be entitled, at his discretion, to arrange for that child to be interviewed by an independent interviewer.

For this purpose the interviewer may be from any background, whether professional or otherwise, but should be skilled and experienced in suitable interviewing techniques, and should be approved for the purpose by the Sheriff Principal for the court district concerned.

The interview should be conducted in a suitable room having a one-way glass screen on one wall. The accused and his lawyer, and the procurator fiscal, should be entitled to be behind this screen, out of sight of the child, but they should be able to communicate with the interviewer (using microphones and an ear receiver) so as to suggest desired lines of questioning to be put to the child.

During the interview it should be possible, at the discretion of the interviewer, for the child to be accompanied by a parent or other adult.

The whole interview should be video recorded."

The alternative option would be to make the interview "admissible in lieu of more formal evidence by the child, but both the accused and the prosecutor would have an absolute right to require the child to give evidence in a more formal manner."

The world is waiting for us to move on this issue. Our present court procedures are manifestly inadequate and cause a great deal of injustice. It is no use waiting for technology. We must make our decision now. There has been much evidence in recent years that children who have been sexually abused are then further abused by the courts. We should put that shame behind us.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): The remarks of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) have stung me to intervene. Legal practitioners are not the cause of injustice in our society; the ill-thought-out laws and procedures that are laid down in this place are at the root of injustice. Legal practitioners, in common with Members of Parliament—although at a later stage in the proceedings—afford the only real protection to the individual against the injustices of the system, of the Establishment and of the machinery of government. To think otherwise is totally to misunderstand the role of the defence lawyer in our society.

5·30 pm

As my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) has already said, the problem is not the burden of a legal background, but that hon. Members do not realise the practical problems behind many of their well-meaning ideas. It is not just the impracticality of this proposal that causes me concern, but its possible counter-productivity.

In practice it is extremely difficult to ask questions through an interpreter—that is what a "prescribed officer" would be. Juries do not want to do an injustice to defendants, however horrifying the crime with which they are charged. When a defendant is charged with a horrifying crime, a jury particularly wants to ensure that justice is done. From my experience, I know that juries will not want social workers, child psychologists or probation officers acting as a further barrier to an understanding between the questioner and the answerer. Even if good interpreters are always available in our courts whenever they are wanted, which I very much doubt, even if those interpreters want to do such work, which I very much doubt, and even if they could do it without emotion and with objectivity, which I doubt, new clause 7 would establish barriers in the process of persuading a jury of the guilt or innocence of the accused, and therefore I object to it. If too many barriers are erected between those acting for the accused and the child witness, the result will be not more convictions of the guilty, but, I fear, more acquittals of the guilty.

Mr. Bermingham: I was saddened by the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington). He normally applies terrific logic to what he says, but in his contribution tonight logic appears to have been lost in the sea of emotion. Although there is much to be said as to how we can best prosecute and secure the conviction of evil men and women for child abuse—it is not a male-only crime—we must, as I said in Committee, tread with caution.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), who has great experience in such matters, was right to say that if we erect too many barriers and raise too many questions we will run too great a risk of acquittals. Let us suppose that a child has been gently interviewed and videoed shortly after it has been taken into care. That is an emotive time and one of great stress. Arising from that video, questions may be asked by a social worker or police officer. For the sake of argument, let us assume that those individuals are extremely skilled. They can look for all the nuances and for all the evidential problems that may arise later. If that child breaks down in the course of that video recording, should we edit that video? Do we take such bits from the video film, which may take four, five, six, seven or eight hours to record? Which bits do we tape? The minute one begins to edit, one gives the defence an open sesame. The defence will cry "cheat" or "foul". It is bound to do so in the interest of its client, and such is the duty of the defending solicitor or counsel in any court room. I declare my interest in such matters.

It is the duty of the defence to look for holes in the prosecution case. In our system one must never forget—and I do not seek to preach a sermon—that it is not for the defence to prove anything. It is for the Crown to prove its case. The defence is under no duty to give or to call evidence. It can spend the whole of its time asking questions, and, at the end, say, "Members of the jury, the Crown has failed to prove its case."

There are some who would like the burden of proof to be shifted, and regrettably that tendency is growing. While we maintain a system that puts the burden of proof upon the Crown, the very introduction of the suggested preliminary stage creates an enormous hurdle for it. That hurdle is created because of the length of time it takes to make the video. It will not be shown in full to the court; it will be edited. Such a video may then be contrasted with a case where the child has refused to give evidence.

Mr. Worthington: Does my hon. Friend agree that the statements that are put in front of the court are a heavily edited account of what occurred in terms, for example, of the police investigation of a case?

Mr. Bermingham: That is not the case in the English system. A written statement is the means by which a person sets out his or her allegations. It is not edited. If it were found to be so, the unedited, unexpurgated version would be produced for the defence as a matter of law under the Attorney-General's guidelines relating to unused material. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has a question, he should stand up and ask it and I will answer it. The hon. Gentleman should not seek to make a sedentary intervention, which is bad manners.

Editing is unknown to our law. There have been experiments regarding tape, recordings where the whole tape untampered with and untouched, is delivered to the defence. It may be that an agreed synopsis is produced, but it must be agreed. If it is not, the full version must be accepted.

When tape recordings are made at a police station, tried and experienced officers ask the questions. New clause 7 provides not for the investigating authority or, in the ultimate stage, the prosecuting authority to ask questions, but rather for social workers or some other well-trained person to do so. I am not critical of that, but I am suggesting that one would be presented with a hostage to fortune. The minute that a third-party stage is introduced, one runs the risk of conflict of evidence and continuity of evidence as well as all sorts of other risks. In common with the hon. and learned Member for Burton, I suspect that one would run the even greater risk of the guilty going free. At this stage I am not prepared to accept that risk.

In Committee I urged considerable caution. I am not averse to the idea of a child giving its evidence in a separate room within the court. I can see a lot of wisdom in that, as well as in a child being interviewed via a video link. At the Old Bailey, for example, it has been found that screens have worked in certain cases, and children have given their evidence freely and well.

I looked with care at this new clause. The spirit behind it is the same as the spirit of those who seek to protect children. Those of us who oppose the new clause do not do so because we want to deny children their rights. We urge that we should proceed with great care so that ultimately every person who is prosecuted for such a heinous crime, where evidence exists against that person, will be convicted.

In our land it is for the Crown to prove its case. We should not rush into untried or experimental systems. We should not set them in tablets of stone, as we do in this place, and then leave it to others to sort out. That is why I was saddened by the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie about lawyers. It should not be left to the lawyers to scrabble around in a morass and say, "How on earth can we protect the citizens of this state?" The spirit of the new clause is good, but its construction and drafting are appalling. I ask the House to vote against it.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Before I came into the Chamber I was reading my local newspaper, the Middlesbrough *Evening Gazette*, in which there is a story of a young lady who claimed that she had been raped. There was a hue and cry and, according to the report, 20 detectives were involved. After a few days, the lady changed her mind. It was all a hoax—but it could have all been video-recorded.

As the Member of Parliament whose constituency includes one third of Middlesbrough, I have been deeply involved in what has happened over child sex abuse there, although my colleague on the Labour Benches, the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), carried the weight. At the height of the problems one of my constituents, a social worker, went missing for a few days, and it was thought that she might have taken her own life. Fortunately, that was not so. She returned and is now all right. But the pressures on that social worker caused that problem. I should be absolutely appalled if I thought that the House would pass the new clause.

I hear comments that we must look after the interests of the children. I believe that we must look after the interests of justice, and the Criminal Justice Bill is for that purpose.

[Mr. Richard Holt]

It would be wrong and foolish of the House at this stage to pass the new clause without a specialist authority with a wider remit looking at the concept of video recording ——

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Holt: No, because I have been asked to make a brief speech.

That should happen whether it is for child sex abuse, rape or any other concept. The House would be misled if it agreed to the new clause.

The idea of a qualified social worker being an intermediary frightens the life out of me. I have been at the heart of the child sex abuse problems in Cleveland, and one thing that we do not want is the intermediary in a child sex abuse case to be a "qualified social worker"——

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The new clause does not say that.

Mr. Holt: With respect, the new clause says:

"a prescribed officer of the court shall be a qualified social worker".

That is what we are being asked to agree to and that is what I am opposing. So far, no one has been asked to learn the skills of conducting an interview when it is video-recorded. Yet hon. Members are proposing that, under the law, a qualified person without those skills should conduct the interview.

I was asked to speak briefly. However, one does not need to speak at length to make a point that should carry weight with the House, especially with hon. Members such as my colleague the hon. Member for Middlesbrough and my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), who also represents part of Middlesbrough. Those of us who come from that area would find it difficult to face our constituents and all those who have been deeply involved if we supported the new clause. I ask all those who are concerned about justice for everybody, not only the child, but all the relatives and perhaps the accused person, to think long and hard before supporting such a loose and woolly new clause.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In contrast to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), I believe that many children throughout the United Kingdom have been saved from a pretty miserable and horrible fate by the intervention of a qualified and deeply compassionate social worker. That should not be forgotten.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) seems to have been subjected to some quite severe criticism today because he argued that the interests of the child must be paramount. I have a great deal of sympathy for that viewpoint, but I suppose that the law must reconcile the interests of the child with those of the accused. The two principal promoters of the new clauses, the hon. Members for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), have sought to attain the most difficult of objectives. In my view, the criminal investigation of such cases must require the most humane and compassionate treatment of the children involved. In too many cases, interviews are inflicted upon the children, which places an intolerable strain on them. Another dreadful strain inflicted upon the children in such cases is the knowledge that, if they tell the truth, in all probability they will wreck their own family. I believe that such knowledge reduces many children to silence.

5.45 pm

The whole procedure must become more humane. I compliment the hon. Members for Bury St. Edmunds and for Chislehurst, and those who have supported the new clauses, on seeking to develop that trend, but I have a couple of reservations about both new clauses and some questions for their promoters. For example, does new clause 7 allow for the accused and his or her counsel to ask the court to declare the video recording inadmissible as evidence?

Secondly, would the accused and his or her counsel have the absolute right to require that the child give evidence in a more formal or structured way? I hasten to add that I have a great deal of sympathy for the new clauses. I attempted to introduce similar amendments to extant Scottish legislation, but I failed in my endeavours.

Thirdly, would the jury be allowed to take the video recording to the jury room to examine sections of it or to view it again in its entirety when it makes its deliberations? That is an important question which was raised by the Scottish Law Commission in the recently published document to which my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie referred.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I imagine that it would fall to the discretion of the judge to respond to such a request from the jury.

Dr. Godman: That partially answers the question, but I feel that there are too many ambiguities in the new clause. I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman said about his lack of experience of parliamentary draftsmanship, which I share.

As I said, despite my questions, I have a great deal of sympathy with the new clauses. However, I would raise the upper age limit to 16 years from 14, which is far too low. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds and his supporters talked about sexual abuse and molestation. Do those terms include sexual exploitation—for example, introducing or manipulating a child into child pornography or prostitution?

If we are to talk about video recordings, we should talk about pre-trial deposition proceedings, which would involve the formal cross-examination of the child by counsel in a room away from the austere surroundings of the average court room. I think that I am right in saying that one of the most modern court rooms in the United Kingdom is the new sheriff court in Glasgow. I visited it recently and discovered that in such a case a child in that most modern of courts could be sitting or standing less than 9 ft away from the accused in the dock. The architectural design of that court room in Glasgow is an abysmal failure. When bringing a child into a small court room it must be remembered that the proximity of the accused might frighten the child into silence.

Mr. Bermingham: We have already agreed that children could give their evidence on video in a separate room. Does that not meet my hon. Friend's objection?

Dr. Godman: It does to a certain extent. The judge should oversee these proceedings in as informal an ambience as possible. Failing that, they should be presided over by an official appointed by the court.

The proceedings should take place in a room whose design and layout present a pleasing prospect for the child to enter and stay in for some time. If the Bill meets that requirement, I shall be pleased to hear about it. The surroundings should be as informal as possible. The judge, counsel and child—plus what we call in Scotland the befriender—should be seated around a table. The befriender's status derives from the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

The accused should be present but concealed from the child by means of a two-way mirror or closed circuit television. A child advocate should be appointed to protect the interests of the child who is a principal witness in such a case. We could expand the role of the safeguarder, which was created 20 years ago in the legislation introduced by Willie Ross, as he then was.

Perhaps the way ahead lies in the use of closed circuit television, with the child placed in a room close to the court room, but I intend to reserve my remarks about that for a later debate.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): We have had an interesting debate on a significant subject. We can all agree that every abuse of a child, sexual or otherwise, is a vicious crime, not least because such abuse deprives the child of the security that should be the right of all children. We can all agree that we should spare no effort to provide them all with that security. One of the things to look for in the new clauses is whether they will contribute to that.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) said that the debate was worthy of emotion. When we speak we must control our comments, because we all feel extremely strongly about people who commit these vicious crimes. However, as the hon. Gentleman pointed out, it would be equally wrong for us to be too cool, clinical and detached—because we are discussing serious difficulties. Anyone who has spoken to the parents of children who have been abused knows that feelings run high on the subject. That must be taken into account when we discuss such a sensitive issue.

When we discussed this matter in Committee, we all agreed that clause 31 was an important step forward. It is the clause to which my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) referred a few moments ago when he spoke of children giving evidence on a closed circuit television link. He outlined problems in the design of courts which mean that children must be close to the person who has committed the crime against them. That has caused a great deal of concern, and I and my hon. Friends think that the provisions of clause 31 will go a long way towards easing the problem and relieving the strain on children. We know of cases that have broken down recently because of the strain under which children have been put through being able to see the accused in court. We all want an end to that, and we welcome clause 31 because it makes significant progress towards solving the problem.

The common aim that we all share is that of making it as easy as possible for the child in what must be a difficult situation. Everyone agrees that the child's interests must come first. As my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) said, there may be false accusations because a child has been pushed into a corner and feels that that is the way in which to make progress. My hon. Friend pointed out the difficulties that arise when children give the answers that they feel are expected of them. When we discussed clause 31 in Committee, even though we all agreed with it in principle, Opposition Members believed that many questions still had to be answered and that guidelines needed to be laid down to ensure consistency in the way in which the courts operated the new procedures so that everyone knew what the child's rights and the defendant's—or his counsel's—rights were. The Minister was open-minded about the need for guidelines and took on board many of the points that we made during one of the most constructive debates that we had in Committee.

Many difficulties are involved in the role of the pre-recorded interviews that are proposed in the new clause. We all hope that such interviews may have a role to play in certain circumstances, but if they have, it will be limited. If pre-recorded interviews have a use, it may not be limited to cases of child sexual abuse. Perhaps they could be used in cases of rape and in other cases in which witnesses are reluctant to give evidence or feel that they would rather discuss what happened away from the court room.

Some of the arguments in favour of pre-recorded interviews have exaggerated the contribution that they might make to relieving the anguish of children in this situation. Too often the case has been presented too simplistically and hopes have been raised that pre-recorded interviews might produce more good than they ever could. They are in no way a panacea. At best they will have a limited contribution to make in certain specific cases.

I agree with hon. Members on both sides of the House who have said that we should proceed with caution. There are many pitfalls in this path—and some potential advantages. If, at some stage in the future, we were to adopt a system in which pre-recorded interviews could be used as evidence in court, we should need strict guidelines and clear codes of practice, because we would be changing the rules of evidence in a fundamental and significant way.

The one way in which pre-recorded interviews might have a role to play—to judge from all the evidence I have seen—is in cases in which the person who is accused is guilty and, having seen the child giving evidence on a video recording, is caused to change his mind and plead guilty, so that the social workers and everyone involved in the case can make some progress. That might avoid the lengthy and tortuous experience of a contested court case that would be very difficult for the child and its family.

That may happen, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough said, the Cleveland experience shows that children and parents will sometimes give the answer that is wanted because they hope that that will lead to a breakthrough and a progression of the case when a log-jam occurs and social workers or the police are convinced that abuse has taken place. That may lead to children being persuaded to make accusations, or it may lead to parents, relatives or the person accused being persuaded to admit to some sort of abuse in order to make progress. In some cases that may be done in order to allow children to go home.

6 pm

Mr. Holt: Does the hon. Lady agree that if that thesis were carried through, the opposite should also be the case? I have a letter from the Cleveland social services department which says that a life-sized rubber doll of a man was used in a child sex abuse case. When a sweet was placed in a specific place on the doll the child went into the room and took the sweet, and that was taken as absolute evidence that the child had been sexually abused. Does the hon. Lady agree that in such a case a person could be found not guilty?

Mrs. Taylor: I agree that such evidence and such experiments could be interpreted in many different ways. We must be cautious about all these matters, and one of the lessons that everyone will learn from the Cleveland experience is that there is still a long way to go before procedures on a whole range of matters are considered adequate and before we can have full confidence in them.

I have some questions for the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, but perhaps the Minister will deal with them in his winding-up speech so that it will not be necessary to ask them twice. Obviously, there are many difficulties in dealing with such cases. Hon. Members have put forward a strong case for saying that interviews should be held as quickly as possible after the abuse has taken place. However, we must be realistic about this and understand that very often abuse takes place over many weeks, months and sometimes years. For that reason, a delay of a week or two may not make the difference that is sometimes suggested. If it is a question of one incident of abuse, or indeed of rape, it is useful and beneficial for interviews to be conducted as quickly as possible. Where there has been prolonged abuse, perhaps an early interview is not as important as ensuring that the interview takes place in the right context, with the right people present, and in the right atmosphere.

Interviews of very young children conducted by social workers and police officers—I know that many women police officers are extremely experienced and good at conducting such interviews—are not for evidential purposes. They are for counselling purposes, for drawing out the child's experiences and for starting to help the child to recover. It would be quite legitimate for the people conducting the interview to lead the child, to draw out the story and even to suggest what might have happened in a way that would normally go against all the rules of evidence. We should be quite clear that such interviews will not be used later as evidence in court. However, if social workers and police officers have that fact at the back of their minds, they might be less good at counselling the child in the first instance.

My second point on the practicalities is about where video interviews should take place. Will they take place in a police station, in a hospital, in a social worker's office or in the child's home? From the point of view of the child's recovery, the best place for the interview may not be the best place for recording the experiences of the child, when more than one camera may be needed. Certainly we could not have cameras invading a child's home to take evidence.

Mr. Devlin: Does the hon. Lady agree that the best place for such interviews would be the new family court buildings, one of which would be built in each town? Such buildings would be properly financed and would be part of a national change in procedures. That is long overdue.

Mrs. Taylor: We welcome support for the principle of family courts. The Minister makes noises about the cost, but it is a cost that is well worth bearing. If the Government want to make a contribution to the welfare of children, not just to those who have been abused in this way, but to children involved in divorce proceedings and so on, they should introduce family courts. We would support legislation on that and should like to see it introduced as soon as possible.

The problem of cross-examination was briefly raised by some hon. Members who are lawyers. The new clause allows for cross-examination. A child who is to be cross-examined in court will not attract the benefit of an early and quick recorded interview that will be presented in court with the idea that that will be the end of the matter. It is clear that if a child is cross-examined about what he said in one or more interviews some weeks or months before, it would put not less, but probably more, strain on the child. That will create great difficulties. Although the child will give evidence from a different room, it will be the duty of defence counsel to trip up the child or to find inconsistencies between what the child has said in the recording and his answers in court.

I am not trying to knock holes in the case or to say that there is no role at all for video recordings. I stress that the simplistic answer that is sometimes put forward is fraught with many difficulties. It could be counter-productive if a clever counsel for the defendant destroyed the child in court. That might happen if proceedings went ahead in the way that I have suggested. An early interview of the child that could be shown to the defendant might lead to a plea of guilty. However, as soon as the defendant obtained access to a lawyer—which might be after charges are preferred and after he, the defendant, has seen the video—his legal advisers might suggest a change of plea. In such a case a lawyer might then find it even more necessary to destroy the child's evidence, and in so doing he might destroy the child as well.

Although we all want to reduce stress on the child and to help him, we must be sure that we do not create new stresses and new problems for the child. My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) talked about a child's memory and said that interviews immediately after an incident might be far more helpful than later asking the child to repeat the story time and again. Immediately after an incident there could be a great deal of confusion in a child's mind. Children who have worked out the sequence of events in their mind are extremely accurate when recalling the very tiny details of many events. That would often happen in cases such as those that we are talking about.

We all share the same objective. We want to make it as easy as possible for the child to explain what has happened to it and for the responsible authority to prosecute somebody who has committed an abuse. We want to ensure that those who deserve conviction are convicted, but we must ensure that there is full justice, that the defendant's rights are preserved and that we do not take a step that could create more problems than it solves. I hope that the Government will consider those matters, but will not rush into a system of giving evidence that we have not fully examined in this country and that might be fraught with difficulties. We welcome the changes so far. We fully supported clause 31 in Committee and believe that it is a

significant step forward, but there are some difficulties in the new clause and we hope that the Government will consider it further in greater detail.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has counselled caution and been even-handed in her approach. Her speech has been characteristic of speeches made on both sides of the argument in the two and half hours of debate this afternoon. If anyone had come to listen to the debate this afternoon, he or she would have heard two things: first, an extremely measured form of debate and, secondly, a form of debate that was neither party nor partisan. I do not think that non-party and non-partisan debates are necessarily good or particularly interesting to listen to, but this afternoon the intensity of debate and the care with which hon. Members have deployed their arguments has been exemplary. If anyone had been listening and trying to keep track of the voices on both sides of the argument, and whether, if there should be a Division, it should be restricted to those people who have spoken, he or she would agree that it is a cliff-hanger, on a knife edge, because the arguments on both sides have been so balanced.

We have heard the most powerful advocacy from my hon. Friends the Members for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) in the interests of obtaining better justice for children. They have been supported in equally powerful speeches by the hon. Members for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) and for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) and others. On the other hand, we have heard, across the party divide, hon. Members counselling caution, as in the case of my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), in his short and forceful intervention, and, perhaps most notably of all, in the case of the three hon. Members who represent Cleveland—the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) and my hon. Friends the Members for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) and for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt).

That note of caution was present throughout our debates in Committee. I agree with the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme that those debates were most constructive. Since then, I have taken every opportunity to consult those people who wished to see me, on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, to discuss those issues. I have, of course, consulted my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds and representatives of the police and acknowledge their formidable argument. I have spoken to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst and to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) who accompanied a delegation from the NSPCC. That was a most useful meeting, and I wish to pay tribute to the work done by the NSPCC in experiments on video recordings. I also met my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), together with representatives of the National Children's Bureau.

In anticipating the spirit of the debate this afternoon —my hopes have been borne out—I have made known my views as openly as possible, in advance of the debate, in the letters that I have sent to everyone who has corresponded with me. Those letters included a weighty appendix in which I tried to weigh the pros and cons, but, at the end of the debate, I am left with two big question marks in my mind: what happens in the trial itself and what happens in the period before the trial? I shall try to deal with each of those questions in turn.

First, at present, in a trial, the first person to examine a child witness is prosecution counsel, who will take the child step by step through its evidence-in-chief. That will be a friendly face with which the child is familiar. If video recordings were admitted, the first person against—the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North—would be defence counsel. In his client's interest, quite properly, defence counsel's aim is to try to expose holes in the child's story. We must remember that the child is anonymous, whereas the accused person is not and he is on trial for his reputation and faces a possible prison sentence.

6.15 pm

We then come to the important concept introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds—that there should be a video recording, and that many of the issues could be overcome by an interlocutor, from the caring or legal professions, putting the points to the child on behalf of the defendant. That is where we come to the question raised so powerfully in Committee by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). I recommend hon. Members to read the hon. Gentleman's speech in Committee. He said that it is surely a defendant's right—not everyone accused of child abuse is guilty by any means—to have the counsel of his or, more rarely, her choice putting the questions on his or her behalf. That is a substantial principle.

However, I am worried that, if the child's friend is drawn from the caring or legal professions, he or she will have attempted to establish a relationship with the child beforehand to set him or her at ease. On the other hand, we must also consider what would happen to the child when he or she suddenly found that friend, in the specially designed informal room off the court room, saying, "Why did you say this? Why did you say that? Why is there a difference between what you said then and what you say now?" Will that be in the child's interests? We must consider the question raised by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South both in the way that he put it and in the way that I have tried to extend the argument.

Secondly, most people recognise that video recordings of children are taken for a number of purposes. I have been to Bexley and seen the excellent experiments. The chief superintendent, social workers and others who have co-operated have performed a singular service for all those people involved with child abuse. The video recordings are made for evidential and investigative purposes by the police who want to try to find out what happened. They are made for therapeutic purposes, because the child needs to be helped, and it is important for the social worker or the doctor to help the child by talking the terrible experience out of his system. The recordings are also used for investigative medical purposes by the doctor or, more rarely, by the social worker to try to tease out what happened. We all know, from evidence given in recent cases, how difficult that can be.

We all agree that the child should be spared the trauma of having to give his or her evidence very often. One or more recordings to try to encompass all that would lead to considerable pre-trial editorial problems, as was pointed out by the hon. Members for Dewsbury and for St. Helens, South and by my hon Friend the Member for

[Mr. John Patten]

Westminster, North. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds also recognises those points, because we have had the chance to discuss them.

I believe that those problems need careful consideration. That is why I am pleased to announce that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has decided that we should look more deeply at the use of video recordings for the evidence not just of children but of others who are witnesses in trials—rape victims, the disabled and those who suffer in a number of different ways from a number of disadvantages. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has invited, and his invitation has been accepted by, the Common Serjeant in the City of London, Judge Thomas Pigot, who is a most experienced Crown court judge, to inquire into these issues. He will be assisted by representatives of the police force and the social work world and by a barrister. The inquiry will look as quickly as possible at the evidential difficulties of using video recordings and will report back to my right hon Friend as soon as possible.

I hope that that move will meet the general approval of many hon. Members. I hope, too, that with that undertaking, my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds will feel inclined to withdraw his new clause.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am naturally disappointed that my hon. Friend the Minister has not been able to accept my new clause, although I am not surprised. He has been fair and generous. The Pigot inquiry, which he has just announced, will, in all the circumstances, be able to examine this matter. I hope that it will do so quickly. I am delighted that it will have, as one of its assessors, an experienced police officer. I hope, too, that my hon. Friend will accept some suggestions along the lines of the new clause. Equally, it must be right that he includes within that commission someone from the caring services and an experienced barrister.

I hope that I heard my hon. Friend clearly, and that the inquiry will examine not just the difficulties of using video recordings, but the possibilities and the opportunities. I am delighted to see my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary here. On the understanding that he wants to see this matter progress speedily, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 8

POWER TO SEARCH

'(1) A police constable may search any person whom he suspects of possessing a prohibited or offensive weapon, if that officer fears that the use of such a weapon will endanger his personal safety or that of any other person;

(2) If a search conducted under subsection (1) of this section leads to the discovery of a prohibited or offensive weapon concealed on the person of the suspect, a Constable may arrest that suspected person without a warrant.'.—*[Sir Eldon Griffiths.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I hope that I can be equally brief on this. On Second Reading my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that he was proposing a radical change in the law on the carrying of knives, and that the danger was overwhelmingly the concealed carrying of such weapons. There is no doubt that many crimes are committed with the aid of knives—muggings, assaults, rapes and so on. Therefore, the Government are quite right to tackle that problem as they have. However, they leave the police service with one difficulty, which is that unless one can search for a concealed knife, it is difficult to bring into play the powers that the Bill will now provide, including the reversing of the burden of proof.

I make it clear that neither I nor the Police Federation have any wish to return to sus. That is not my objective. However, I wish to raise with the Government the narrower point of the code of guidance that is set out in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which is too restrictive and makes for some difficulties. It says that a reasonable suspicion is needed to justify a search and it must be founded on fact. There must be some concrete basis for the officer's belief, related to the individual concerned, which can be considered and evaluated by an objective third person. The difficulty is that in many cases it is a one-to-one situation and it is extremely difficult for a police officer, faced with someone whom he suspects may be carrying a concealed knife, to establish the degree of fact that will justify the search on reasonable suspicion.

My design in moving the new clause is not to take us back in time. It is simply to ask the Government whether they will examine the code of practice, and if they find that the police case—that it is not working satisfactorily—is a good one, they will take steps to revise it.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): When I first looked at the new clause, I was inclined to look for a motive behind it. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has made it clear that his intention is not to increase the powers of the police, although he referred to the restrictions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Nevertheless, I hope that hon. Members will emphatically reject the new clause, because it is inevitably bound to be regressive. In particular, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can believe what he has written here.

The hon. Gentleman has a great reputation, and hon. Members on both sides of the House recognise that during his time as parliamentary representative of the Police Federation he has carried out his duties in an energetic way. Sometimes we have been annoyed at the way in which he has done it, because he has been so persistent, but I cannot believe that he wants the House to introduce such legislation.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ease the hon. Gentleman's anxieties, I assure him that I have no intention of pressing this matter to a vote. I simply want to explore the statutory code of guidance in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and this is the only way to do it. The hon. Gentleman need not worry about asking his hon. Friends to repudiate what I am doing—I shall do so myself by withdrawing the new clause.

Mr. Randall: The hon. Gentleman had the opportunity to withdraw the new clause if he felt that he could not accept it. He did not say clearly that he could not accept the new clause. As he has said that he wants to use new clause 8 to debate the existing powers, it is worth hon. Members on both sides of the House talking about parts of the new clause, in particular subsection (1), which says:

"A police constable may search any person whom he suspects".

That could be construed as a return to sus. We would then be returning to 1824 and the passing of the Vagrancy Act.

Mr. Bermingham: As the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has said that in view of my hon. Friend's powerful oratory he will withdraw the new clause, would it not be better if he did so as soon as possible?

Mr. Randall: That is a matter for the business managers. Like the horse in "Animal Farm", I plod away and do the job that is needed of me.

6.30 pm

Under the terms of the 1824 Act, sus was an offence. The scope of that Act was extraordinary. I refer the House to page 103 of the report of the Home Affairs Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, dated 13 March 1980. The relevant passage reads:

> Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824, includes an offence (known colloquially as 'sus') which prohibits 'every suspected person or reputed thief' from . . . frequenting or loitering about in any river, canal or navigable stream, dock or basin, or any quay, wharf or warehouse near or adjoining thereto, or any street, highway or avenue leading thereto, or any place of public resort, or any avenue leading thereto; or any street or highway, or any place adjacent to a street or a highway, with intent to commit an arrestable offence."

The Act was intrusive. It impinged very much upon the liberty of the citizen. Until section 4 of the Act was repealed in 1981, police forces in various parts of the country used the sus offence. The consequences were serious.

The Select Committee on Home Affairs repudiated sus in 1980 and stated that it had been bad for race relations. I think that we were all pleased with the Criminal Attempts Act 1981, which repealed the sus provisions. The strength of feeling of the members of that Committee was profound. The Committee stated that if the Government failed to produce the required legislation, it would promote it.

I am a strong supporter of the police force. I believe that it is fundamental to our democracy. The throwing of grenades—metaphorically—at the police is to be deplored. I accept, however, that the police are not perfect. Members of the police force are a cross-section of the community, as we are in this place. My main concern—it was shared by many others—was that imperfect people were free to exercise wide-ranging provisions.

There was a feeling that some police officers abused the law. There are many blacks and Asian people in our inner cities, and strong feelings were aroused in them because of the abuses that took place. There were "fishing expeditions". Those were bad at times. The police had a power that led to much damage being committed, especially in our inner cities and areas of deprivation generally. We heard stories of police officers entering Indian restaurants, placing people against the wall and telling them to put up their hands. There were horrific stories and, irrespective of whether they were true, strong feelings were aroused within the community. All that was detrimental to race and community relations.

We believe that stop-and-search powers should be exercisable only if there is reasonable suspicion. The powers of stop and search were defined in section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Subsection (3) states:

> "This section does not give a constable power to search a person or vehicle or anything in or on a vehicle unless he has reasonable grounds for suspecting that he will find stolen or prohibited articles."

The definition of those articles includes offensive weapons, and subsection (9) defines offensive weapons.

The second part of the new clause refers to the discovery of knives as a result of a search. We are all for finding and dealing with those who carry knives and other offensive weapons. That does not need to be said, because it is obvious. We all want the provisions in our legislation that allow that to happen to be as effective as possible. We are concerned, however, about increasing the powers of the police where there is merely a suspicion. The concept that that is a ground for taking action is anathema to the notion of liberty. We are entirely opposed to it.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds has been assiduous in his service to the Police Federation, and we respect him for that. I have read that when the Royal Commission met before the new legislation was introduced it was aware that the police had asked for the retention of the sus powers. The House decided in its wisdom that it would have the section 1 powers of the 1984 Act, which introduced reasonable suspicion rather than giving the police wide powers that would enable them to proceed merely on suspecting someone.

The new clause should be taken seriously. I see it as a desperate measure. We have the highest crime figures in Britain's history and we have a Government whose crime policy is failing miserably. If we consider all classes of crime, it is clear that crime generally is on the increase. There have been massive increases in crime rates in certain categories and I suggest that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds is clutching at straws. He knows that the Government's crime policy is in a mess. A serious manifestation of that is the football hooligans and their awful activities in Frankfurt, Stuttgart and other German cities. The Government's policies have led to a society that lacks decency. Consequently, we have a selfish and greedy society. Nasty things are coming home to roost. When contemplation is given to this sort of new clause at a time when crime figures are so serious, it is clear that the hon. Gentleman is clutching at straws.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): How does the hon. Gentleman explain the paradox that, when unemployment was rising, the Labour party blamed it on Government policies, but now that unemployment is declining and the Government's policies are working he is blaming wealth creation?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The new clause concerns powers of search. I ask hon. Members to stay with that.

Mr. Randall: The powers of stop and search, known as sus, were used in inner cities, or what I prefer to refer to as areas of deprivation. There is a strong correlation between crime and deprivation. When those powers were available, people were discriminated against. Blacks and Asians, who are already deprived by income, by unemployment, by inadequate housing and by inadequate hospital services, were the victims of stop and search. They would be affected again if new clause 8 were agreed to. It is important to put that on the record.

As the Select Committee report said, those people do not have equal rights before the law. They do not have

[Mr. Randall]

equal representation in court, they do not enjoy the same legal aid as others and they tend to be given custodial sentences.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds understands the police force well. Knowing what sort of man he is, I cannot believe that he would want to damage community relations, and it is therefore inconceivable that the new clause will be agreed to. I shall therefore not present any more arguments against it.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) focused on the code, so I shall concentrate exclusively on it. He articulated his concern that the code as drafted contains too strict a definition and interpretation of the concept of reasonable suspicion. In that, he reflects the anxiety of the police service.

I understand the force of my hon. Friend's arguments —that is why my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has commissioned a review of the code. We hope to have comments in by the end of October, which will enable us to decide whether we should redraft the code to give a different interpretation of the concept of reasonable suspicion. The points made by my hon. Friend and by the police service will be kept fully in mind during the review. I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for the way in which he moved the new clause.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 16

EXEMPTION FROM JURY SERVICE

'At the end of Schedule 1 to the Juries Act 1974 there shall be added "those who object on grounds of religious belief to serving on juries."'.—*[Mr. Peter Archer.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

6.45 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This is a proposal which I believe transcends party differences and I should like to acknowledge the indications of support that I have received from parliamentary colleagues in all parts of the House.

I should like also to acknowledge the vigilance of the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). As originally set down, the new clause referred to the Juries Act 1984. That error escaped everyone but the hon. Gentleman. The draft was taken, as I had fully intended, from the *Official Report* of our proceedings in Committee. Although we debated the Juries Act 1974, it was transcribed as the Juries Act 1984 in the *Official Report*. I say that only by way of explanation. I fully understand the *Official Report's* difficulties. Indeed, because we so rarely find a mistake we come to rely on it uncritically.

I should like to seize this opportunity to correct one other misconception. Dr. Bryan Wilson of All Souls—who I understand is the distinguished constituent of the Minister—to whom we are all indebted for having drawn attention to this problem in the first instance, also pointed out to me that, following the *Official Report* of our debate in Committee at column 881 on what was then new clause 65, there is a reference, in column 893, to new schedule 65, which is reported as having been added to the Bill. I understand that this has led to some genuine misconceptions. I should like to place it on record, lest anyone be misled, that, unhappily, as I believe, nothing was added to the Bill relating to this matter. It was left that the Minister would investigate some of the examples that had been given and that he would write to me. That is an undertaking which he very properly observed.

I believe that most hon. Members take the view that, in return for the privilege of living in a democratic society, citizens should be prepared to undertake their share of the burdens entailed in its working. I would not wish to question that principle, but it sometimes happens that a good conscientious citizen says, "Although I am normally prepared to shoulder my share of the burdens, this one is not one in which I can conscientiously participate." It may be an obligation to undertake military service or an obligation to return a census form. There may be other obligations about which that could be said.

I believe that, at that stage, every tolerant society says not, "We must automatically respect this objection," but, "We must balance the equation—we must balance the consequences, if the objection is allowed, against the respect we would normally accord to an individual conscience." There may be circumstances in which to allow an objection would tempt large numbers of other citizens to take a similar objection and, in what I think is the common terminology, open the flood gates. If someone had a conscientious objection to paying his income tax, I would not recommend that we give effect to that objection. But that will not happen in this case. Vast numbers of people will not rush off to become Exclusive Brethren to avoid jury service. I am always impressed by the readiness of members of the public to drop all their other concerns and apply themselves with great concentration to assisting the administration of justice.

On the other side of the equation, there is the respect that our country has traditionally accorded to those with conscientious scruples, especially those who do not usually seek to avoid their obligations as citizens and are good and conscientious members of the community. The brethren objection is to sitting in judgment as a member of a jury, because that is the interpretation that they accord to certain scriptural texts. I do not share their conclusions, but I respect them and am totally persuaded of the sincerity with which they hold those views. Of course, in any particular case it may be an issue whether someone summoned for jury service really holds such views or is merely seeking an excuse to avoid his obligations.

The House will have noticed that this new clause is narrowly drafted. It does not seek to provide an excusal as of right for anyone who objects on the ground of conscience; it is an excusal for those who object on religious grounds. An excusal on grounds of conscience might present a court with a difficult issue to resolve. But the new clause should not provide any difficulties. Usually all that would be required would be a letter from a local pastor saying, "Mr. X is a member of my congregation and attends my church regularly. He plays a full part in our activities. I am satisfied that he genuinely believes our teachings. What our church teaches on this issue is . . ." Usually, nothing more would be required. If it were, I have no doubt that the pastor would attend court and expound

on that and answer any questions. Excusal as of right would not, in principle, provide any difficulties for the administration.

There is also a good, pragmatic reason for allowing an objection as of right. The brethren's objection is to sitting in judgment with others. So if one of them applies to be exempted and that application is refused and he has to serve on the jury, he will stand aside from the discussions in the jury room. He will write down his individual verdict and request the foreman or the usher to deliver it to the judge. Not surprisingly, that would place the judge in a difficult position because he is not allowed to receive an individual verdict. That cannot be a way of effecting justice. Most judges would prefer not to have a reluctant juror. It is better for everyone to have 12 jurors, participating willingly. Where, in addition, one juror is not willing to discuss the case with the other jurors, that does not effect justice.

Schedule 1 to the Juries Act 1974 lists certain categories of people exempted as of right. Section 9 provides that, in certain circumstances, the appropriate officer has a discretionary power to exempt from jury service someone not exempt as of right. If that officer does not grant the exemption, there is a right of appeal to the judge.

It is not the first time that there have been proposals to add those with religious objections to the category of those exempted as of right. In 1965, Lord Morris's committee on jury service considered the proposal that those with religious scruples should be added to that category. It concluded that that was not necessary and, in para 153 of its report, said:

"We recognise that there are people whose religious scruples would make it genuinely distressing for them to serve on a jury but we cannot think that excusal as of right would be an appropriate way of dealing with this problem. In our view such persons should apply for excusal in the normal way, and we have no doubt that summoning officers and courts will deal with the applications sympathetically."

The committee was right: it would have been better to deal with them in that way. Over the years, tolerance, sympathy and common sense have worked well and there has been no need to discuss amendments to legislation. However, recently in a few specific courts a number of members of the Exclusive Brethren have applied for exemption and been refused. It is a problem that has arisen only——

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Like the right hon. and learned Gentleman, I am aware of the Coventry cases where judges have said no. Bearing in mind that the judges have a discretion and that, in some cases, that discretion has worked in favour of the Exclusive Brethren and the Plymouth Brethren and so on, does he feel that this problem should be dealt with not by legislation but by the Lord Chancellor sending a circular to all circuit judges and recorders alerting them to the problem and making them aware of the strong, heartfelt feelings of the Exclusive Brethren?

Mr. Archer: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying and I would have agreed with him had it not been for the fact that that has already been tried. In a moment I shall try to explain what has gone wrong. The problem has arisen in only a few courts—although more than just one—and it has given rise to a great deal of distress and, I suspect, to some real anxiety among those on trial about whether justice really has been achieved. Their problem is that they do not know what happened in the jury room, so they do not know whether they received justice.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, as the deliberations in the jury room are for ever silent and secret, if one of the Exclusive Brethren opts out any contribution that he may have made is withdrawn from the general discussion of the jury? There will always be a question mark in the minds of both the defendant and, in the case of acquittal, the Crown that had there been a 12-man rather than an 11 or 10-man jury the verdict might have gone the other way.

Mr. Archer: I agree with my hon. Friend and would not seek to improve on the way that he put it. We do not know whether it has affected the outcome in any particular case. But we know that if the proper procedures are not followed someone will be left unhappy.

As usual, one problem left unresolved leads to others. Some people have applied for exemption and been rejected —somewhat peremptorily, I am told—by a judge without what they would regard as a proper hearing. They then asked to appear by counsel to put their case and explain their reasons, but that was also rejected. I understand that consideration is now being given to an application for judicial review of that decision. If nothing is done, this will grow into a major issue and everybody will make a meal of it, and that is not what the brethren want.

The Minister said in Committee that the Lord Chancellor's Department had written to the court service asking it to

"place on record the specific concerns of the Exclusive Brethren and the Plymouth Brethren, to draw them to the attention of the judiciary and to remind the courts of the relevant laws and procedures."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee H*, 29 March 1988; c.885.]

7 pm

I have not seen the circular and I would not ask for it, but I wonder whether it made itself understood. I am told that recently a member of the Exclusive Brethren telephoned the office at Acton which deals with the selection and summoning of jurors in London and was told that the Lord Chancellor's Department had said that applicants should not be excused jury service on grounds of their religious belief. When he telephoned the Lord Chancellor's Department and expressed surprise, he was told that no such guidance had been given. Whether he misunderstood what was said to him by the Acton office or whether the Lord Chancellor's circular, in attempting to help, had merely created confusion is a matter on which I, at least, can shed no light. Perhaps the Minister can. I would have agreed with the hon. Member for Yorkshire, South—

Mr. Hind: Lancashire, West.

Mr. Archer: Geography was never my strongest subject.

I would have agreed with the hon. Gentleman that the circular should be tried if it had not already created confusion. In Committee, the Minister very fairly said that he would investigate some of the cases and write to me. He did so, and I understand that the problem is that, as no record is kept when an application is made for exclusion from jury service, it cannot be investigated. Perhaps one day such records will be kept: to do so surely would not impose an inordinate burden on the courts.

I do not propose to elaborate on the matter at great length. In my view, the case makes itself. If we are all agreed that a genuine religious conviction should be

[Mr. Archer]

respected, that a reluctant juror who will not discuss the case with the rest of the jury is not conducive to effecting justice, that deciding who has a legitimate claim would entail the simplest and briefest of investigations and that this would not open the floodgates to a host of applications for exemption by newly enrolled Exclusive Brethren, what is the objection? If there is no objection, why should we not remove all the difficulties and prevent the escalation of problems by writing the new clause into the Bill?

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My constituency contains a number of Exclusive Brethren, but the issue is not confined to them. It concerns a point of principle, and goes back to a practice direction made in 1973 by Lord Widgery, then Lord Chief Justice. He said that a juror may be excused

"at the discretion of the judge on grounds of personal hardship or conscientious objection to jury service."

He went on to say:

"It is contrary to established practice for jurors to be excused on more general grounds such as race, religion or political beliefs or occupation."

Since then the Juries Act 1974 has become law. As the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) stated in his cogent speech, section 9 prescribes that

"If any person summoned under this Act shows to the satisfaction of the appropriate officer that there is good reason why he should be excused from attending. . .the appropriate officer may excuse him from so attending and shall do so"

if the person falls within the various categories specified in schedule 1. Schedule 1 makes exemptions for, among others, vowed members of religous orders. There is a category specifically related to the clergy and to exemptions which appear to all intents and purposes to be made on religious grounds. If the practice direction has been overtaken by a discretion conferred by Parliament under the 1974 Act—which I believe could be argued—and the only basis for the obligation to exempt is contained in section 9 and the schedule that includes religious exemption, the words "good reason" must include a basis not exclusively related to the practice direction.

Surely, in all conscience, it is reasonable for us to make provision in the Bill to ensure that we do not get into the tangle of difficulties mentioned by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West. There is inconsistency, on the evidence that I have seen, in the way in which the matter is being handled by different courts. There is a good case in principle for excluding those with genuine religious convictions. It will not lead to a rash of applications. It would be sensible to bring the Juries Act 1974 up to date with what I regard as reasonable and proper practice, in the interests not only of the Exclusive Brethren but of others who hold similar convictions. That would also deal with what I fear could also be difficulty in the case of majority verdicts under section 17 of the 1974 Act. If people were effectively exempting themselves from participating in a majority verdict, it would be a very difficult problem for the courts.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My hon. Friend is legally qualified and I am not. Can he tell me what happens under the existing law if someone who believes that he ought not to serve as a juror turns up but refuses to take the jurors' oath or affirmation?

Mr. Cash: That is governed by a subsequent section in the Juries Act which deals with the various offences of failure to comply with a summons. Section 20(4) provides:

"A person shall not be liable to be punished under the preceding provisions of this section if he can show some reasonable cause for his failure to comply with the summons".

Although he may have technically committed the offence, such a person may be able to excuse himself on the basis of "reasonable cause". We return again and again to the question: what is "reasonable cause" or "good reason"?

We should clarify the matter by passing the new clause. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give reasonable consideration to the arguments which I have advanced and which, no doubt, others will put forward.

Mr. Bermingham: A long time ago there was talk in the land that anyone who was a conscientious objector went to prison. That was during the first world war. Then suddenly people began to think about the issue, and began to have some sense. People such as the Quakers, for whom I have infinite respect, served in the second world war not as soldiers—because they were conscientious objectors—but as ambulance men for the field hospital in which my father served. After the war he said that they were the bravest men that he had ever known. When people have a conscientious objection to something, it is because of a profoundly held belief. The Exclusive Brethren have a profoundly held belief that they should not serve in judgment on others.

For once I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who showed us the dichotomy that arose between a practice direction and a section of a subsequent Act. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee unanimity of practice in this country, no matter how we try, as was rightly pointed out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). What do we find—the events that took place in Coventry. We find that certain other judges take a robust view. I have had the misfortune to fall foul of such a robust view. We were told, "The man must serve," and serve he did. A disagreement arose and when the final note came after three or four hours' deliberation—we had the practice direction in two hours, 10 minutes—it was a majority verdict. We were told, "Nine of us are for, two of us are against, and one won't say because he objects to sitting in judgment." That was the man who had been forced to serve.

What did we do? The defendant had to stand trial again; the jury was locked. Are we seeking to put people of conscience—whose conscience we respect—in such a position that they know that because they stand by their conscience they may affect the livelihood or way of life of another? Let us consider the case that I mentioned. That person had to stand trial again. The outcome on the first or second occasion matters not. The point is that more than one person suffered. The witnesses, the defendant, the state, and the man who stood by his conscience all suffered. Do we really want that to happen? The Lord Chancellor's Department sent out an advice but one cannot enforce an advice.

What are we asking the House to do? The new clause seeks to turn back the clock to Lord Widgery's direction, which said that if a matter of conscience is involved a juror should not serve. A provision later in the Bill removes the right of peremptory challenge; it is a provision with which I violently disagree. We shall leave the right to challenge for cause. As a practising lawyer, I know what I shall do.

Every time someone says, "I'm from the Exclusive Brethren" I shall challenge for cause for all the reasons given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West. *[Interruption.]* It is all right for the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), whom we nearly exported to Yorkshire, to say that that is his right, but do we really want to start building up challenges for cause in which we test a person's religious belief to justify the challenge?

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) has illustrated the point that I wanted to make. He has shown the farcical nature of challenge for cause. We have been told that there is no need to have peremptory challenge because one can challenge for cause, but if one challenges for cause in Coventry, will that be held to be a good challenge for cause by the judge who insisted that those people should sit on a jury?

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Gentleman has made a valid and strong point with which I entirely agree. I sought to argue that, if the matter is left to the lottery of the individual choice of judges, whether it be on challenge for cause or under the Juries Act 1974, we shall get different results. We shall get a different outcome in Coventry from that in Snaresbrook or elsewhere.

Mr. Hind: The hon. Gentleman knows my view on peremptory challenge. Is it not clear that we shall build up a body of law on challenge for cause that will inevitably be tested by the Court of Appeal time and again? We shall extend the time that cases will take to try as a result.

Mr. Bermingham: I have just realised why I did not export the hon. Gentleman to Yorkshire: I agree with what he has just said. He has made a valid point showing the shortsightedness of the Bill in removing the right of peremptory challenge and leaving only challenge for cause. He is right in saying that if we are not careful we shall go down the American road; it takes four of five days to empanel a jury in America. The Minister may tell me that I am seeing mountains where there are none. If he opposes the new clause, I shall merely tell him that he has given me my first 20 or 30 challenges for cause. I shall challenge for cause on the ground that a person has a right not to serve as a matter of conscience.

I shall seek to detain the House no longer. I hope that the Minister will listen to the voices crying from both sides of the House, and in particular to the voice of justice, which cries that the jury must be free in its deliberations and that no one in the jury room must be reluctant, whether for religious or other reasons. If a juror is reluctant, he will not play the full part that is so necessary in trial by jury and to the future of the person on trial. In conscience, I ask the Minister to use his conscience and to support the new clause.

7.15 pm

Mr. Lawrence: If the Government do not like the new clause, they have only themselves to blame. Many of us, especially those who are lawyers, warned the Government that if they abolished peremptory challenge something like this was bound to happen. At present following the practice direction, the judge, in his discretion, may excuse the Exclusive Brethren or anyone for reasons of conscience from serving on the jury. If he fails to do so, it is never in the interests of counsel—either prosecution or defence—to allow to serve on the jury someone who clearly does not want to serve and who has no interest in contributing to justice. Under the rule of peremptory challenge, the Exclusive Brethren, the Plymouth Brethren or the conscientious objector is nearly always challenged. That is one of the safety valves provided by peremptory challenge. Now that that is being abolished, the Exclusive Brethren and those who are concerned about conscientious objection are rightly worried.

We now have to choose between the complicated procedure of challenging for cause, which no one would welcome, and the new clause, which will give those under the pressure of conscientious objection the right to say, "No; I do not want to serve on the jury." Conscientious objection is a traditional privilege that the citizen of Britain has always been able to enjoy in a whole range of activities. It is a mark of a free society and we should not forbid it.

Although I should not have supported this change in any other circumstances, because I should have thought it entirely unnecessary, the stubborn determination of the Government to carry on with the proposal to abolish peremptory challenge leaves me no alternative but to support the new clause to ensure justice and protect the tradition of exclusion for conscientious objectors.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I do not intend to detain the House unduly because from the speeches made thus far it is fairly clear that there is a general welcome for the new clause. It is right that I should place on record, as other hon. Members have, the fact that in normal circumstances it is the duty of the citizen to submit himself to jury service. It is part of the price that we pay for living in a democracy, as the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) said.

In my experience of working in the legal profession, it never failed to surprise me how readily people submit themselves for jury service. Some are prepared to wait for days on end before being called. When they are called to serve, they do so willingly, and regard it as part of life in a free society. We all subscribe to that view.

I confess that I was extremely worried when I read of the reports that have been referred to. In some courts in England, members of the Exclusive Brethren were denied the right not to serve on juries on religious grounds. That was a step back from the position that pertained many years ago. As we have heard, it is only recently that difficulties have arisen about not serving on juries on religious grounds. Most hon. Members who have expressed an interest in the matter have received copies of the arguments that were used by the Exclusive Brethren and the Plymouth Brethren in seeking to be excused, and the arguments used by the courts to deny them that right. That disturbed me. In the past, courts allowed exclusion for that reason, but, suddenly, a spate of applications were refused and so I came to the view that the system was breaking down.

It has already been mentioned that the right to peremptory challenge is to be withdrawn when the Bill becomes law. Then this clause will be the only way in which people can be excused on religious grounds. Essentially, it is a matter of principle—a right that people with conscientious objections should be able to exercise.

I come from a Welsh tradition of nonconformity. Over generations and centuries people fought hard to achieve

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religious freedoms and rights. It is right that hon. Members continue to uphold such principles. When we consider that such rights are being denied, we should uphold them.

As I stated, the arguments have been well rehearsed. In view of the clear support for this small but important measure, I sincerely hope that the Government will accept the new clause.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): As a non-lawyer, I intervene briefly to speak against the new clause. I am delighted to see the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) in the Chamber. The parallel with conscientious objection against war was not convincing. Those who objected were against war in principle. In this case, those who seek exemption are not against justice. It was not a direct parallel.

We must determine whether there is a good case for exempting from jury service people who are able, intelligent and conscientious and examine the problems that we face nowadays in getting good juries. We saw recent cases of intimidation of jurors in Birmingham. There is growing evidence that many cases are becoming complex. We must now think carefully before introducing a blanket exemption on religious grounds.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) spoke about the brethren. Of course, the new clause does not mention the brethren at all—it mentions religious belief. Quite frankly, the sort of cross-examination that the hon. Gentleman envisaged taking place before a jury is sworn fills me with apprehension about clogging up the system of justice. He envisaged a vicar being cross-examined on whether someone was a church attender or a church member. To go through that sort of rigmarole when one is trying to swear in a jury will slow down rather than accelerate the jury process.

Mr. Archer: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to deploy his argument, but he is not entitled to attribute to me things that I did not say. I certainly did not paint a picture of a long cross-examination of a pastor or minister of religion about whether someone attended his church. How long could cross-examination on that point conceivably last?

Sir George Young: I thought that the right hon. and learned Gentleman said that he was sure that the pastor would give evidence. We shall find out from *Hansard* whether he said that. A pastor could give evidence about the religious beliefs of an individual who had been called to jury service. That would slow down the process of jury service. I do not share the view that no one would abuse the exemption. I can think of many people who would like an excuse not to serve on a jury. As the new clause is drafted, it would be perfectly possible for anybody to claim, "I have a religious belief that protects me against jury service. I wish to be exempt." I do not accept that that is a sensible way to make progress.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir George Young: I shall not give way. My remarks will be brief.

Each time a parliamentary problem arises, I am, like other hon. Members, lobbied by the brethren. On previous occasions, I was swayed by the force of their argument. In 1979, I supported my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) in the case that he deployed against rating. On the occasion when I was visited at my advice bureau, I was struck by the fragility of the argument, and I said so to those who came to see me, and explained that I would speak against it. I did not like their phrase "yoked to unbelievers". There is a risk of enshrining in statute a questionable approach to one's fellow citizens. When one is swearing in a jury, the basic question is whether they are able people who would perform their task. Like the rest of us, the brethren benefit from the imprisonment of criminals and the protection of society that our judicial system offers. I was not persuaded that being yoked to unbelievers was a sufficient cause for exemption.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in principle, there is little between what he just objected to and, for example, pacifists? They may take a similar line because they regard an issue of principle in the same way.

Sir George Young: I tried to deal with that matter in a sentence at the beginning of my speech. Those who seek protection behind the new clause are in favour of justice and the judicial process, and they want criminals to be put in prison. Those who objected to war were against war. That is why I do not accept that there is a direct parallel with conscientious objection.

Some obligations of citizenship are indivisible. Tax paying is one and sitting on a jury is another. I should be gravely disturbed if the Government are minded to accept new clause 16.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Like other right hon. and hon. Members, I have been subject to a great deal of canvassing on this subject. To use a word that has already been mentioned, some of it has been rather robust, to the point at which it almost persuaded me to be less than sympathetic to the proposal. I am convinced by the strength of the belief of those who have sought to enlist my support that this is a measure that, in turn, I should support.

I was interested in a phrase used by the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). He took exception to the expression, "yoked to unbelievers." I do not share all the beliefs of the Exclusive Brethren. If this were an argument about doctrine, I could think of several points that I would like robustly to put to them. But I do not for a moment want to detract from their right to believe as they do. This is a matter of conscience. If their consciences drive them in a certain direction, it is not my right to seek to alter that or to drive them in another direction. The truth is that the issue is inextricably linked to the right of peremptory challenge. It is proposed that that should be abolished, although, happily, north of the Tweed it still exists.

My experience of peremptory challenge has always been that when one arrives in court the court officer or usher has inevitably, by the intelligence system that operates on these occasions, found out who might wish to be excused and for what reason. Therefore, the peremptory challenge is frequently an informed one, based on the knowledge that there is a person who has a substantial objection to service.

If the proposal is enacted there may be a slowing up in the administration of justice to the extent that the depth of

a person's religious belief will have to be examined. However, I cannot help thinking that a recognised form will soon be achieved which will satisfy the judges.

7.30 pm

What if the administration of justice is slowed up? Is that not a legitimate price to pay if, as a consequence, one is ensuring that a person who has a conscience against serving on a jury is entitled not to do so? To have people serving on juries whose conscience so divides them from those with whom they must serve and makes their contribution to the work of the jury impossible cannot strengthen the jury system or the system of justice.

The proposal is right in principle, and, if enacted, it will avoid the evils of practice which might otherwise arise. For those reasons, it should commend itself to the whole House.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): First, I hope that the Government will accept this new clause, which I have signed, or make some positive move in that direction. We all accept that it is not the job of Parliament or the Government to make provision for people's strange views. I do not like wearing seat belts, and we all object in particular to things of that sort. But it would be wrong to consider this matter in that regard. There is no doubt that we are dealing with a deeply held religious belief, of which all hon. Members who have spoken to the brethren and who have observed their rites in our communities must be aware.

Secondly, the Government must be aware that the present circumstances in some instances cause great offence and distress to those involved.

Thirdly, we must bear in mind that in this case we are dealing not with an anti-social group of people who cause social problems, but with a group who lead good lives as good citizens whom we would not wish to condemn in any way.

Finally, I hope that the Government will think about the problem in so far as it affects the courts. How does it help the judicial process to have reluctant jurors? Will it not simply be a prescription for injustice to the defendant? It seems unreasonable that the Government cannot make some move in this direction.

I am sorry that the excellent amendment No. 2, which I and some hon. Friends tabled, is not being debated with this new clause. It calls upon the Government to give guidance in statute to the courts to exercise their discretion so that religious beliefs and deeply held convictions are taken into account. That would be not an instruction to judges, but some sort of guidance on how they should exercise their discretion.

I hope that the Government will appreciate that we are dealing with a matter that is important to the administration of justice and the respect that the House should have for the deeply held religious views of a group within our community.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): Two matters are of particular interest in this debate. The first is the inordinate number of lawyers on both sides of the House who seem to turn out for an interesting legal point. The second is that this is one of the few occasions on which we can all truly say that we have no self-interest whatever in the matter under discussion.

Members of the sects to whom we are referring not only do not wish to serve on juries, but do not vote, join political parties or take part in many aspects of collective decision making. Surely that is their right.

It is not a question of whether we resent some group being allowed to wriggle out of jury service. We are considering two different questions. First, are the interests of justice served by forcing a member of a sect to serve on a jury? If a person by definition will not play his or her proper part in arriving at a collective decision with other jurors, is it in the interests of justice or of the defendant? It is not.

Secondly, does the present rule cover the matter adequately? The Government will no doubt argue that it does. From the many cases cited tonight, the answer, again, must be no. It allows the awkward or robust judge, if we are to use those various euphemisms, through his discretion, to circumvent the spirit, if not the letter, of the law. Therefore, we should consider the new clause as a reasonable means of ensuring that people with strong religious beliefs and conscientious objections against serving on a jury are not forced to do so.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Those of my constituents who are members of the Exclusive Brethren have made the point to me that they are obliged to rely on the provisions of section 9 of the Juries Act 1974 to be excused from jury service. As the House has heard from several hon. Members, it is clear that that discretion does not operate uniformly. Often those who object on conscientious grounds are excused without difficulty, but on several occasions, which have been reported to all hon. Members interested in this matter, one judge or another has clearly not felt able to excuse a person who has been summoned for jury service.

I was interested to read the report of Lord Morris's committee which considered this matter in 1965. The committee decided that it was better to deal with the question of being excused from jury service on a common sense basis rather than by statutory exemption. In his report, Lord Morris said:

"we have no doubt that summoning officers and courts will deal with their applications sympathetically."

Unfortunately, that does not always happen. Clearly that causes distress to members of the Plymouth and Exclusive Brethren, and they have asked me and others to support this new clause.

In reply to my constituents, I quoted the words of my hon. Friend the Minister who is in charge of the Bill. In Committee, he said:

"We must not open loopholes through which others can drive a coach and horses. In the end it is a matter of judgment."

We know that this is a matter of judgment, but it does not seem to be working as we might hope. My hon. Friend went on to say that between the Home Office and the Lord Chancellor's Department there was unanimity of view, and

"that the Lord Chancellor's Department should write to the court service in December 1987 to place on record the specific concerns of the Exclusive Brethren and the Plymouth Brethren, to draw them to the attention of the judiciary and to remind the courts of the relevant laws and procedures." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee H*, 29 March 1988; c. 883-85.]

Was that letter sent by the Lord Chancellor's Department in December 1987, and is the Minister satisfied that it has worked as intended and is working

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uniformly? The House has a choice to pass this new clause or to continue to rely on the discretionary procedure. That is the crux of the matter.

To help me to make up my mind whether to support the new clause, I ask my hon. Friend to tell me whether the provisions of schedule 1 to the Juries Act 1974, especially the part which refers to people being excused on grounds of conscience, still operates. It says that a person shall be excused if he is

"a vowed member of any religious order living in a monastery, convent or other religious community."

Do the Exclusive Brethren who live in the religious community in my constituency qualify for exemption under that schedule? What is the definition of a religious community? I suspect that we are getting near to an agreement that people who are vowed members of a religious community, whether it be residential or non-residential, should be exempt from jury service.

If my hon. Friend cannot accept the new clause, will he ask the Lord Chancellor to issue further guidance, requests or instructions to the judiciary to have regard to the genuinely held religious scruples that have been demonstrated by the Exclusive Brethren so as to achieve the uniformity of practice that so many hon. Members have made clear is greatly to be desired?

Mr. Worthington: I have listened with great interest to hon. Members who have much experience in the courts. One might have thought that the objection to the new clause would be the difficulty in obtaining good juries and the fact that a coach and horses can be driven through the present exemptions, or the floodgates can be opened, or whatever image one wishes to use. But apparently that argument is not being used. The system seems to work reasonably well, although I believe that there are exemptions for holidays, which would be much more prone to having a coach and horses driven through them. It is difficult to accept that the new clause would cause major problems to the courts. The Minister will have to find stronger grounds than that.

It will not be difficult for the courts to establish the strength of a claim to conscientious objection on the ground of religious belief. Some time ago a Member of the House was named because he objected to the presence of others at Prayers. It would be difficult for some us to make a similar claim to a long pattern of religious belief as the ground upon which one should be excluded. It is difficult to pretend that one has been a member of a faith for a long time.

We have heard what was said by the judge who saw the brethren who were claiming exemption. He said:

"I have your letter. I notice you refer to the scriptures. Have you considered the gospels where it says 'Render to Caesar what is Caesar's'? Have you got anything to say?"

The reply was, "I respect the court." The judge then left. It is difficult to accept that as a mature consideration of the case. The judge also said:

"If we went by this, I would be out of a job. You are a British citizen with privileges like voting; you therefore need to be included also in services. You will have to serve."

When one member of the Plymouth Brethren referred to the scriptural background, the judge said:

"No, that's enough. There are other scriptures in the New Testament which refer to Pharisees. I suggest that you have a look at those as well. Your reasons are not sufficient. You will have to decide when it comes to the day whether to attend or pay the penalty."

The worst example was the clerk of the court saying:

"The judge has no time for conscientious objection."

Those actions by judges do far more to weaken the English legal system than anything that we may do today by allowing conscientious objection. That is why I hope that the House will support the new clause.

7.45 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Like many hon. Members, I became involved in this matter because members of the brethren came to see me. Having read all that they gave me, I have come to the conclusion that new clause 16 is fundamentally wrong. First, it is wrong in principle. Secondly, even if the House finds the principle acceptable, the wording is wrong.

The principle at stake is that of being able to opt out of jury service on the grounds of religious belief. What justification have we been offered? The letter from the brethren to the Minister of State dated 15 April this year states that their conscience is governed

"by conviction based on the holy scriptures".

The first belief is that it is wrong to judge, while the second is that it is wrong to sit with unbelievers. There are difficult implications for all of us in both beliefs. If we accept the point that it is wrong to judge, does that mean juries only, or judges, too? Either way, it undermines our concept of the rule of law. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) said, the belief that it is wrong to sit with unbelievers postulates two classes of citizens: brethren and others. We enshrine that concept in the statute book at our peril.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend may recall that one of the most important British constitutional cases was that of Bradlaugh in the 19th century. That dealt with whether a Member of this House should be allowed to take his seat on the basis of his religious conviction that he would not swear an oath but would affirm. That case reverberated throughout the House for a long time and was decided in Bradlaugh's favour. My hon. Friend is dealing with an issue that goes to the centre of gravity of the constitution of the House and the country.

Mr. Wilshire: Time is against me, Madam Deputy Speaker. Were it not, I would happily enter into a long debate about the significance of religious belief and how it is translated into freedom of action, which are two different concepts. For my purposes, I see the relevance in the judge saying:

"Render to Caesar what is Caesar's."

We are all citizens of the United Kindom. We receive things from it and it grants us rights and privileges. In return, we all have civic duties and responsibilities, one of which is jury service.

There is a danger in trying to legislate via biblical quotations. I shall explain where it leads using a simple example. The Children of God are a fringe Christian sect who believe sincerely that the saying in the New Testament,

"I will make you fishers of men,"

means that their young women members should become prostitutes to recruit new members. Will that be entered as a defence against a charge of soliciting in the future?

The wording of new clause 16 raises two problems. First, it does not define religious belief, and, secondly, it

provides no test of the genuineness of religious belief. The only definition to hand is that offered by the brethren in their letter to the Minister—that it should be based upon holy scripture. Whose holy scripture is relevant? We are on a dangerous path.

I have with me a book that looks exactly like the Bible. To the Children of God that book contains divinely inspired words. In that book, however, there are detailed instructions on how to be a prostitute and it advocates sex betwen children and adults.

I believe that to try to establish the genuineness of religious belief is dangerous. Will it simply be enough to say, "I do not believe in jury service"? If so, that will provide everyone with a cop-out. I hope that new clause 16 will be rejected. Like it or not, we are all part of British society.

Mr. Madden *rose*——

Mr. Wilshire: I shall not give way, because time is against me.

We all benefit from being part of that society and we owe it something in return. We fulfil our calling when we play our proper part in making it work.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I hesitate to follow the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) down some of the paths he was travelling. Some of his arguments would be extremely dangerous were they applied to other areas upon which we legislate.

I wish to make a brief speech because hon. Members generally are in agreement and most of us would like to move to a vote. I want juries to consist of as wide a cross-section of the public as possible. I believe that that hope is common ground among most hon. Members. I believe that we would all agree that members of the public should not be excused from jury service lightly. That should occur only when there is good reason for it. There are two arguments that I should like to make to emphasise to the Minister the seriousness with which we consider this new clause.

The first argument relates to the principle of religious belief. If people have a strongly held religious belief that precludes them from certain activities, even though they are desirable civic duties, we should respect their right to opt out. If the Exclusive Brethren find it offensive to sit on juries because it is against their religous principles, we should make provision for their exclusion from such service.

The hon. Member for Spelthorne has misled the House. We do not have to accept people's religious beliefs to respect them. We now live in a multi-cultural, multi-religious country and it is dangerous to criticise other people's religious beliefs in the way that the hon. Member for Spelthorne has sought to do. We believe that one should respect religious beliefs even though one does not agree with them. We believe that the Exclusive Brethren have a strong case and we shall support the new clause that was moved by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer).

The second important argument for the Minister to consider—it was made in Committee and has been repeated today—is that a reluctant juror is not an asset to justice. The Minister acknowledged that in Committee, and if he plans to resist the new clause he must explain to the House how he can square that circle. It will not be in the interest of justice for reluctant jurors to sit on juries.

I hope that on those grounds and on the ground of respecting religious beliefs the Minister will accept the new clause.

Mr. John Patten: I am sure that all of us would agree that we want to have the widest possible pool of jurors from whom to pick. The Bill widens the pool from which that selection takes place because it will make it possible for those between the ages of 65 and 70 who wish to serve on juries to do so. I believe that that has been widely welcomed.

It is clear from this debate and the powerful speeches that we face a collision between principle and practice regarding the operation of jury selection—a collision between strongly held religious convictions, which I appreciate and agree are those that a free society should mark, and the demands of good citizenship. I am sure that all of us would recognise that we are on a collision course and that it is not an easy problem to solve. My hon. Friends the Members for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and others have tried to deal with the problem in an extremely helpful way.

Whatever scheme is introduced it is clear that, in the end, it is not a mechanistic test. It is not like sticking a piece of litmus paper into a solution to see what colour it turns. Someone must decide whether a person is a conscientious objector or whether he should serve in the armed forces. In Australia someone must decide whether someone has a proper reason not to vote. In this connection we must decide whether someone has a genuine, conscientiously held religious conviction that should persuade the summoning officer for the jury that that person, be he a Jehovah's Witness, a member of the Select Brethren or a member of the Roman Catholic, Jewish or Anglican faiths, should not serve on the jury. There is no easy way of doing that. A human being must decide whether another human being has such a conviction. There is no magic formula.

The formula suggested by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) does not save a human being from having to judge whether another human being has strongly held religious convictions and to decide whether that should exempt him from jury service. Such arguments exercised the Morris committee. I do not believe it is necessary for us to go over the findings of that committee and what it considered was and was not in the public interest.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that when dealing with the manner in which discretion is exercised the problem is that there are insufficient criteria to determine the question in one direction or another? That is what leads to inconsistency and, in the absence of peremptory challenge, it will lead to reluctant jurors. That will create chaos in our legal system.

Mr. Patten: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I am discussing the general principles at the moment rather than learned judges' practical applications of the rules and practice guidelines handed down. The points that my hon. Friend has raised are similar to those raised by my distinguished constitutent, Mr. Bryan Wilson, who is a fellow of All Souls. He is not a member of the Select Brethren or a Jehovah's Witness, but he has given a lot of the intellectual underpinning to the argument. Nothing sharpens up a Minister more than to have a prominent

[Mr. Patten]

constituent leading the campaign—especially if he keeps the cellar at All Souls. There are fearful sanctions that he could exercise against me should the vote go against me.

Mr. Hind: Does my hon. Friend agree that something could be taken from the recommendations of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who cited Lord Widgery's practice direction to the judges on how to deal with cases where there was some true reason for the citizen not taking part in jury service? Perhaps that is the way to resolve this matter. The Lord Chancellor could make a direction for circulation to judges so that they could interpret section 9 of the Juries Act 1974.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend has made an extremely helpful suggestion; he has put his finger on it. For the sake of argument, let us suppose that we voted in favour of the new clause. That would not stop Jehovah's Witnesses or members of the Select Brethren or other religions arguing their cases to the jury summoning officer or the judge of appeal. The new clause would not get the summoning officer or the judge of appeal out of making the difficult decision on whether a person's conscientious objections were genuinely held.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): Does not my hon. Friend accept that, in addition to those who are excluded from jury service at the moment, there are those who are specifically permitted to seek to be excused from jury service? They simply tell the officer who requests their service the reason for that. All that we are seeking is a simple extension of the rule to a relatively small number of people. Is it not as simple as that?

8 pm

Mr. Patten: I do not think that my hon. Friend is quite right. It is perfectly simple. If one has a series of exemptions from the public duty of a citizen to serve on a jury which is based on a profession, such as being a Member of Parliament or a barrister, that class is easily identifiable. It is slightly different—I do not think that I am logic chopping—for someone to turn up and say that he is a member of Jehovahs' Witnesses, the Roman Catholic Church or the Jewish faith and to show something from his rabbi, bishop or pastor to attest that that is so. It may be easy in the case of those mainstream faiths, but my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) is right in saying that many organisations call themselves religions and, under certain circumstances, from each of those organisations there could come arguments about strongly held religious convictions. I do not want to exaggerate the importance of that, but it would ill behove the House to dismiss it as if it were a problem that would never arise.

Mr. Ashby: My hon. Friend will appreciate that we are concerned only about these two sects and it would be obnoxious to spell them out in the legislation. As the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) said, would it not be possible for the summoning officer to have a letter from the pastor saying that the person belonged to that sect? If the summoning officer was not satisfied, all that he would have to do would be to refer the matter to the judge. Judges are highly paid. They are highly qualified to do just this—to judge. Why do we not let them judge? That is their job.

Mr. Patten: It is exactly that process of judgment by judges that is being criticised. My hon. Friend is right in intimating that it would be obnoxious to enshrine in legislation the names of one, two, three or more faiths. The trouble is that if one does not do that, not next year, but the year after or the year after that, one could well find other people coming forward and using that as a perfectly legitimate excuse.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: I must answer the Uxbridge question.

Mr. Archer: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: I am just answering the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). As he said, those who are ineligible include ministers of religion and, in the words of the statute,

"A vowed member of any religious order living in a monastery, convent or other religious community"

—"living in" being the key words. Those people are in a slightly different category. They are ineligible for jury service on the ground that their vocation and position in the community are incompatible with jury service. The question before us is the slightly different one whether adherence to a particular religion but living in the community should be treated in the same way. That is where the line needs to be drawn.

Since the Committee debate, I have discussed the matter further with my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor. It would not be proper for either him or me to comment on the three cases that have arisen in this calendar year and say whether they were correctly or incorrectly treated. Those matters are within the discretion of the court and would remain so should the new clause be passed.

I should like to answer a highly pertinent question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge. The Lord Chancellor is considering whether the December guidance on the law and practice relating to jury service should be supplemented. That is happening at the moment. My noble and learned Friend and I share the hope—it is important that I put these words on the record—that applications for excusal from jury service based on genuine conscientious scruples should be sensitively and sympathetically considered by the courts within the discretion that the law allows them. My noble and learned Friend will not hesitate to issue further directions along those lines should he judge it necessary to do so. I hope that the House will agree on reflection that that is the right way to proceed.

Mr. Shersby: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker) Order. Has the Minister finished his speech?

Mr. Patten: I am afraid I have.

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that you have only just arrived in the Chair, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) moved the new clause at 6.46 pm and there seems to have been a great deal of unanimity of view. I sense that many hon. Members wish to vote. Will you accept a motion, That the Question be now put?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall consider it later.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I shall overlook the unusual discourtesy of my hon. Friend the Minister in rising to speak while colleagues of his who have sat through the debate were still trying to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It means that my hon. Friend will have to ask your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to reply to points that have yet to be made in the debate.

There is only one point that I wish to make. It is quite clear that the new clause does not refer only to the Exclusive Brethren. It is general rather than particular. It is also clear that it could be abused for economic reasons by those who have no authentic religious belief. Therefore, the question must be: how does one protect those who have an authentic religious belief while eliminating as far as possible those who would wish to make a spurious claim of religious belief for their own economic advantage to avoid jury service? That is a real problem, and I doubt not that it is one that taxes the Government, and reasonably so.

Reference has been made by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) to the fact that it is usual in wartime for those who successfully plead conscientious objection nevertheless to serve the community, often in peril of their lives—*[Interruption.]* Will the Government Whip on duty allow the Minister to listen to what I am saying? I thank him. I should have thought that the problem could be avoided in the following way. If the new clause were carried, and then when it went to another place an amendment were made to it that those who claim exemption rather than excuse on the grounds of religious belief should have to be present at the court building, although not necessarily in the court proceedings, for the duration of the trial, the conscientious objection would be met, but those involved would secure no economic advantage from it. I should have thought that that would protect those of genuine conscience and at the same time protect the judicial system from abuse of the conscientious claim for the economic, commercial or unworthy advantage of spurious claimants.

Mr. Mike Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): The argument is fairly simple. It cannot be just for people to be forced to serve on juries when they have strong religious objections. It cannot be just for the accused to have reluctant jurors. The tradition of the House is to defend the right of conscience and religious freedom. Present interpretations of the law are not serving those causes. In the absence of a clear commitment and clearer directions to judges, we should amend the law. This is a sensible new clause and we should support it.

Mr. Ashby: As we do not have jury challenge, we could now have jurors who cannot read, which will cause problems in cases in which there are large numbers of documents. We shall now have jurors who perhaps cannot speak or understand English. Yet we are told that people who do not want to participate in jury service will be forced to do so.

In this Chamber there are many lawyers with a wealth of experience. They have given their views, but been completely ignored by the Minister. This new clause is not open to abuse, and to say that it is is nonsense. It would be obnoxious if an amendment named the Plymouth Brethren. A juror should come along and give his objection and a judge should then decide whether that objection is genuine. For those reasons, I support the new clause.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I shall always respect a Christian's right to conscientious objection, which is what the clause is really about. I welcome what the Minister said, and, as a non-lawyer, ask the right hon.and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) to clarify something for me. Would a judge betake a specifically legal view when considering whether to excuse a juror, or would he, as a Christian member of the Church of England or of the Church of Rome—a body other than the Plymouth or Exclusive Brethren—make a Christian judgment of the individual who was seeking to be excused jury service in certain circumstances? If he did that, he might take the view that the individual concerned should be part of the leaven of society, share its burdens, and therefore undertake jury service.

Mr. Watts: The mood of the House and the balance of the debate has been overwhelmingly in favour of the new clause, so I find it unnecessary to reiterate the points that have been fully and persuasively made by other hon. Members. However, I have one question for my hon. Friend the Minister, which I would have made in an intervention had he not sat down so quickly.

The Minister said that it was his wish that all who have a genuine religious objection to jury service should be released from that obligation. If that is his intention and that of his right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor, in view of the poor past performance of the guidance for achieving that objective, why does he still seek to rely on further guidance notes? Can he not accept that there is an overwhelming case for accepting the new clause so that a right is enshrined in law that would make it much more difficult for judges, such as those who have been cited by Opposition Members, to say that they do not believe in religious objection?

Mr. Archer: I want briefly to reply to two questions that I have been asked. The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) asked whether a judge would decide this matter as a Christian. He will decide as a judge. He will decide, as a simple question of fact, whether the applicant has a genuine objection on religious grounds to serving on a jury. He will do that, one hopes, in the interests of tolerance and of justice.

The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) raised the difficulty of deciding whether an applicant genuinely had a religious objection or whether he might be motivated by economic considerations. I would be content to leave the amendment that he proposed to be discussed in another place. I can see the argument, but I am not sure that the House needs to resolve it tonight.

The issue tonight is: will it be too difficult for a court to decide whether someone has genuine religious objections? I am sure the Minister will recognise that when I opened the debate I tried to face the objections to the new clause. If I were persuaded that any of them were valid and had been established, I would not persist in calling a Division. But the only objection that has been ventilated is the apparent difficulty that a court might have in deciding whether an objection is genuine. I do not see how that could be a difficulty for a court. If a person says he has genuine religious objections, he will have to establish that he is a regular member of a congregation. I cannot believe

[Mr. Archer]

that anyone will attend a congregation, Sunday after Sunday for years on end, because one day he might be called for jury service and would not want to do it. There can be no doubt about whether someone has attended a congregation. It can easily be resolved.

The only remaining issue is whether a congregation genuinely holds this doctrine. There is no difficulty in calling someone in authority from the congregation to say that that is its doctrine. I cannot foresee any problems for the courts.

Mr. Cash: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the point that he has just made is equally applicable in principle in the case of religious communities?

Mr. Archer: I should have thought that it was. I fully take the hon. Gentleman's earlier point, but at the moment I cannot amend the new clause further. This is a limited amendment, and there can be no problem about this aspect of it.

None of the arguments would benefit from being repeated. I have respected the Minister's approach throughout our debates on the Bill. He has usually tried to address his mind to the matters that we have raised. On this one, for reasons that I do not follow, he has raised objections that do not exist. This is a sad day for British justice and tolerance. We propose to proceed to a Division.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 205, Noes 209.

Division No. 368] **[8.16 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashby, David
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Cleiland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gardiner, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Illsley, Eric
Irvine, Michael
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watts, John
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Woodcock, Mike
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*

Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. David Lightbown

Question accordingly negatived.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have to report to you that, in the last Division, the Division bell did not ring in St. Stephen's Tower, where my office is located. I should be grateful if you would cause an inquiry to be made into why it did not ring.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall ask the Serjeant at Arms to make inquiries into the failure of the Division bell.

New Clause 18

SALE OF KNIVES TO JUVENILES

'. (1) Any person who sells to a person under the age of sixteen an article to which section 132 of this Act applies shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (1) above shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.'.—*[Mrs. Ann Taylor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

8.30 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take the following new clauses:

No. 19—*Advertising of knives*—

'(1) Any person who sells, hires or offers for sale or hire with verbal, written or graphic reference to its potential offensive or defensive use an article to which section 132 of this Act applies shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (1) above shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.'.

No. 29—*Sale of knives to juveniles (No. 2)*—

'. (1) Any person who sells to a person under the age of eighteen an article to which section 132 of this Act applies shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (1) above shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.'.

No. 45—*Sale of offensive weapons to children*—

'No person shall supply, offer to supply or agree to supply any items referred to in section 134 of this Act to any person apparently under the age of 16 years.'.

No. 46—*Advertising of offensive weapons*—

'(1) No object which is an offensive weapon within the meaning of section 134 of this Act may be sold, hired or offered for sale with verbal, written or graphic reference to its potential offensive use.

(2) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.'.

Mrs. Taylor: Following the last interesting debate and very close vote, I hope that the Government will take a great deal of notice of the arguments to be marshalled in later debates, because the more Conservative Members listen to the arguments, the more they are willing to vote against the Government. I hope that the Government will take that on board and perhaps consider the points raised in the last debate and other ways of dealing with the problems that we discussed.

New clause 18 deals with another important issue—the problem of knives and the carrying of knives and, particularly, the sale of knives to juveniles and the way in which knives and other offensive weapons are advertised in this country. New clause 18 would ban the sale of knives to young people under age 16. Some people have suggested that we should ban the sale of knives to people under 18. We shall be happy to discuss what would be an appropriate age, but we have suggested banning the sale of knives to young people under 16 because knives are extremely dangerous weapons and are being used increasingly.

We must act quickly to counteract the serious knife-carrying sub-culture that appears to have developed, particularly among young people and in certain parts of the country. That is primarily, but not exclusively, a problem in London and, like many other problems that started in London, it is now being exported elsewhere. Perhaps the violence that we have seen recently in Essex and other rural parts of the country will make the Government realise that violent crime is not just an urban problem. It has pervaded the whole country and must be taken more seriously.

The carrying and use of knives has become increasingly commonplace. Between 1985 and 1986 the number of street robberies in London involving the use of knives rose by one third. In 1986, knives were used in 650 muggings and 1,100 violent attacks in Lambeth alone. We know that young people are increasingly involved in crime generally and that many of the offenders involved in street crime are young people.

The Minister of State, who is not here at present, told us in Committee that the peak age for offending is now 15, for both boys and girls. Many of us may well be surprised when we first learn at what age young people start to carry knives. In a recent police amnesty on playground weapons, knives were handed in from children as young as 11 or 12. When we discussed that problem in Committee, I quoted the case of a head teacher in my area of West Yorkshire who had confiscated many knives from youngsters in his school and handed them to the police during the amnesty and was quite rightly appalled to see even more offensive weapons, and weapons described as offensive, on sale to anyone.

In new clause 18 we are trying to make it as difficult as possible for youngsters to get hold of weapons. We must try to halt the trend for carrying knives by hitting at the root of the problem. If it is easy for young people to obtain knives, it is all too easy for them to carry and use them. We realise that simply by saying that weapons should not be sold to young people we shall not see the end of the problem. Youngsters will continue to obtain weapons from friends and parents, and some may steal them. But we should still try to put as many obstacles as possible in the way of children who try to obtain and use knives.

We have all heard about the events in Europe last week with the English soccer fans. I do not want to dwell on that now, but one incident involved a young West German who was stabbed by English supporters in one of the several fights that took place. It is clear, not just from [illegible] abroad, that carrying knives has become fashionable—strangely fashionable to those of us who are a little older—among young men wanting to promote a macho image. What develops as a fashion then becomes a necessity. Young people need to be convinced that it is silly and dangerous to carry knives.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I apologise for not being here for the start of my hon. Friend's speech. Is she aware of reports that there are certain gangs that will not allow a youth to join unless he has a knife on him and, in some cases, unless he can say that the knife has been used? Such is the knife culture in our sick society.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend is right to describe such a culture as part of a sick society. We have seen too many gangs of youngsters egging each other on and encouraging each other to use violence. That is a dangerous state of affairs.

We believe that the way to prevent the spread of that knife-carrying culture and of the groups to which my hon. Friend referred is to discourage people from as early an age as possible from carrying knives. At present, any young person can get hold of a knife or other dangerous weapon, and the new clause seeks to make that task much more difficult.

It was disturbing to read in newspaper reports last week that children as young as 10 or 11 are now carrying knives in London, out of fear. The problem was identified by a number of community and police consultative groups in a joint letter to the press, which said:

"The carrying of knives must be curbed before it spreads uncontrollably—for when one set of youths carries knives out of bravado, the next set carries them out of fear, for self-defence (which so easily results, not in security, but in the giving or receiving of injuries). Youths need to be persuaded that it is foolish not glamorous or protective to carry knives."

The police officer involved in the south London campaign to reduce the carrying of knives by the young there said that knife carrying was no longer simply for machismo or robbery, but because young people were afraid to walk the streets without protection.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I am aware of that campaign in south London because my constituency is affected by the knife culture. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that many young people who carry knives for protection end up being injured by those knives. Because they have protection, they get into a conflict, and the knife that they are carrying to protect themselves is used to injure them. That is an immense danger of which young people should be made aware.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend makes the valid point that knives are dangerous to the carrier as well as to the potential victim. As she says, the knife may be carried not as an offensive weapon but as a defensive weapon. That is a salutary point that should be emphasised to young people. A vicious circle of weapon carrying is being created, and we are trying to break it with our new clause.

Mr. Winnick: Especially if there is drink.

Mrs. Taylor: As my hon. Friend rightly says, this is especially so if drink is involved. That point relates to other amendments to this and other legislation that we

shall discuss at a later stage. The combination of knife carrying and the consumption of alcohol is extremely dangerous. It is something that young people who are under the age for drinking, and who should, we argue, be under the age for buying weapons, ought to bear in mind and have emphasised to them as part of their general education.

Young people fear that others may be carrying knives, so they themselves carry weapons for protection. As my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) said, that does not always have the desired effect. We want to break this dangerous habit of young people carrying offensive weapons for defensive reasons.

In Committee we welcomed and supported clause 132, and we accepted, with some reluctance but out of necessity, clause 133, which extends the powers of the police to stop people who are carrying knives and alters the onus of proof. The Government have argued that a ban on the sale of weapons such as that suggested in new clause 18 would be difficult to implement and would be ineffective. The Home Office has said:

"Nor does the Home Secretary believe that much would be achieved by banning the sales of knives to people under the age of 16. Many of the knives carried by young people are found in every home and imposing age restrictions on their sale could not prevent young people from getting hold of them."

The legislation banning the sale of solvent glues and of fireworks to children has not always prevented young people from getting hold of those commodities, but that does not invalidate the benefits of such legislation. It has reduced the number of children who get hold of such items without parental supervision. Extending such a ban increases parental guidance and authority over what children are doing. In view of some of the Government's comments on other matters, I should have thought that they would be interested in this. It has been argued that it is difficult for shopkeepers to tell the age of young people who are trying to buy knives. This is a problem, but it is one that will always exist. Such problems have not stopped the introduction of bans on the sale to juveniles of solvents, fireworks, cigarettes and alcohol.

We must stop the developing culture of weapons carrying among the young, and one of the best ways to do that is to make it more difficult for young people to obtain these weapons. We do not claim that the new clause will immediately stop the sale of knives to those under 16. Some youngsters look older than their years, but others will be discouraged from trying to buy weapons, or will find that they are refused when they try to do so and the responsible shopkeepers challenge them as to their age.

8.45 pm

We know that the Government are aware of the problems of the use of knives, but they have concentrated their efforts on making the possession of a knife without good reason the offence. We support that move and the ban on the sale of martial arts weapons. The new clause, which would ban the sale of knives to juveniles, would complement the steps being taken by the Government. If the Government were to accept the new clause, it would contribute towards breaking the culture of knife carrying.

New clause 19 seeks to control the advertising of knives and other offensive weapons. The Government see the possession of knives as the main problem, but we believe that this is only part of the problem. The growing sub-culture that encourages possession is one of the main difficulties that we face. Part of this may be due to fear, but a major part of the problem is the easy availability of knives and the way in which they are advertised. Action is needed to counter the sub-culture by reducing the glamour associated with it, which the advertisers of the knives encourage. The advertising of knives as offensive weapons must be stopped if we are to combat the problem of knife-carrying youths. The problem is particularly prevalent in gun and survivalist magazines, which often offer for mail order purchase offensive weapons and knives that can be dangerous.

In a letter to the Lambeth police consultative group the Home Secretary said:

"It would be difficult to seek to prohibit the advertising of weapons which can be purchased legally, nor do we believe that statutory controls would be a suitable means of attempting to influence such advertisements. The British code of advertising practice, however, exercises a voluntary control, and we have entered into discussion with the Advertising Standards Authority, which administers the code, to see whether there is scope for developing further guidance in relation to the advertising of weapons."

Progress on those lines is not adequate, but it seems doubtful that the manufacturers, the wholesalers and the retailers who advertise an object as having a defensive use will wish to be bound by a voluntary code. Given that the criminal law is to be changed to make it an offence to carry a knife or other implement in a public place, it seems only logical to place statutory controls over how such items are advertised. It makes a mockery of the law that, while it is illegal to have knives as offensive weapons in a public place, it is not illegal to have them advertised in a way that suggests that they have a use as a defensive weapon in a public place.

If the Government are serious about wanting to deal with the problem of knife carrying and the use of knives as an offensive weapon, they should accept the new clause to ban the advertising of such knives. The glamour of weaponry should be discouraged. The macho knife-carrying culture is something that advertising encourages, and we would like to see the problem tackled. I hope the Government will acknowledge that this is a real problem and accept our new clauses as constructive suggestions on how to deal with it.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I shall direct my remarks to new clause 29, which stands in my name. Like the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), I want to prohibit the sale of knives to young people. The difference between us is that I want to prohibit sale to those under 18 years as opposed to those under 16.

Like the hon. Lady, I am seriously worried by the increasing number of young people who carry knives. I agree that there is a spiral effect. Young people carry knives to project a macho image. I agree that the next step is for young people to carry them as a form of self-defence. I speak from personal experience. My son is now 19 years of age, and I recall that when he was 15 or 16 he asked me whether I thought that he should carry a knife for his self-defence. Fortunately, he came to me. I would have considered it a serious matter if a shopkeeper had sold him a knife. It would not have been an offence at that time, nor is it an offence now. For that reason, I have tabled new clause 29.

It is unfortunate that figures on the use of knives are so scanty. However, as the hon. Member for Dewsbury said, during the first half of 1987 the number of robberies, or street robberies involving the use of knives, or sharp

[Mr. Tony Favell]

instruments, increased by almost one third in London. Many of those offences involved young people. It was suggested in another place by Lord Caithness, Minister of State, Department of the Environment, that many youths in some parts of the country carry knives as everyday wear. At Burnage high school in Manchester, which is not far from my constituency, there was a horrendous murder of a young coloured child, resulting from the carrying of knives in the playground.

It has been estimated that 13 or 14 per cent. of all offences of violence are committed by persons under the age of 16 years. The figure increases to 25 per cent. when we include offences committed by those under the age of 18 years.

Like the hon. Member for Dewsbury, I welcome clause 132, which introduces the new offence of carrying a knife without lawful excuse. I have pressed for such a provision ever since I was elected to this place. I should like to see the clause go further, as the new clause suggests. If it were not an offence to sell tobacco to a person under 16 years of age, more would smoke even though it is not an offence to do so. If it were not an offence to sell liquor to someone under 18 years of age, I think that more would drink. If it were not an offence to supply drugs to persons of any age, more people would take drugs. More people will use knives, especially young people, if it is not an offence to sell such items to them.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I support the provisions in the Bill relating to offensive weapons, including knives. I support also the new clauses that have been tabled by my right hon. and hon. Friends, which I prefer to the two new clauses of a similar nature which I tabled. I want to strengthen still further the controls that are set out in the Bill. In saying that, I am representing the views of constituents in all walks of life. As I represent a multiracial constituency, I can say that I represent the views of all races as well.

My constituents, both as individuals and members of organisations within the community, are sickened by the injury, maiming and slaughter resulting from the use of dangerous implements, especially knives. Sometimes a knife is used in temper. That, of course, does not mitigate the results of that action for the victims. If a knife is carried, what might have resulted in a bloody nose can extend to the severing of an artery or the puncturing of a lung. What might have involved a bruise becomes a serious laceration. In other circumstances, knives are used for the cold and calculating creation of terror in the course of robbery or other crimes.

In the past year or so I can think of about six unlawful killings that have taken place in my constituency. It is true that not all of them have resulted in convictions for murder. Sometimes those who have committed the offences have not been apprehended. Alternatively, of those who have appeared before the courts, some have been found not guilty. However, that toll of unlawful killings is extremely high in one constituency over about a year.

We in Lambeth have been very much reinforced in our attitudes by the hard work that has been undertaken by those who have campaigned against knives. I refer especially to Jean Hayley and David Green, who have been associated with a campaign called WHY, which has operated in my constituency and beyond. The campaign has received the full co-operation of Lambeth borough council, including its recent leader. It has used our libraries to mount exhibitions of the sort of weapons that are used. Photographs have been shown of the ghastly results of the use of knives. This has helped to turn public opinion against knives. Of course, those who have supported WHY have not been the only ones to campaign, and my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) referred to the local police-community consultative committee. The local authority has been active, and that is true also of the local newspapers.

The results of this activity have been interesting. Many parts of the community have got together—tenants' associations, the WHY campaign, the police-community consultative committee and both black and white organisations have worked side by side—and there has been a fundamental change in public opinion. There is widespread disapproval among adults and older people of the carrying of knives, and that has started to cause a reduction in the habit. That is the only way in which crime can be fought effectively. If people in clubs and pubs disapprove of a course of action—in this instance, the carrying of knives—and if that view is taken by people in one's street, block or the house next door, eventually that course of conduct tends to diminish. That is the result if the view is taken generally by those with whom one lives, plays and works. It becomes less fashionable and less of a culture, with the result that the crime tends to diminish. That is the only way in which we can effectively control crime.

There are many examples. Harsh penalties have been introduced for heinous offences, including terrorism. If there is emotional, material and spiritual support within a community for particular types of crime, those crimes will continue to be committed, no matter how harsh the penalties, the punishment, the vigour of the pursuit of detection and the controls that are introduced.

In my constituency, the general expression of public disapproval is having an effect on the carrying of knives and the views that young people have of them. They are now receiving a different message from their parents, pals and what sociologists call their peer groups. If the House accepts my analysis—that the most powerful and cheapest weapon is public opinion and social and peer group pressure—it must back up the community. It is no good our doing all these things and not being backed up by legislation and the Government.

We have to work against encouragements which operate in a different direction such as advertisements, shop displays and pictures in magazines. My objection is not that the displays or advertisements are neutral, but that the context is of illegal use. The atmosphere implies that the weapon should be used as an illegal weapon of offence or defence.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that some of these weapons seem to have very little lawful use? Indeed, they are designed and decorated to look offensive and frightening. The advertiser makes them look offensive. That is part of the culture about which we are talking.

Mr. Fraser: I am sure that that is right.

The Bill divides weapons into two classes. One class consists of those with no inherent useful purpose, such as death stars and certain types of flail. I take it that if they

are banned outright, their advertisement and display will also become illegal. The second class includes knives. It is true that there is some ambivalence about their use, but the advertising or display about which I am speaking makes it clear that the intention of the advertiser or the person displaying the knives is that they should be used unlawfully.

9 pm

It is no use the community working its guts out to reduce the use of knives when they are glamorised in magazines. People know what instincts they are pandering to when they sell them. Knives are sold by mail order to people, irrespective of age, attitude or mentality who the vendors do not meet. We should assert that the advertisement of weapons and knives in that way should be illegal.

If the House acts, it will not be so difficult for newspapers and the Advertising Standards Authority to follow our lead and to ensure that, by following the honest, decent, legal and truthful code, they can operate administratively to control advertisements for such weapons.

We must also bar advertisements by means of display. Such advertisements would not automatically be illegal. There are shops which sell little other than knives and weapons and which display them in circumstances which make it clear that they are intended for aggressive purposes. There is a shop in Rye lane one half of which is devoted to the display and advertisement of the most lethal-looking sheath knives and clasp knives. They are displayed in a context which makes it clear that their use is likely to be illegal.

Knives, chisels and other sharp instruments are displayed in hardware shops or builders' merchants, but in a context where their use is likely to be useful and lawful. Those who go to the kitchen department of a multiple store will see knives and canteens of cutlery on display, but in an atmosphere where their use is likely to be legal. Perhaps the amendments on armoury shops are a more appropriate vehicle than those which concern advertisement, but I object most strongly to knives being sold in a context which is not associated with a useful purpose. That is bound to inspire the wrong motives in buyers. I think that we ought to apply the test of intention and likely use. The House should prevent the advertisement and display of such weapons in the circumstances that I have described.

A new clause which bans the sale of knives to juveniles will not, of course, prevent some juveniles from being able to get hold of knives. They will still be able to go into the kitchen department of a multiple store and buy knives, but an amendment would add care and prudence to the sale. New clause 29 would prevent juveniles from buying knives in kitchen departments or hardware shops.

We should put a seal of disapproval on the purchase and possession of knives. We should say that people should be prudent and worried when a knife is sold to a young person. If a knife is really needed a parent or responsible adult should buy it; it should not be sold to a juvenile. It would not cost very much to do that. There are many examples in legislation of a ban on the supply of goods or products to young people. It has been conspicuously successful in the sale of solvents and glue, which has caused a monstrous problem in my part of London. That problem is now diminishing because of the lead given by the House, after long hesitation. I am sure that the same will be true of knives. I hope that the House will reinforce the air of disapproval that has developed in my community.

As the new clauses are linked to clause 132, I should like to know whether the Minister will consider how it will operate. It appears to allow two defences. First, it will be a defence if there is a lawful excuse for carrying a knife in a public place. Secondly, and without prejudice to the generality of the clause, there is a particular defence of using a knife for religious or work purposes. The problem is that when someone is charged with the offence of possessing a knife in a public place, he always seems to have a lawful excuse. The Government should reconsider clause 132 so that the new clauses, if they are agreed to, will be effective.

My father-in-law is a farrier, so it would be a lawful use of a knife if he were paring the hoof of a horse in the street. That would be part of his work. However, a frequent excuse for carrying a knife is that the person is a chef or a butcher. Clause 132 should make such a defence much more difficult. A knife should be carried to work in a way that ensures that it cannot instantly be used. For example, a carpenter would have it locked in his tool box. That would help to prove the reasonable excuse that the knife was being carried for the purpose of work.

Clause 132 should include a provision that if a knife or weapon is not in immediate use—for example, paring the hoof of a horse—it should be an offence to carry it unless it is firmly wrapped up or locked away and cannot immediately be used. Without that provision, there will continue to be a long trail of defences. Somehow, people coming out of bars, dance halls, football grounds or discotheques always seem to be on their way to a fishing expedition, to repair a window or to cut some string.

I ask the Government to reinforce the weight and wave of public opinion against the use of knives by accepting the new clauses.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I support the new clauses and wish to make two short, but fairly important, points. The first relates to the increasing use of knives by young people, to which reference has already been made and with which the new clauses seek to deal as far as is possible.

The use by so many young people of such a shocking number of knives leads to the use of other weapons. As has been demonstrated in many court cases, when young people are outside a pub or discotheque there is an expectation that some of them will have knives, and that undoubtedly leads to others bringing bottles and glasses out of the pub or discotheque and using them. The use of knives has a knock-on effect that leads to the use of what can sometimes be far more dangerous weapons, which can often cause ever more disabling injury. In my view, the new clauses can make a valuable contribution to reducing the number of knives in circulation, and therefore reducing the number of other weapons used in an allegedly defensive response to the carrying of knives.

My second point is one that I have made before in the House. It relates to what is euphemistically called "survivalism". It seems to me that young people and, indeed, older people, if they want to enjoy aggressive outdoor pursuits—even pursuits of a somewhat militaristic nature—can do so quite successfully without the use of knives, machetes bayonets and other vicious weapons that

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

can be bought in shops, and even obtained by mail order. It is shocking that so many such shops have sprung up in this country—there is one on the Euston station concourse, where some pretty vicious weapons can be bought on British Rail premises—and have been able to sell items that can only have an offensive and illegitimate purpose. They are doing so under the guise of survivalism.

It is even more shocking that publications now abound in which similar weapons are advertised for sale. Some of the publications are aimed at adults, but many are aimed specifically at foolish young people whose aggression can be channelled into the lethal weapons that they advertise, possession of which can never really be justified.

I welcome clauses 132 and 134. Like the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), I recognise, albeit reluctantly, the necessity for clause 133, but I feel that in accepting the new clauses—or, perhaps, more elegantly drafted versions of them—we would be tackling further and more meaningfully the two problems that I have put to the House.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am afraid that I cannot commend any of the new clauses to the House.

The debate has essentially revolved around two issues. The first is whether it should be an offence to sell a sharp bladed or pointed instrument to a young person—the age limit has varied, depending slightly on the speaker. The second is whether we can apply the criminal code to advertisements.

Let me deal first with the question of sale, not only of knives, but of sharp bladed and pointed instruments. It is important to emphasise that the new clause is not confined to the sale of knives, but applies to any article that falls within the scope of clause 132. For understandable reasons, hon. Members who have spoken have tended to focus on knives, although clearly the matter goes much further.

It is right to say that the carrying of knives in a public place is a matter of considerable concern. I stress that it is the carrying of knives in a public place rather than possession qua possession—which may be in a private place—that is the essential cause of concern. It is because the Government recognise that the carrying of knives in a public place is a grave matter that it was they who brought forward clause 132. In essence, the clause provides that a person carrying a bladed or sharp pointed instrument will be deemed to be committing a criminal offence unless he can establish the existence of a good reason.

That, in essence, is the offence. There are two important points. First, we are dealing with the carrying of pointed or bladed instruments in public places—that is the mischief. Secondly, we have to accept that good and lawful reasons exist for the possession of such instruments, and those lawful reasons can exist for young people as well as for adults.

9.15 pm

When one looks at the scope of clause 132, one immediately appreciates the reason. All bladed and pointed instruments fall within the scope of that clause. Scissors, mathematical dividers, any old piece of household cutlery, gardening and agricultural tools, carpentry tools, craft or hobby equipment and sports equipment all inevitably fall within the scope of clause 132. The question is whether we wish to say that young people can never lawfully purchase for themselves or by themselves the articles to which I have referred. I do not believe that the House would be justified in asserting that proposition. It is true that we should tackle the problem of possession in a public place, but it does not follow from that that we should prohibit the sale to under-aged persons of articles that they properly and legitimately require for their own use in a private place. I believe that that goes much too far.

My final point is essentially a drafting one, but as we are talking, not about principle but about legislation, it is right that I should make it. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and I have served on various Committees in the past and most recently on the Committee considering the Licensing Bill. May I say how much I enjoyed that privilege. We discussed the sale of alcohol to under-aged persons, and I remember that she stressed her opposition to the concept of the absolute offence and asserted the need to provide a trader with a defence in the event of a bona fide mistake. I do not rest my argument on a drafting point. I would merely mention that the hon. Lady has created an absolute offence and has failed to provide a defence for the bona fide trader acting in good faith. I think that that was a slip and is inconsistent with her attitude to the Licensing Bill.

Another matter to be considered is the question of advertisements, and again I wish to stress my opposition. It seems to me that one element of criminal law is that it should be reasonably precise in its meaning and capable of reasonable recognition and certain interpretation. The new clause is very subjective in judgment. I cannot readily call to mind any offence concerning the content of advertisements other than those that contravene race relations legislation. I oppose the new clause on the grounds that it is too subjective, too imprecise and is incapable of certain meaning.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Minister recognise that we are dealing with the continuing use of knives, as illustrated by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), who said that in his constituency, in the course of a year, there were six deaths following the use of knives? In view of that, do the Government not recognise that we are faced with an emergency? The Minister's remarks do not seem to recognise the deep anxiety of the Opposition about the continuing use of knives and the knife culture that unfortunately exists among many of our young people.

Mr. Hogg: There are at least two answers to the hon. Gentleman's points. First, the existence of a major problem does not justify the House passing bad legislation. If my criticism of the advertising clause is right, the legislation is bad, and, notwithstanding the existence of the problem, we should not do it.

Mr. Fraser: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hogg: I shall finish this point and then give way.

Secondly, the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) would be well advised to remind himself that clause 132 is the Government's response to the problem. It was not anybody else who brought it forward; it was the Government.

Mr. Winnick: After pressure.

Mr. Hogg: No. The hon. Gentleman is wholly wrong on that point. I have a great familiarity with the clause because, before my hon. Friend the Minister took responsibility for the Criminal Justice Bill, I was heavily involved in the formulation of this offence. I can tell the House with absolute certainty that the Government came forward with this proposal to deal with precisely the problem to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Fraser: The Trade Descriptions Act 1972 makes it a criminal offence to publish certain misleading advertisements. The Act is difficult to enforce and there are problems. In practice, there is an arrangement between trading standards officers and the Advertising Standards Authority. The authority is able to translate what we want into a code of practice that it administers—for most of the time without the intervention of the criminal law. It would be extremely helpful if the Minister would do something to give legal support to the Advertising Standards Authority in constructing a code of practice which as a matter of practice, if not as a matter of the operation of the criminal law, will outlaw that type of advertisement.

Mr. Hogg: That subject is not referred to in the new clause, as the hon. Gentleman will bear in mind. Under the Trade Descriptions Act the court is concerned with whether a statement is misleading. In the end, that is a matter of fact. We are now concerned with the subjective interpretation of the content of an advertisement, and that is different in kind.

There is scope for discussions between the Home Office and the Advertising Standards Authority. As the hon. Member for Dewsbury, who read out a letter from my right hon. Friend, has made plain, we are doing that. In the end, the major problem is the carrying of knives in a public place. It is that matter to which the House needs to devote its attention.

Mr. Favell: I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend speaking about the difficulty of forbidding the sale of all items that will be covered by clause 132. I am disappointed that, apparently, the Government will not accept the amendment. Will my hon. Friend monitor whether, when clause 132 becomes part of the Act, it reduces the number of offences involving the use of knives? Unfortunately, at the moment Home Office figures about the use of knives are scanty. They show the number of offences of violence, but not those offences involving the use of knives. It would be helpful if the figures were available in case further legislation is to be brought forward.

Mr. Hogg: If the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis were to conclude that the legislation reflected in what is now clause 132 was inadequate, he would tell us without much delay. That is perhaps the most effective way of responding to the concern that my hon. Friend has voiced. We are concerned specifically with the carrying of sharp bladed instruments in public places. Clause 132 is an effective response to that problem, and I would not commend any of the new clauses to the House.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: The Minister has shown a remarkable degree of complacency about this important and significant problem. Earlier we were all in agreement—certainly some Conservative Members agreed with us—that the increase in violence was extremely worrying. It is not simply a London problem, as the Minister seemed to imply when he said that he would listen to the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; it is a much wider problem. It affects not only all our major cities, but many large towns and, over recent weeks, rural areas, too. I should have thought that that would bring home to the Government how extensive some of these difficulties are.

The Minister is complacent because he is suggesting that the major problem is simply the carrying of knives in public places. It is far more complex and difficult than that. I should have thought that it was obvious that if we restricted the sale of knives there would be fewer knives to carry in public places. The Minister has not taken on board our arguments and anxiety about violent crime.

Mr. Winnick: When the Minister said that the Government acted without any pressure, would it be useful to remind him that in this Parliament my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) introduced an Adjournment debate on the subject, the response to which was along the lines that no action could be taken? It was as a result of renewed public pressure at about this time last year and the way that the Metropolitan police, for example, displayed a number of knives being used that the Government decided to act, and we now have clause 132.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend has put his finger on a significant point. Before I was in this House, many Opposition Members were pressing for far stricter controls on the sale, use and carriage of knives. Yet it is only in the past year or so that the Government have recognised this problem.

The Minister did not give an answer to the problem of violent crime. He simply concentrated on the carrying of weapons. He did not, for example, deal with the point that the peak age for offenders is now 15 years. In other words, the largest single age group of offenders are of the young age of 15. They would be covered by a ban on the sale of knives such as we are proposing. If they are covered, that would surely help to reduce—it would not completely solve the problem—the number of young people who carry and attempt to use knives.

The Minister gave as reasons for rejecting the new clause several problems. He said that the ban would be difficult to implement and we all know of those difficulties. But they did not extend to glue sniffing and the problems that the Government saw in acting on that.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) have been chiding the Government for late conversion, but I am sure that they both studied the Conservative manifesto with considerable attention. It made a positive commitment to strengthening the law dealing with the sale and possession of offensive weapons, of which this is a reflection, not a late conversion.

Mrs. Taylor: I am sure that the Minister will be aware that the Labour party's document, "Protecting Our Children", which was published six months before the general election, advocated even tougher controls on the sale of knives. Obviously the Minister learnt from reading our policy documents and I shall send him copies of many others in the hope that he will learn a great deal more.

9.30 pm

The Minister has been extremely complacent about the matter. It must be obvious to any lay person what is more dangerous—solvents, glue, fireworks, or knives and

[Mrs. Taylor]

sharp-edged weapons. If the Government can bring themselves to control the sale of glue, solvents, fireworks, cigarettes and alcohol to young people, they should control the sale of dangerous weapons. Until we take strong action, the influence of the knife culture will increase and there will be more crimes of violence on our streets.

We welcome clause 132, but it is not sufficient and I urge the House to vote for the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 132, Noes 218.

Division No. 367] **[9.30 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Ian
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morgan, Rhodri
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'l's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David

Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 60

PROSTITUTION (OPTION OF CUSTODY)

'The court may impose a custodial sentence on a prostitute convicted of soliciting when it does not consider a fine an appropriate deterrent.'.—*[Mrs. Maureen Hicks.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I thank Mr. Speaker for judging my new clause worthy of debate. It would restore to the courts the ability to imprison prostitutes found guilty of persistent soliciting where fines have not been considered an effective deterrent. Such is the magnitude of the problem in the town of Wolverhampton, part of which I represent, and the other red light centres that have been regularly featured in some horrific television programmes recently that I felt moved to table this, my first ever, new clause. That surely reflects the gravity of the problem which, I believe, needs to be urgently resolved for the sake of those who live with it on their doorstep.

Had I been called to speak last Thursday evening, I should have expressed my personal fear that, unless the Government took urgent steps to address themselves to the growing problem of street prostitute soliciting and residents living within the same neighbourhood, those directly affected in Wolverhampton would resort to taking the law into their own hands, as people have done in Birmingham in recent months. It is with great sadness that I have to report that on Friday, by sheer coincidence, that is exactly what happened. One group of residents who suffer particularly from the problem had reached the end of their tether. They called a meeting at which they decided to form their own vice patrols to get rid of the problem themselves. In addition, they threatened to withhold payment of their rates. I am glad to say that swift action by the local police in co-operating with them has resolved the problem temporarily. They have agreed to postpone their actions, but warned that if the police fail to get rid of the prostitutes they will go ahead with their plans—which only serves to increase my anxiety.

I ask the House to recognise that the Criminal Justice Act 1982, which removed the option of imprisonment, has proved unsuccessful. Far from having limited—let alone eliminated—the problem of soliciting, the 1982 Act has merely served to increase it. In places such as Wolverhampton it has opened the floodgates to what can only be called a thriving business, to the detriment of local residents who unfortunately now realise that they are living in a town with the reputation of the vice centre of the west midlands.

9.45 pm

In Wolverhampton, from January to May of this year—only a five-month period—there were 683 arrests, which was nearly the same as the total for 12 months in 1983, the year after imprisonment was removed, when there were only 737. Such high figures speak for themselves, and there are still seven months to go.

This large increase is not confined to my area. Nationally, in 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 9,098 prostitutes were found guilty of street soliciting. That compares with 1982, when only 5,811 were found guilty. So how can anyone argue that the legislation that we endorsed has succeeded in checking the rise?

It is easy for us, debating statistics in the Chamber, but I am concerned about the human effect on the people who are touched by the problem. They are the people who must live with the problem on their doorsteps night and day, and naturally they are running out of patience. They feel imprisoned: they can no longer live with the problem, but they cannot sell their homes because it would be commercially unrealistic to do so. It might be easy for hon. Members from leafier suburbs, who talk liberally about letting the prostitutes live—as long as they do so in other people's back yards. But if we had to look out of our front windows every day, only to be confronted by prostitutes visibly touting for business, we might see the problem differently. If hon. Ladies knew that when they went to their local bus stop they stood a good chance of being stopped by a kerb crawler who might assume that they were on the game—for that is the assumption made about all ladies in these areas—they might see it differently, too.

How would we feel about bringing up children in an environment in which it is commonplace to see scantily dressed, provocative females, whose appearance is designed to entice and excite would-be customers? I have a nine-year-old child, and I would like to think that he was at home doing his homework or playing with his toys in the evening. So imagine my sadness when Wolverhampton ended up in the national newspapers in a story about a little girl of eight who had been enticed by a prostitute to become involved in sexual activity with a male customer.

[Mrs. Maureen Hicks]

I hear reports from residents of 13-year-old boys being used as pimps to stop kerb crawlers and get them round the corner to do business with prostitutes.

Often, things must be seen to be believed. In the early days, when I was a candidate, I thought that the problem might be exaggerated and I made up my mind to go out on a night patrol with the vice squad for a complete shift. That experience convinced me that if I ever got into the House, however unpopular the subject might be, it would be my duty to do something about the most serious problem that confronts my town. What I saw that night on patrol was an absolute farce. The prostitutes seemed to mushroom as the night went on and the police were forced to take them in. The police were so regularly taking them in that they were on Christian name terms. They laughed at me, assuming that I must also be on the game. The police knew that within half an hour of paying a small fine the prostitutes would be back on the streets trying to get business.

Prostitutes know that the courts have at their disposal only a modest fine to impose, and the police say that, if the fines do anything, they encourage the prostitutes to work even harder. As the House knows, mounting fines are commonplace, and only two years ago Birmingham recorded that it had £40,000 worth of outstanding fines! On that patrol night the prostitutes were laughing and saw the whole thing as a joke. We had to break off playing cat and mouse round the streets to look for two young children who had been missing for days. It increased the seriousness of the matter for me when the police had to stop looking for those children because they were needed again in the vice squad area. That brought home to me whether this was the best use of police resources in a town that puts many demands on its police. But obviously we have a duty to answer the demands of the people who have to live with the problem.

The time has come for the House to recognise that we might not have known best and that fines are not a deterrent. We have frustrated police officers, frustrated magistrates, frustrated residents and a frustrated council all of whom feel that they are banging their heads against a brick wall. In addition, magistrates now lack the power to impose even a community service order. They could have done that when imprisonment was an option. It may sound strange to the House when I say that it is considered that community service orders were used successfully in the past.

Time prevents me from developing arguments about the role of the pimp and other matters, but I should like to pose some questions. We have in my town a vigilant police force and a chief superintendent who recognises the priority of the problem. He has increased manpower accordingly, often at the expense of other areas. That police force is frustrated and engaged on a soulless task, and the only penalty is a fine. If the fear of AIDS and drug-related problems has no effect, if improved lighting and road management schemes have merely served often to move people from one street to the other when roads have been blocked off, if the Sexual Offences Act 1985, which made kerb-crawling an offence in the hope that it would reduce the problem, and if letters sent to the families of known kerb-crawlers and publicity have failed to contain, let alone reduce, the problem, we have a duty to legislate immediately to provide a deterrent, to give the police the back-up for which they are crying out and to improve the quality of life for long-suffering residents.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Is the hon. Lady aware that since the law was changed in 1983 to make soliciting not an imprisonable offence more prostitutes have ended up in prison because they have been unable to pay the fines?

Mrs. Hicks: I am aware of that, but I am also aware that it has become a farce in Birmingham. Prostitutes on whom mounting fines have been imposed merely sit at the back of the court for an hour or two, and that is the end of £400, £500 or £600 worth of fines. I cannot agree that it has proved to be a deterrent. First, the Minister must say to prostitutes that if they continue to cock a snook at the law they will face imprisonment.

Secondly, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to review the kerb-crawling legislation in the light of two years' experience as, to date, it has proved very difficult to enforce. Police officers invariably talk of having pages of evidence and of following kerb-crawlers for hours, yet those kerb-crawlers are still let off because there is difficulty in defining what constitutes the word "persistent".

Given the number of kerb-crawlers that must be around, as it takes both a prostitute and a customer to participate in an activity, we must ask why so few men are being prosecuted. Although we have been successful in Wolverhampton in 1986-87, during which time 47 kerb-crawlers were prosecuted, how is it that, in London, which has the biggest problem, but where only one third of all prosecutions for prostitution come from the Metropolitan police area, a grand total of only three kerb-crawlers were convicted in 1986? The total national figure, in the light of that law which was intended to deter, reveals only 189 prosecutions in England and Wales and 161 convictions.

Thirdly, I ask my hon. Friend to give further consideration to community orders as another possibility for deterring persistent offenders.

I hope that the Minister will have taken on board the seriousness and urgency of my case. It might be worth considering that, in 1959, when such blatant street soliciting existed, it was considered that the normal, decent citizen should be able to go about the streets without affront to his or her decency. To achieve that, it was agreed that imprisonment would be introduced as an option to the courts for persistent offenders. The sharp fall in street soliciting after that decision, I believe, speaks for itself.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) is, in my opinion and that of my party, going down a dangerous road in proposing the new clause. I shall read the report of her speech with care tomorrow, but I did not catch a word about the causes of prostitution and the reasons why women go into prostitution, nor did I catch very many words about the role of men in that, except in her reference to the lack of prosecutions for kerb-crawling.

In 1983, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) mentioned, Parliament took a progressive step in attempting to keep women out of prison by imposing fines rather than custodial sentences. I well recall the successfully persuasive words of a member of the hon. Lady's party, who is no

longer a Member of this House—Mr. Matthew Parris—who argued that soliciting should not be an imprisonable offence. Since that came into force, more women have been put in prison for prostitution, but under the guise of unpaid fines, than were in prison for the offence of soliciting. If the hon. Lady consults her figures, I am sure that she will be able to confirm that.

I am sorry that that is happening because I do not believe that it is right to put those women in prison and I do not believe that it is a deterrent. The hon. Lady's proposal is a backward step and will increase overcrowding in our already overcrowded prisons. The hon. Lady wants to institutionalise that trend by transferring the non-payment of fines sentence into a sentence for soliciting. I hope that the House will resist her proposal.

Has the hon. Lady been to Holloway prison recently? I suggest that she goes there. It is extremely overcrowded, as are other women's prisons. If she talked to the governor and the prison officers, she would find that they would not welcome what she is proposing, because they are having enough difficulty in coping with the prison population, which includes many women on remand. Apart from the women who are imprisoned for serious offences, there are a number of women in Holloway who are imprisoned for trivial offences, such as shoplifting. This is not the best way to deal with such offences. Before the hon. Lady puts into the minds of magistrates that they have the option, which many of them would use——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth].*

Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*

As amended, again considered.

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Ms. Richardson: Before the hon. Lady goes down this road, she should discuss the matter with some of the people who have to operate our prisons and who would not welcome her move.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: Although I have not been to Holloway, I have discussed this problem with other prison officers. I hope that that reassures the hon. Lady.

Ms. Richardson: The hon. Lady may reassure me, but she does not tell me what they said. I am not convinced that they will have said, "Yes, yes, please. We would open our doors if you would propose in Parliament a clause making custodial offences and institutionalising and soliciting once more."

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): Is it not more likely that prison governors would say that they are worried about the overcrowding of prisons in general, but would not express a view about certain types of offences, which are extremely serious to those who suffer from them, if not to those who represent happier constituencies? Have prison governors truly said that there are certain offences for which they do not wish to see imprisonment, rather than speak in general about the numbers?

Ms. Richardson: In the discussions that I have had with the prison officers, I have not heard that view expressed. I have not heard that they would think it was a good idea to overcrowd their prisons with women convicted of what many of them would regard as a trivial offence. Many prison officers are overstretched in looking after people who have committed serious offences. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East has mentioned people who live in areas where there is prostitution, but prostitution is a victimless crime. It is not a crime from which somebody who is involved in its operation actually suffers. The hon. Lady would have done her constituents a better service by examining some of the reasons why women are driven into prostitution.

By and large, women go into prostitution because they are poor and because the Government have taken away such economic power as they had—they did not have much before. Women who are single parents, white women, single women, black women, young women and even older women, women who are hit by poor housing, large gas and electricity bills, the inability to care for their families, by the depression which overcomes them because they cannot support their children in the way that they want to do, turn to prostitution. It would become the hon. Lady much better if she recognised that women are the majority of the low paid in this country and in the world. If she asked the Government to adopt policies that did not hit women so hard and instead supported the work that women are trying to do, training schemes for women and women who want to earn a living, she would do a much better service to the constituents who complained to her about the problems caused by prostitution. Instead, the hon. Lady attacks prostitutes, and that will not achieve what she wants.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): The hon. Lady seems to be concentrating on female prostitution. Does she believe that male prostitution is no problem?

Ms. Richardson: I believe that male prostitution is a problem as well. Insofar as I know much about it, often young male prostitutes are driven into prostitution through the lack of money. I have concentrated on women because it happens to be my job to speak for women on behalf of the Opposition, but I am not denying that there are male prostitutes. As I have said, I am sure that many of them have been driven into prostitution because they are poor, badly trained or lack training. If they are poorly trained or untrained, they will lack the ability to take on a variety of jobs. That is something that should be tackled by the Government. The Government should be encouraging employers to pay decent wages.

Many young girls, young women and young boys go to large cities, in some instances to find jobs. Others wish to get away from difficult home circumstances. Such young people cannot always find jobs. They are often driven into prostitution because they are ill trained and cannot find the variety of jobs that should be available to them to choose from.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Does my hon. Friend agree that in some respects the state is pimping on prostitutes? I used to be a visiting teacher at Holloway prison, where I met prostitute women who could not pay the huge fines that were being demanded of them repeatedly. They were often single mothers who went on the game because they could not pay the bills. When they

[Ms. Mildred Gordon]

were fined repeatedly, there was no way that they could come off it. We need a better benefit system so that these women will not get in that mess in the first place.

Ms. Richardson: I was about to talk about older women but, first, I shall address myself specifically to young girls.

Prostitution is a tragedy for girls and young women. However, my hon. Friend is right. I do not have any statistics, but it is probably true that the majority of prostitutes have children and have homes to look after. The only way that they can obtain a decent income is to go on the game. They cannot look to the social security system for that income. I do not think that that is a good thing, but the choice is theirs. I wish that they would find other courses of action preferable so that they could make their contribution in a different way.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the greatest problems when young girls are loose in large cities, if I might put it in that way, is that they often fall prey to the pimp, and once in his hands they are exploited? If the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) were to have her way, many more prostitutes would find their way into prison. The prostitute has to pay the pimp, and if she cannot pay the fine she will end up in prison. She will go to prison rather than default on the pimp, who often has great physical power over her.

Ms. Richardson: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. There are young girls, and presumably young boys too, who are under the power of pimps. They get themselves increasingly into difficulties from which they cannot escape because there is no alternative.

I watched a moving film on television a few weeks ago —I think that it was a repeat—about a husband and wife who were looking for their 15-year-old daughter who had disappeared two years earlier. It was not a documentary. Eventually the father found her in the big city. Although it was not stated explicitly, she was a prostitute. I did not see the problems that faced the father and the problems that faced the daughter that led her to leave home. She wanted to get away and she could not find a job. We know that that happens. We must provide the sort of society that will not cause women to resort to that way of life.

Miss Widdecombe: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way a second time. She has painted a picture of girls who think that they are forced, through economic circumstances, to go on the game, but how do so many single parents who also maintain homes manage not to do that? Will the hon. Lady consider the cumulative nuisance of prostitution rather than stories of young girls who apparently cannot manage when hundreds of thousands of their counterparts can?

Ms. Richardson: I do not know where the hon. Lady has been, but I wish that she would come to my surgery. She is right to say that hundreds of thousands of single parents and women with partners try to manage without becoming prostitutes, but they are doing it with the utmost difficulty. It is a constant problem to pay bills.

I am afraid that the question is rhetorical, but does not the hon. Lady have people coming to her surgery saying that their gas or electricity is about to be cut off, that they are buying cheaper food than they want to buy because they cannot get a job which pays a decent wage or because they cannot get decent income support out of the rotten social security system that has recently been introduced?

The hon. Lady asked why I do not pay attention to the pleas of women constituents of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East. Of course I have sympathy for people who feel that some offence is being committed which is a nuisance to them. All I am saying is that imprisoning them is not a deterrent. They will go to prison and, when they come out, if they still do not have a job or some proper and dignified means of supporting themselves and their families, they will return to prostitution. The hon. Lady is merely ensuring that prisons are fuller than ever. She can be sure that, if magistrates have the option, they will send them straight to prison rather than impose a fine.

We want a decent policy against poverty for men and women. There should be a decent sentencing policy which ensures that the most serious offences are properly punished but that trivial ones are not. That is how to look after the nuisance, as the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East calls it, caused to some people in some residential areas. Imprisoning the women concerned is not the answer, and I hope either that the hon. Lady will withdraw her new clause or that the House will defeat it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) has highlighted a considerable social mischief in her constituency, and her constituents will be extremely grateful to her for that, but I cannot commend the new clause to the House. There are four considerations that may influence my hon. Friend and persuade her not to press the clause to a Division.

The first is a slight drafting difficulty. We are not resting on principle today—we are dealing with a proposed inclusion in a Bill. The problem with the new clause is that it does not prescribe a maximum penalty of imprisonment.

Mr. Corbett: Life.

Mr. Hogg: As the hon. Gentleman says, there is no upper limit. That causes a slight difficulty, because courts in some areas might impose a 10 or 15-year sentence. That would be within the scope of the new clause, and I do not think that my hon. Friend intended that.

10.15 pm

I shall now deal with the substantive matters. Secondly, this category of offence should not attract a prison sentence. We are trying to confine prison sentences to serious crime—defined, perhaps, as crimes of violence or serious crimes against property. I accept that my hon. Friend has made it plain that prostitution is a serious social mischief, but it is not a crime that should attract a prison sentence. I have no desire for our prisons to be full of prostitutes.

Thirdly, imprisonment has never served as a deterrent to any prostitute. Until 1982 a sentence of imprisonment was available to the courts, and it was also available at the time of the Wolfenden report. Prostitutes roamed the streets, and the courts were full of them. There is no reason to believe that the problem has become worse since then.

The fourth consideration that will weigh with the House, if not with my hon. Friend, is the little matter of sexual equality. If we lock up a number of female prostitutes, what will we do about the rent boys? Surely

they will also have to be locked up. The mind boggles at the prospect of Brixton and Pentonville full of rent boys. That would do nothing for good order and discipline. It would also have a serious effect on the incidence of AIDS in prisons—*[Interruption.]* I have even persuaded my hon. Friend the Minister of State, whose name I was about to invoke because he is shortly to publish a consultative document about alternative punishments in the community. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East is understandably worried that prostitutes cannot be sentenced to community service. She may wish to make some representations to my hon. Friend the Minister of State in the context of that consultative document.

Mr. Bermingham: I hope that the Minister is not serious. I know that it is late at night, but this is a serious subject. Those of us who were around in the 1970s will remember that those convicted of prostitution and soliciting were sent to prison, which caused enormous problems. We have sought to avoid any hint of imprisonment, so it has been with great sadness that many of us have noted the use of punitive fines as a backdoor method of imprisonment. I hope that the Minister is suggesting only in a jocular way that community service should be an alternative to imprisonment, because that always carries a penal sanction for breach.

Mr. Hogg: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is being serious. It is important that there is an ultimate sanction against those who persistently and deliberately refuse to pay a fine. It is right that the courts should have the power to impose a sentence of imprisonment on prostitutes in breach. I make no apology for that.

I was explaining to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East that it would be appropriate to make representations in the context of the consultative document. I am not saying that the Government would respond favourably; I am merely responding to a specific comment. My hon. Friend should be aware of her ability to make such representations. I recognise that in Wolverhampton and elsewhere prostitution is a serious social mischief, but I do not believe that imprisonment is a proper solution. I hope that, on reflection, my hon. Friend will not wish to press the clause to a Division.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: I thank my hon. Friend for those comments, but obviously I am bitterly disappointed. He has offered few crumbs of comfort to those who must live with the problem. I hope that he will in due course reflect on its seriousness and, in the light of any future escalation, consider the matter further. I also hope that he will monitor the position carefully, with due regard to what I have said.

I suppose that I must thank my hon. Friend at least for telling the people that he intends to issue a consultative document, and I shall of course make myself au fait with the contents. I hope to make a contribution to the arrangements for alternative punishments in the community, as he suggests. In the light of that small but beneficial offer, I shall bow to his judgment and not press the new clause to a Division. I assure him, however, that I intend to monitor the situation carefully, because of my heartfelt sorrow for those who live with it. I have seen the extreme effect that it has on them.

I have tried tonight to highlight the problems of those who suffer, but the problems of prostitutes themselves are a matter for debate on another occasion. I thank my hon. Friend for his courtesy in listening to me.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 63

INCOME-RELATED FINES

'A court imposing a fine on an offender convicted of an indictable offence shall, so far as the disposable income of the offender appears or is known to the court, impose a fine of the number of days' disposable income which it appears to the court that the seriousness of the offence and the culpability of the offender require.'.—*[Mr. Worthington.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Worthington: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause proposes to increase the credibility of the fine systems by ensuring that fines are related more directly to the ability to pay. This is known as the day-fine system, and there are two sides to it. One is to ensure that those with limited incomes are not threatened with an overwhelming fine that is not related to their ability to pay. The other is to ensure that the fines imposed on those with sizeable incomes make an impact on them.

Day-fine systems have been introduced, and have apparently worked well, in a number of countries, including West Germany, Sweden and Austria. The amount of the fine is arrived at by multiplying a number reflecting the gravity of the offence by a sum that varies in proportion to the offender's income. It is a kind of tariff system, which I think is much fairer.

This needs to be seen in the context of the general crime position in this country, and also the problem of overcrowding in our prisons. Fines are the principal non-custodial sentence that is imposed. Although they have fallen proportionately in recent years, they still form 39 per cent. of the penalties imposed for all indictable offences.

As a Scottish Member, I am especially pleased to move the new clause. Scotland has a particular problem of fine defaulting—even larger than the problem in England and Wales. In 1985, half of all admissions to Scottish prisons were due to fine defaulting. Only 6 per cent. of all offenders in prison at any one time were fine defaulters, but their impact on the prison system is colossal, because the overwhelming majority of such sentences are short-term. There are over 400 movements in and out of Barlinnie prison in Glasgow each day, and a significant proportion of those prisoners are fine defaulters. That imposes a considerable logistical problem on the prison. It means that many of the staff can be used not for positive duties, but simply for duties involved in maintaining the prison.

We wish to consider fines in the context of all other disposals. It is important that those who commit offences receive the appropiate punishment. Sometimes fines are imposed when it is inappropriate, and that leads to people ending up in prison. The opening of a designated place for drink offenders in Albyn house, Aberdeen, had an almost miraculous effect. In the previous year there had been 600 prosecutions for drunkenness. After the opening of Albyn house there were only three, and that meant that there was a significant reduction in the number of fine defaulters.

Our proposal for day fines is linked to the need to ensure that fines are not imposed inappropriately. I am sure that there is common ground on that. We wish to ensure that there are appropriate disposals for those with drink problems, that the probation service is developed to its full and useful extent, that community service orders are used and that day attendance centres receive more attention than they have done previously.

Mr. Hanley: Will the hon. Gentleman turn his attention to the serious problem of assessing a person's income if he is self-employed? Would it be assessed on the previous year's income as declared for taxation? Would it be assessed before, or after, business expenses have been considered, and would it include factors that are not allowed for taxation, such as depreciation? Would the present year's income be considered for a person in employment, and, if so, is the hon. Gentleman not further discriminating against people who are assessed under schedule E?

Mr. Worthington: Before I answer that question, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell us how income is assessed at present.

Mr. Hanley: I shall not answer that question, for the simple reason that I know how to assess an income for tax purposes. I am asking the hon. Gentleman to tell us how he will get an accurate assessment of a person's income for the purpose of fines.

Mr. Worthington: The reason why I asked the hon. Gentleman to intervene again is that at present there seems to be a limited system for calculating whether people can afford to pay the fine that is imposed. We should move to a system that gives a clearer appreciation of a person's disposable income so that magistrates and Crown courts can be more aware of people's ability to pay. It is sheer foolishness to take a sum out of the air and impose it if the consequence of that will be a waste of public resources. The average cost of maintaining someone in prison is about £250 a week—it ranges from £150 to £500 a week. That is what it costs to imprison people who have defaulted on fines which are on average about £100. It is folly not to examine the size of fines much more closely than we do at present in terms of public resources.

Mr. Hanley: I merely suggest that the hon. Gentleman should perhaps look to a reform of the taxation system before a reform of the fine system.

Mr. Worthington: I am working simultaneously on this Bill and the Finance Bill. I am thus attempting to deal with the fine and taxation system at the same time. I assure the hon. Gentleman that if my proposals for a taxation system were adopted many more people at the bottom end of the income scale would be in a position to pay their fines.

10.30 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that, at any specific time, it is relatively simple to determine someone's disposable income? If all courts had the debt counselling system that the Government have advocated, and which Opposition Members would certainly support, we could help people who find it difficult to pay their fines and develop the expertise for working out people's disposable income when a fine is about to be imposed.

Mr. Worthington: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. As I said earlier, we hope that, following acceptance of our proposal for day fines, there will also evolve a much more satisfactory system of ensuring that fines are paid, by making sure that the proper social services support or money advice is available. At the moment it seems to be a hit and miss system.

It would not be sensible to impose a large fine on someone on social security without taking into account all

the other outgoings that that person may have, particularly in the present circumstances. Two of the Government's measures will increase the problems of those on social security. One such measure is the poll tax, which will mean that at least 20 per cent. of the country's average poll tax will be paid by people on social security. If anyone imagines that the Government will increase the amount of benefit to compensate for that, he is slightly more naive than I am.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the point that was made by the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, every day, courts are in the business of assessing defendants' disposable income and that that is done for single applications for legal aid? The criminal legal aid form applies a test that is aimed at finding out a person's disposable income. The term "disposable income" is used in the new clause. Therefore, there is no difficulty in assessing disposable income.

Mr. Worthington: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for his intervention. Of course that is so. As always, the worst possible case has been presented, that of the self-employed person, but the vast majority of people who come before the courts are likely to have no difficulty in declaring their disposable income. It is a familiar request. It is made on numerous occasions in respect of income tax or benefits. It is not a major obstacle.

This proposal reflects a social fact. The value of money is not the same to everybody. A fiver to one person is not the same as a fiver to another person. Fifty pounds to one person is one family's disposable income for a week. To another person, £50 is lunch. We would not treat offences with the same seriousness if we were to impose the same fines upon people.

Unfortunately, some judges and magistrates have lost touch with the value of money to those who are poorer than they are and impose fines that are out of all proportion to the ability to pay. One would want to set limits for those in the social security system and never require them to pay back more than £1·50, or some such sum, per week.

I mentioned that the poll tax is one imposition on people with limited incomes. The social fund is another. Those who find it necessary to use the social fund will have to repay whatever loans they receive from that benefit. It is unrealistic to impose a hefty fine on that family, who may also have fuel debts. It is easy to forget that we are largely talking about the impact of fines as they affect families, because behind every fine defaulter there is a family in difficulty.

Before fines are imposed, much more information should be available to the courts about the disposable income of the offender. Instead of a standard rate tariff there should be a sliding rate according to the ability to pay. That would make for a much fairer system and ensure that our prisons were not filled with people who should not be there—a goal which I know the Minister shares.

Mr. Cash: What the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) said was dangerous. If people guilty of the most appalling crimes could escape with a small fine because they did not have many resources, we would have a most appalling mess in no time.

Recently a magistrates court fined a student £1,100 for a driving offence, which by any reasonable standards was incredible. During the proceedings an examination—not an effective one as it turned out—was made of his income, and, although the facts were examined, they did not seem to bear any weight with the magistrates. Not only did they ban him from driving for 18 months, but they imposed a fine of £1,100. The student, deciding that he had not had a fair trial, appeared in person before the Crown court and managed to get his fine reduced to £400. A sensible judge, in a formal sensible proceeding, reduced the fine, with the result that the student could pay. Everything was done as it should have been done and a reasonable result ensued.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that what he is saying is a strong argument for the proposal of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington)?

Mr. Cash: I was about to say that, although I have grave doubts about a sliding tariff, which is what the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie proposed, there is some merit in the notion that when courts are considering such questions they should, and often do, have regard to the requirements and circumstances of the offender. I suspect that my hon. Friend the Minister may wish to say something about that.

The hon. Gentleman made a further important point —that the punishment should fit the crime. There is a prison in my constituency, Stafford. We are anxious, as is the prison service as a whole and the Home Office, not to fill prisons with people who are not suited to be there. Too many people are being given the wrong punishment.

I have much respect and time for my hon. Friend the Minister, who performs a distinguished service to the country. We have not yet had an opportunity to read his new proposals, but no doubt we shall in time. Then we may be able to congratulate him on his proposals for hard labour—*[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and others laugh at the thought of hard labour, but hooligans—especially football hooligans—should not be allowed to get away with fines when hard labour should be meted out to them. I do not mean indiscriminate, mindless hard labour, but effective hard labour that would make them think twice. It would go a long way towards solving the problems on the terraces.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: We were smiling at the phrase "hard labour," because the Government are schizophrenic in their attitude to community service. They say that they appreciate the work that is done as part of community service orders, many of which entail very hard work. But the term "hard labour"—certainly as employed by some Conservative Back-Bench Members—has negative connotations. The Minister is trying to ride two horses: he is trying to be constructive and support the community service scheme, and he is also trying to use language that will appeal to some of the backwoodsmen behind him.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not follow the hon. Lady down that road. We are discussing fines.

Mr. Alex Carlile: She started it.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is a matter not of who started it, but who finishes it. The buck stops here.

Mr. Cash: Fines are appropriate on some occasions. The hon. Lady has fallen straight into the Socialist trap. It is what I call Socialist claptrap: confusing an important matter with Socialist middle-speak. She forgets that the expression "hard labour" means something, and in the context——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I asked the hon. Gentleman not to follow that road. I am a most tolerant individual in the Chair, but my tolerance has now expired. We must return to the new clause.

Mr. Cash: I agree absolutely, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is much merit in what the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie said, and I look forward to the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister. I suspect that he will have some important statements to make.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I apologise for flippantly taking the Chair in vain a little earlier, but I was perplexed as to how hard labour related to a day fine system.

The problem with fines is that, proportionally, they tend to be much higher for the lower-paid. Courts are embarrassed in two respects. First, they are embarrassed by imposing what appear to be extremely high fines, albeit on people who may have extremely high incomes. However, who could say that it was unjust for the person who earns £100,000 a year to pay a fine of £3,000 and for the person who earns £10,000 to pay a fine of 300 for the same offence? That must be elementary justice. The courts also appear embarrassed to impose low fines on the low-paid. A fine of £300 may sound little for a fairly serious offence, yet it may be imposed on someone whose net income is only £300 a month. The new clause seeks to strike justice, so that high-earners and low-earners can be fined by the same set of standards.

This proposal is not a kite that is being flown out of the imagination of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington). He has pointed out that countries in northern and central Europe successfully operate a day fine system. They use simple forms to assess people's income and there is no difficulty in doing so. Those who falsely declare their income are committing the extremely serious offence of perverting the course of public justice. That offence is always punished by imprisonment.

10.45 pm

Mr. Hanley: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman believe that a custodial sentence should be imposed in proportion to the length of life that the accused has had upon the earth or in proportion to a person's life expectancy? Should one impose a hard labour sentence according to the strength of the individual? Where does the argument end?

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Gentleman demonstrates his lack of experience in such matters. If a 70-year-old man is charged with a serious offence, he will generally get a much lesser sentence than a 25-year-old man who has committed the same offence—unless the sentence is fixed by law. If a sick man is convicted of a serious offence, he will receive a lighter sentence than a healthy man who has committed the same offence. That is only fair and just.

Sentencing is not merely an objective exercise; it has a strong individualised element. The day fine system is a simple and fair way to ensure that fines are such that they strike that balance between the objective and the subjective at which every sentencer should be aiming.

Sentencers have a public duty to perform—the duty to impose a sentence that, broadly speaking, fits the category for which the crime calls. They also have a duty to perform by the accused that involves sentencing that person within the broad framework in a way that is not unduly harsh on that individual.

The two embarrassments of which I spoke would be removed if a court was able to use the day fine system. I do not support the argument that courts should use only the day fine system. In many instances small, standard monetary fines for everyone convicted of a particular offence—for example, a byelaw offence—are justified.

Mr. John Patten: Where would the hon. and learned Gentleman draw the line between the common use of the day fine and the use of other forms of set fines?

Mr. Carlile: I believe that the court should have available to it a day fine system. It could choose between fixing a monetary fine and imposing a day fine.

Courts often face the problem of ascertaining at the hearing the precise earnings of the accused, especially if that person is unrepresented. Those practising solicitors who are in the Chamber know that they can face such a problem in court. It is not always easy for solicitors to ascertain, at the moment of sentence, the precise earnings of their client. If a court, faced with such a dilemma, was able to say, "We impose a fine of five days' or five weeks' disposable income", it would enable the appropriate inquiry to be made afterwards if necessary. In that way the precise figure for the fine could be assessed.

I urge the Minister, either now or during the review, to which we look forward with great interest, to study closely the possibility of introducing a practical and also pragmatic measure that would make life for sentencers much simpler and the consequences for criminals much fairer.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I agree with the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) that the measure has considerable practical and pragmatic appeal, but it is also right in principle that punishments should mean the same to each person who is being punished for roughly the same offence. If we had a system of day fines, or income-related fines, that would be fairer, because each person would be punished according to the extent to which the punishment hurt him, was meaningful and affected his everyday life.

As the hon. and learned Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) said, it would have the practical consequence of reducing prison overcrowding, because many of those who are in prison for the non-payment of fines are there because they cannot pay the fines imposed on them, not because they wilfully refuse to do so. That imposes an undue burden on our prison system, because the vast majority of fine defaulters spend a short time in the prison system, and the administration that is caused by that creates considerable difficulties.

We should all try to seek systems by which fewer people end up in prison because of defaulting on fines. We must also be realistic and recall that many women end up in prison because they cannot afford to pay their fines. The

day-fine system that we suggest is particularly appropriate to many women, because many of them have a low disposable income. That should be taken into account.

The new clause outlines the situation clearly and should deal with some of the concerns raised by Conservative Members, although often from sedentary positions. The new clause makes it clear that we are talking about disposable income and that the seriousness of the offence is to be taken into account by the court. It would be helpful if the court had that as an option, although I should like to go slightly further than the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery and hope that if it were introduced it would not be left simply to the courts, but that clear guidelines would be issued as to when it was considered appropriate to use the system.

I hope that the Minister will clarify the Government's thinking on the issue.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend is always clear.

Mrs. Taylor: The Minister's hon. Friend accuses him of always being clear, but I have to tell the House that in Committee the Minister resisted our amendment on this topic, but the Home Secretary, when he made his statement on overcrowding in prisons, hinted that he would like to move towards an income-related fine system. It appears that the Home Secretary has slightly more of an open mind than has the Minister of State. Perhaps we shall hear tonight that the Home Secretary has been able to open up the Minister of State's mind a bit further. Perhaps, along with my hon. Friends, the Home Secretary will have given the Minister cause for thought. I hope that we shall have a more favourable response now than we did in Committee.

Mr. John Patten: As the then Prime Minister of France, M. Fabius, said when there was a dispute about whether there was any disagreement between him and the President of the Republic, M. Mitterrand, there was not a centimetre's difference between his position as Prime Minister and that of the President of the fifth Republic. I can say exactly the same. There is not a centimetre's difference in policy between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and myself. I have combed the statements by my right hon. Friend in reference to the point made by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), and he has never said that he wishes to see the introduction of a day-fine system. What he has said clearly, which I think is common ground across the Floor of the House, is that he wishes to see the fine system related to income. As with M. Fabius and President Mitterrand, so with the Home Secretary and his junior Minister.

The hon. Lady gave notice in Committee that she wanted to pursue this point. This evening it has been pursued by the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), who is a glutton for punishment. He is serving on the Committee examining the Finance Bill, and he has come to take part in this debate, too. I share his aim: we do not want inappropriate fines to be imposed on offenders.

The courts are already encouraged to take full account of means when determining the size of fines. The problem is that it is said that they sometimes do not—hence the sort of problems that emerged in the speech by the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, and the example given by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

Sometimes people who default on fines go to gaol. The numbers who go to gaol are still higher than the Government want. That is a strain on prison administration. We can take only a little comfort from the figures. It might interest the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie if I gave him the most recently available figures. In 1982 there were 24,500 receptions into prison following fine default. By 1986, that had fallen to about 19,000—a substantial, although not astounding, reduction. Equally, and probably more importantly, the average number of people in prison at any given time for fine default fell from about 900 in 1982 to about 500 in 1986.

We are by no means unsympathetic to the thinking behind the new clause. But we doubt whether the pure day-fine system, as operated in some western European countries, would work well here. That system requires the courts to express the fine as a number of units on all or most occasions. Courts impose fines on more than a million occasions a year, so this would be a considerable strain on the court system.

We think that the system would be unduly mechanistic. It could be rigid, and it would certainly be bureaucratic. There are all sorts of practical problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) put his finger on them earlier. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford also pointed to the sort of problems that can arise. The essence of the day-fine idea should be explored and promoted, if that essence has to do with ability to pay.

This is why, as I said in Committee, we are setting up some experimental projects in several parts of the country. They are designed to do exactly what the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), with all his experience as a deputy recorder and the times that he has appeared in Mold Crown court—the centre of the United Kingdom judicial universe—rightly wants us to do: to examine the possibility of relating fines to income. We are introducing the projects to devise a systematic way of relating fines to the means of offenders. As part of the experiment, we shall introduce a new form, which will make for consistent decision taking about fine levels across the country. The aim is to establish a procedure that is not unduly bureaucratic—which a strict day-fine system, whether compulsory or available at the discretion of the court, might well be—but which will relate fines more closely to income.

In Committee, I said that we hope to have two of these experimental schemes quite soon. One will be in Bradford and the other in Swansea. I can announce to the House that, with the agreement of the court authorities, we will be able to have a further experiment, which will begin almost immediately, in Teesside. Therefore, there will be three experiments—one naturally in Wales, one in Bradford and one in Teesside. These experiments will run for six months and the Home Office will get reports about the findings not in 1995 but in 1989.

11 pm

I think that in trying to relate fines much more closely to income we are travelling along much the same road as the Opposition. However, we think that the day-fine system is too rigid and too bureaucratic, at least for the moment, and would prefer to experiment on the basis that I have described.

[Mr. John Patten]

In view of what I have said, I hope that the hon. Member for Dewsbury and her hon. Friends will be content to leave matters as they are and not press the new clause to a Division.

Mr. Worthington: We wish to press ahead with the new clause. Before I sum up, I should like, on behalf of the Opposition, to apologise to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), because we should have added his name to the list of proposers of the new clause. That was an omission.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) for telling me that she knew the Minister would not accept the new clause. She has worked out his body language and knows that when he is about to say no he has his arms folded. My hon. Friend has never persuaded him to say yes. We are also grateful to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) for the moment of exquisite pain that he inflicted on the Minister when he used the term "hard labour". The Minister tries to be loved by everybody and the term "punishment in the community" is exquisitely balanced but is hardly how the Minister wanted to see his new proposal described.

None of the Conservative Members who spoke tackled seriously enough the problem that I posed in proposing the new clause. It is that in Scotland 50 per cent. of the admissions to prison are for fine default. In England and Wales it is about half that, about 25 to 30 per cent. That is an enormous problem for the prisons. The Minister said that our proposals would impose a strain on the court system. What on earth does he think the present procedures impose on the prison system?

We must tackle the problem of some unpaid fines being disposed of by an inappropriate, short sentence. We accept that that is a difficult problem because, while over 90 per cent. of fines are paid, it is quite difficult to identify the fines which will not be paid and which, because of their large number, create a considerable problem for the prison system. We must press the new clause because we think that it would make the courts much more systematic than they are at present.

As I said, there are two sides to this argument. Someone who has committed an offence should have imposed upon him a penalty that makes him think about the serious consequences of his actions. The penalty should be such that it causes people to say that society seriously disapproves of their actions. There is no doubt that if a substantial fine is imposed upon a poor person he will get that message. If one imposes a moderate fine on a wealthy person, one has not penalised him. Therefore, there should be more substantial fines, or disposals, which have an impact on the life of that person.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does my hon. Friend recall the support that the Home Secretary gave to this concept, when he said in the House that the answer to many of the problems outlined by my hon. Friend

"is to make the level of fine realistic in the first place"? —[*Official Report*, 30 March 1988; Vol. 130, c. 1090.]

Mr. Worthington: The Home Secretary has said some sensible things, and I wish that they could be codified into a day-fine system.

As the Minister knows, we have the massive problem that in England and Wales we imprison more people than are imprisoned almost anywhere else in Europe. I am delighted to see present the Under-Secretary with responsibility for prisons in Scotland, because the problem is even worse there. Only the record in Turkey exceeds the number of people who are imprisoned in Scotland.

We shall never be able to deal with this problem unless we can tackle the supply side. There is also the problem, which in a way is a good one, that the judiciary is independent and is not the judicial arm of the political system. We must ensure that there are no rogue courts that are taking up more of the country's resources than they should by imposing fines or other disposables, with the result that people are being sent to prison needlessly.

A good court will have an informal day-fine system anyway, and a good judge will take into account people's ability to pay, but all the experience is that we cannot simply leave it to good practice. There has to be a codified system of day fines, which lays down on a formula basis how fines should be calculated, taking into account both the seriousness of the offence and the ability to pay if we are both to use the fining system sensibly and avoid the needless use of our prison space.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:——

The House divided: Ayes 72, Noes 197.

Division No. 368] **[11.7 pm**

AYES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Home Robertson, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Hoyle, Doug
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Battle, John	Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Lewis, Terry
Boateng, Paul	Livingstone, Ken
Boyes, Roland	Livsey, Richard
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	McCartney, Ian
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	McNamara, Kevin
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Maxton, John
Clelland, David	Michael, Alun
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Murphy, Paul
Cohen, Harry	Nellist, Dave
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	O'Brien, William
Corbett, Robin	Parry, Robert
Cousins, Jim	Patchett, Terry
Cryer, Bob	Pike, Peter L.
Dalyell, Tam	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Primarolo, Dawn
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Rooker, Jeff
Dewar, Donald	Rowlands, Ted
Dixon, Don	Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Eadie, Alexander	Skinner, Dennis
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*	Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*	Spearing, Nigel
Faulds, Andrew	Steel, Rt Hon David
Fearn, Ronald	Steinberg, Gerry
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Flynn, Paul	Wallace, James
Foster, Derek	Wareing, Robert N.
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John	Wigley, Dafydd
Golding, Mrs Llin	Wise, Mrs Audrey
Gordon, Mildred	Worthington, Tony
Graham, Thomas	
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*	Tellers for the Ayes:
	Mr. Frank Haynes and Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan	Arbuthnot, James
Alexander, Richard	Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Amess, David	Ashby, David
Amos, Alan	Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*

Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Paice, James
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

Question accordingly negatived.

Further consideration of the Bill adjourned.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee), to be further considered tomorrow.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ordered,

That Mr. Terry Patchett be discharged from the Social Services Committee and Mr. Andrew Smith be added to the Committee—*[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.]

ANTARCTICA

That the draft Antarctic Treaty (Agreed Measures) (No. 2) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 13th May, be approved—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Question agreed to.

Psychological Operations (Northern Ireland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

11.21 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): I have sought to raise this matter on the Adjournment because, quite frankly, it has become impossible to gain through questioning the Government on the Order Paper any detailed answers to the points that I wish to raise.

I shall deal with the questions and answers which have been exchanged between myself and the Government during the past few months and which clearly demonstrate a complete evasion by the Government on the nature of the psychological operations and the warfare in Northern Ireland.

On 27 October 1976, *The Irish Times* quoted an internal Army document, "An Introduction to Psychological Operations", that set out the nature and scope of such activities. Those activities were confirmed at that time—following a question tabled by the late Tom Litterick—by the then Under-Secretary of State in the Labour Government. The reply was clear:

"The syllabus consists of the study and analysis of propaganda techniques and their countermeasures; elementary psychology and community relations."—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1976; Vol. 918, c. *693-94*.]

Yet when I asked the current Secretary of State for Defence to publish the syllabus of courses in psychological warfare operations in the United Kingdom from 1972 to date, the answer was simply "No". If the syllabus could be published in 1976, why not now? Is it that the Government have something to hide of which the then Labour Government were not aware?

On 7 March, answering my question on the number of armed forces and Civil Service personnel trained in psychological warfare from 1972 to 1987, the Under-Secretary of State told the House that information was not available prior to 1983. That was not the case. The numbers involved for the years 1973-74 and 1974-75—a total of more than 200 individuals—were made available in a written reply in *Hansard* on 4 November 1976. Once again, it was strange that the information available to the Government could not even stretch to checking previous editions of *Hansard*.

Following a further written question by myself, the information appears for the period 1973 to 1976, but the Under-Secretary of State now states that the figures for 1976 to 1982 are no longer available. How convenient, how amazing—just the figures that they do not want us to have.

That policy of disinformation towards the House continued when I asked the Secretary of State for Defence

"Where courses have been held on psychological warfare and psychological operations in which his Department was involved in each year from 1972 to the current date, in the United Kingdom and the United States of America."

Following a delay through a holding reply, the Under-Secretary's answer fell into two parts: first, information for the United Kingdom was made available only up to 1982. As to post-1982, the reply stated:

"Since 1982 responsibility for the courses has transferred to MOD central staff."

That avoided answering the question. Why are the Government so keen not to reveal the location? Is it because it would mean admitting that the current location for such courses is the joint intelligence centre, where the Army co-ordinates all intelligence operations, including the covert activities of MI5 and MI6, or is it because they would also be admitting to Parliament that psychological operations are an integral part of the state's secret intelligence function?

It is not surprising, therefore, that when the Secretary of State was later asked what his policy has been since 1982 towards holding courses on psychological warfare and psychological operations at the joint intelligence centre, his answer was simply to refer to the reply given on 6 May.

The second issue raised concerned courses in the United States of America. The Minister replied:

"With regard to courses in the USA, I have nothing to add to the answer I gave on 7 March."—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1988; Vol. 132, c. *622*.]

Yet the question on 7 March was:

"how many members of the armed forces and civil servants from his Department were engaged in psychological warfare in Northern Ireland each year from 1972 to 1987."—[*Official Report*,7 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. *59*.]

I was asking about the location of training in the USA, not about the numbers involved. Why was a reply provided for the United Kingdom but not for the USA when it had previously been provided by the then Labour Under-Secretary in *Hansard* in 1976? The answer may lie in the fact that the Government do not want to admit that courses are currently being provided at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, where psychological operations training is heavily influenced by experiences in Vietnam and specially oriented towards catering for special forces such as the SAS. They involve instruction on kidnapping, explosive booby-trapping and assassination techniques. They were put into operation during the USA assassination campaign called Operation Phoenix in the Vietnam war. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Minister refused to provide a straight answer as well as refusing to comment on the details of course content, especially those provided in the USA.

According to one study, "Britain's Military Strategy in Ireland" by Roger Faligot, in October 1972 Keith Belbin, from the publicity agency Colman, Prentice and Varley, then handling the election account of the Tory party, was present. Also present was Alan Protheroe, a major in army intelligence, who later became assistant director-general of the BBC and is currently working for the Ministry of Defence. In 1979, BBC news editor and Radio 3 controller Ian McIntyre was present.

I asked on 6 May how many employees of the BBC attended psychological operation courses, only to be told by the same Minister:

"The present courses are only open to students from Ministry of Defence and NATO military and civilian staffs."—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1988, Vol.132, c. *622*.]

He thus avoided the question by answering one that I had not asked. Perhaps we can speculate that as the security services were intent on destabilising the legitmately elected Government during the 1970s, the BBC management could prove a useful ally.

On 14 June I asked the Secretary of State for Defence "what are the precise details and responsibilities of the Army information services in Northern Ireland?"

The ever-ubiquitous Under-Secretary evaded an honest reply by saying:

"The role . . .is to represent the Army (including the UDR, TA and Cadets) in Northern Ireland in all matters relating to publicity and the media.—[*Official Report*, 14 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. *121-22*.]

That employs a total of more than 40 press officers. What his reply failed to confirm when considering psychological operations in Ireland was the covert role played by the Army information policy department, set up in September 1971, later to become a separate, militarily-staffed information unit within the Army information services. The Government refuse to confirm the unit's existence. It has functioned under different names. From 1970 to 1971 it was the information liaison unit; from 1971 to 1975 it was the information policy unit; in 1975 it became the information planning unit. According to Mr. Peter Broderick, employed as chief information officer at Army headquarters Northern Ireland from 1973 to 1974, his brief was to

"use psychological means to assist operations strategically and tactically."

Mr. Colin Wallace, a senior information officer at that time, was a key figure in the operation of the unit. According to a statement by the IPCS in October 1975, in addition to ordinary public relations duties Wallace was required to engage in secret black propaganda disinformation activities as part of his official duties. That, of course, required a secret job description on the basis of psychological operations. To comply with Civil Service regulations, a false job cover description was put out by the Ministry of Defence. That has been repeatedly denied by the Government.

The IPCS stated that Wallace's responsibilities included the

"unattributable briefing of journalists which included the revelation of 'privileged and sensitive information' . . .
operations to discredit individuals and cause dissension within organisation . . .
operations designed to result in a 'favourable press' for the Department and the Government, by countering hostile propaganda."

Thus Wallace claims that he was unlawfully employed by the MOD Army information services and used by the intelligence services to disseminate information and disinformation designed to discredit key political personalities, particularly during the 1974 general election —a topic dealt with in Mr. Peter Wright's book.

The growth of psychological warfare dates back to the publication of "Low Intensity Operations" by Frank Kitson. Indeed, prior to that the Army published "Land Operations—Counter Revolutionary Operations" endorsing and committing the Army to the use of those methods.

On 28 March I asked the Secretary of State for Defence about the use of forged CIA documents by the armed forces in Northern Ireland from 1971 to that date. The Minister replied:

"I am unaware of any evidence that such documents have been used at any time by the armed forces in Northern Ireland."—[*Official Report*, 28 March 1988; Vol 130, c. 362.]

Following a holding answer, he replied on 6 May to a question concerning the policy of the Ministry of Defence to the forging of documents by Army printing presses in Northern Ireland in connection with covert operations:

"It is not the practice to comment on operational mattters."—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1988; Vol 132, c. *620*.]

Once again, it was not a denial, which is wise given the mounting evidence to the contrary.

I have a photostat of the CIA forged document of authority that Colin Wallace sent to the Prime Minister asking her to investigate how he came to be in possession of such an item. I am not at all surprised that the Minister does not wish to deny its existence.

A current assistant chief public relations officer at the Ministry of Defence, Mr. Chris Whitehead, also carried a false CIA card. Members of the Army information service masqueraded as members of a paramilitary group with captured terrorist weapons and explosives at Belfast airport in 1974. I shall be interested to know whether the Minister can give a categorical denial of that.

The leaking of the plans formulated by the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), to set up a special community police force to try to bridge the gap between the communities was leaked in order to wreck those plans. That was admitted by my right hon. Friend in March 1987 on Ulster Television. The leak was conducted by the Army information services—supposedly at that time loyal servants of the Government, who would not be expected to leak information to derail their policies.

In addition, in his book "A Personal View", the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland admits to the existence of

"Freelance attempts by the Army information people to use black propaganda."

Clockwork Orange, the plan to discredit politicians and the legitimately elected Government, formulated and activated by the unit working within the Army information services in Northern Ireland, reached its climax in the mid-1970s. In reply to a question about the nature of Clockwork Orange, I was fobbed off by the Minister, who referred to a previous answer stating that all allegations made by Mr. Wallace had been carefully investigated. This was in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), and appeared in *Hansard* on 20 July and did not state the precise nature of those investigations. Subsequent questions about this matter have repeatedly failed to elicit the information—particularly information as to who initiated such a project. I hope that the Government will state clearly how many investigations were conducted, by whom, who was interviewed, what the investigations cost, to whom they were reported and who has seen them apart from the Ministers concerned.

Major General Sir Peter Leng, a former commander of land forces in Northern Ireland in 1973-74 when his unit was active, admitted the existence of Clockwork Orange in an article in *The Listener*, entitled "A Wilderness of Mirrors", on 6 August 1987. I shall be interested to hear whether the Government formally deny that such a project ever took place.

When on 6 May I asked what percentage of officers commanding the information policy unit, the information liaison unit and the information planning unit in Northern Ireland underwent training at home or abroad in psychological warfare, after a delay the Minister, referring to a previous answer, said:

"It is not the policy to comment on operational matters."—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. *59*.]

That was inconsistent as details had previously been given about the individuals who had been "trained". Such details were given by the Prime Minister in *Hansard* on 7 March 1988. Furthermore, the question was not about operational details. Once again the Government were failing to answer the question by answering another

[Mr. Ken Livingstone]

question. As there is dual involvement of the Ministry of Defence and the Northern Ireland Office, it has been difficult to ascertain the exact nature of the relationship, although the Prime Minister stated that the Secretary of State for Defence was ultimately responsible.

That is interesting, given that a question to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland took nearly a month to answer concerning his Department's policy towards Psyops from 1972 was not directly and automatically referred to the Ministry of Defence. The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office replied:

"It is not the general practice to comment on detailed matters of security policy."—[*Official Report*, 23 May 1988; Vol. 134, c. 36.]

There is a need to explain the link between the psychological operations, Lisburn army information services and the small covert unit working within it. Those links have continually been denied. Does the Secretary of State for Defence retain ultimate responsibility, or does it go higher? My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South was asked on Ulster Television in March 1987 whether he knew of a Psyops unit in Army HQ. He stated that he did not know of its existence until late 1974, and then took steps to disband it.

It is important to know that the Information Research Department, a sinister body set up by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and later disbanded by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), was formed to monitor "Left-wing" activities and was involved in information policy in the 1970s. It should also be noted that the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office stated on 6 May 1987 that allegations made by Mr. Wallace were indeed matters for the defence Ministers. The Minister assured the House that

"these allegations have been fully and carefully investigated and that there is not a shred of evidence to substantiate any of them. I am satisfied."—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1987; Vol. 115, c. 808.]

In addition, the Prime Minister, when asked about

"false job descriptions, psychological warfare and propaganda",

following information received from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, stated that all the allegations had been

"fully and carefully investigated and no evidence had been found to substantiate any of them,"—[*Official Report*, 26 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 96.]

Furthermore, on 6 May 1988 the Secretary of State for Defence was asked if he would make a statement as to which officials in charge of Army information services had been interviewed by any inquiries into psychological operations. It is important to remember that, according to the Prime Minister, Psyops falls under his responsibility. He replied that he does not comment on specific individuals. When he was asked on 14 June 1988 how many individuals were interviewed, the same evasion was provided:

"We have been assured repeatedly that full investigations have been undertaken, but no information has been forthcoming as to their nature and scope."

Even more amazing, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when asked whether Wallace was ever interviewed concerning Psyops, political disinformation or alleged use of forged documentation, replied:

"Not as far as I am aware."

In fact, none of Mr. Wallace's former colleagues has ever been interviewed by MOD or NIO about these allegations. In particular, this includes the key accuser Colin Wallace.

If that is what passes for full and careful investigation by the Government, we are in a sorry state. Should we be surprised by the answers provided? Obviously not, given the political embarrassment that would inevitably result—particularly as they dovetail with what Peter Wright has been saying in his book. I also note that Mr. Wright has made it clear on television in the last few weeks that there are 10 major secrets that he did not reveal because they would be so damaging. I have not the slightest doubt that the almost complete absence in the book of any mention of what has been going on in Ireland reflects his desire to save the Government from much more devastating embarrassing revelations than could ever have been the case from anything else that he has written.

We shall not have a safe and secure democracy in this country until we can be satisfied that an elected Government are not undermined by their own security services, and that those services do not operate as cowboys pursuing their own plans and strategies irrespective of loyalty to the elected Government of the day.

11.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) has spoken for 19 minutes. I am sure that he realises that he has somewhat limited my opportunity to respond. I shall certainly study the *Hansard* record of what he has said tonight and, as I am unable to cover the ground that I had originally intended, I shall then respond to any points that require a detailed reply.

The hon. Gentleman has raised the issue of so-called psychological warfare operations in Northern Ireland—based in part, I believe, on a number of allegations made to him about events that are alleged to have taken place in the Province more than a decade ago. I know from their presence tonight that several other hon. Members have interested themselves in this general issue, and, indeed, in the specific cases lying behind the hon. Gentleman's allegations.

It has been the general practice of successive Governments not to comment on detailed matters of security policy. I need hardly stress the importance of adhering to that practice where operations in Northern Ireland are concerned, and I have no intention of departing from it this evening. The Government are committed to pursue their efforts to restore peace and order in Northern Ireland, and, in keeping with the security policy that has been followed by successive Governments, are determined to fight terrorism, with all appropriate resources, under the rule of law.

The hon. Gentleman has made several allegations about so-called psychological warfare operations and alleged criminal activities committed by the security forces in Northern Ireland. These allegations appear to stem from two individuals, Mr. Colin Wallace and a former Army officer, Captain Fred Holroyd, who both left Northern Ireland over a decade ago.

The position rests as I described it in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 3 March 1987, at column 577. The various allegations made by Captain Holroyd and Mr. Colin Wallace over many years about the conduct of the security forces in

Northern Ireland have been fully and carefully investigated since they brought them to the attention of the authorities some years after they left the Province in 1975. No evidence has been discovered, as a result of those investigations, to substantiate any of their allegations. If the hon. Member for Brent, East believes that he has new evidence of illegal activities by the security forces—and nothing that I have heard tonight suggests that—he should bring it to the attention of the proper authorities, as I have made clear to him before.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Who has done the careful investigation of Colin Wallace?

Mr. Freeman: I regret that, in the time available to me, it is not possible to deal with the points raised by the hon. Member for Brent, East, or the points that he may have cared to raise, if this were anything but an Adjournment debate, about the allegations of Mr. Colin Wallace. I shall write to the hon. Member for Brent, East tomorrow and put in the Library a copy of my letter, with fuller remarks about the allegations raised by Mr. Colin Wallace and Captain Fred Holroyd.

The hon. Member for Brent, East raised a plethora of points about parliamentary answers that I and other Ministes have given. If he is not satisfied with the answers that he has received, I invite him to table further questions, and I shall do my duty and answer them promptly.

11.43 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In the time available I shall add to the powerful case that was deployed by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). Like several of my colleagues, I have seen Colin Wallace and Fred Holroyd. It would be presumptuous and impertinent to pretend that I can come to any final judgment on extremely complex intelligence matters. I can only say that, starting from a position of sceptism, by the end of the third hour I was convinced that there was a formidable case to be answered relating to Colin Wallace. I am extremely sceptical about whether any real effort has been made to carry out a careful, thorough and detailed investigation. I should have thought that the Minister's answer would contain some details of the nature of the investigation. I listened carefully to my hon. Friend and to the Minister's reply. My hon. Friend has put the more heavyweight argument tonight. The matter cannot be left as it is.

11.44 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): It is now 14 months since I led a long debate on this matter and raised all the issues in some detail. I shall ask the Minister a question that I know he will not answer from the Dispatch Box, but he might reflect upon it. It is a simple question. Does he know the truth? Does he know what exactly happened? If he does not know the truth, does he think that it is right that he should stand at the Dispatch Box tonight and reply to the debate?

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Many Conservative Members will be disgusted by what the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) has said tonight. It is open to any hon. Member to challenge the workings and actions of the Government. It is often the case that the hon. Gentleman seeks to obtain information which must be calculated at least to undermine the efforts of the Government in pursuing a difficult and dangerous counter-insurgency war in Northern Ireland, for that is what it is. The hon. Gentleman, amusing and personable though he is and having friends on both sides of the House, in raising this debate must give cause for concern about his motives: whether to obtain information that the security forces have not been acting within the law, or to undermine the efforts of the security forces—our constituents' sons, daughters and fathers—who are fighting a war against a vicious, brutal, nasty and inhuman enemy who is constantly destroying the lives of innocent people.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman and others, in holding themselves up as the great champions of democracy and in seeking to take on the might of Government to expose Government wrongdoing, will bear in mind that as hon. Members we enjoy privileges and bear an enormous responsibility to ensure that we do not undermine the work of our security services in trying to defend the democracy that we profess to uphold and which is more seriously under threat in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is a most curious Adjournment debate. The Minister complained that my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) had taken 19 minutes, so he had only a short time in which to answer. Then, lo and behold, the Minister sits down, leaving plenty of time to others. He cannot have it both ways. Was there ever any intention to answer the debate? The Minister has time to answer that question.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): That is a question that the Chair cannot answer. It is not my responsibility.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at thirteen minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 21 June 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday.

IMPERIAL COLLEGE BILL *[Lords]*

UNIVERSITY OF WALES COLLEGE OF CARDIFF BILL *[Lords]* (*changed from* UNIVERSITY OF WALES CARDIFF BILL *[Lords]*)
Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Finance

1. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he now expects to publish his report on student finance; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): The student support review has not yet completed its work. The Government's proposals for the future of student support will be published in due course.

Mr. Buckley: As women are generally lower paid than men, what steps will the Under-Secretary take to ensure that there is no discrimination against female students applying for loans under the Government's proposals?

Mr. Jackson: The Government have not yet announced any proposals, so it is hard for me to comment. There has been a great deal of rather imaginative speculation in the press. We are determined that there will be no discrimination in the system of student support and that that system will promote access to higher education for everyone who is qualified for it.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend accept that I attach great importance to student loans? Is he aware that the majority of cases of hardship that come to me are caused by parents who do not meet their parental responsibilities? Therefore, if students had access to loans, they would be infinitely better off. Will my hon. Friend ensure that the repayment terms are such that the system does not turn into a reverse dowry against girls and does not disadvantage those on long courses?

Mr. Jackson: I have noted my hon. Friend's suggestions, but many countries have a student loan system that does not operate to the disadvantage of women. In fact, it secures greater access to higher education than does our system of grants. Only 8 per cent. of our entrants to universities come from social classes 4 and 5, which is a lower percentage than that in countries that operate student loan schemes.

Mr. James Lamond: Has the Minister considered the American experience of student loans? Is he aware that defaults on loans are running high—at least 20 per cent. or, perhaps, higher? The American Education Secretary, William J. Bennett, said that the defaults are now out of control. Despite trying a number of methods to recover the loans, the Americans are now talking about withholding student loan grants from institutes that cannot reduce defaults to below 20 per cent. Is that the sort of future that the Minister envisages for education?

Mr. Jackson: I have already said that we are considering international experience. The United Kingdom is virtually the only country that does not have a loan element. We shall learn from the mistakes of other countries. Some of them—for example, Sweden—have a low default rate, so the evidence is not as conclusive as the hon. Gentleman suggested.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that adults who have the vote should be fully prepared to take responsibility for financing their further education? Does he also agree that those who take loans would render themselves independent as adults, from both their parents and the Government?

Mr. Jackson: We have carried out a survey of student income and expenditure, which has shown that many parents do not pay the full parental contribution. About 40 per cent. fail to do so. There is no doubt that the provision of additional resources to students would help them to secure the greater independence to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister look carefully at the American experience, particularly the indictment of the loan system in the *New York Times* on 8 June, which pointed out that 25 per cent. of students were now defaulting in the United States, it was costing about $2 billion from federal funds to meet the defaults, there was pressure for checking on the credit rating of students to stop defaults, and perhaps the most damning of all, over a 10-year period, from one in three students having to depend on loans rather than grants, three in four students were having to depend on loans? Surely we should not follow the United States and make the same mistake of bringing in a loan system that will be unfortunate for students and for national finance.

Mr. Jackson: We can learn a great deal from studying the experience of other countries, which have variegated systems of student support. The American experience in respect of defaults on loan payments is anomalous compared with the experience of other countries that have loan systems.

Head Teacher

2. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department is in a position to make an assessment of the number of vacant head teacher posts; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): My Department estimates that at January 1988 approximately 300 head teacher posts were vacant. That is only slightly more than 1 per cent. of head teacher posts.

Mr. Martlew: Does the Secretary of State recognise that we have a growing problem with head teachers leaving the profession, many through early retirement, and that there is great difficulty in recruiting replacements? I understand that 50 per cent. of all head teacher jobs advertised in London have to be readvertised because of the lack of suitable applicants. Even in my constituency of Carlisle, for which Cumbria is the education authority, we now have a staff turnover of 10 per cent. Will not the new Education Reform Bill, with its ideas of turning head teachers into managing directors, add to that problem? We are likely to lose many of our best and most experienced head teachers. Will the Secretary of State make available £35 million to train head teachers, as requested by the National Association of Head Teachers? Will the Secretary of State meet the head teachers union to discuss their problems?

Mr. Baker: In answer to the hon. Gentleman's many questions, the interim advisory committee found no evidence of serious recruitment problems affecting head teacher posts. Certainly I have never heard that head teachers and teachers do not want to work in Cumbria —that is one of the more popular areas for teachers.

As for training, there will have to be extra training for teachers, particularly in managment skills. I am setting up a task force to plan and arrange that. The hon. Gentleman is quite right in that regard, but I can assure him that he is taking far too gloomy a view. Many head teachers are looking forward to the opportunities that the Bill will provide in giving them much bigger and better responsibilities.

Mr. Pawsey: I am certain that head teachers are looking forward to the Education Reform Bill becoming an Act, because of the additional opportunities that it will provide. To what extent do premature retirements figure in head teacher vacancies? Will my right hon. Friend also say a word about indiscipline in schools? In his opinion, is that preventing recruitment?

Mr. Baker: There is not a great deal of convincing evidence that there are a large number of premature retirements. I reported that there were 300 head teacher vacancies in January 1988—the first time that we have collected the figures. That is against 30,000 head teacher posts, and it is a very small figure indeed.

I and the Government are very conscious of the problems of violence and indiscipline in schools. That is why I have set up the Elton committee. Lord Elton and his committee are making rapid progress and I look to them to report by Christmas.

Mr. Barry Jones: Is the Secretary of State aware of the report that showed that many hundreds of head teachers are seeking early retirement? Is not the Government's brutal approach to salaries and conditions of service creating that problem? Is the right hon. Gentleman not creating a legacy of ill-will and bad morale in our schools that will affect the education of our children for many years to come?

Mr. Baker: I do not agree. For the first time in the history of the teaching profession head teachers of the large comprehensives in our inner cities can earn as much as £32,000 a year. There is now effective career progression for teachers, with incentive allowances. There is no doubt that that will attract many people into the profession.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend agree that these vacant headships are mainly in politically perverse LEAs?

Mr. Baker: I do not have the figures, but I am sure that there is some connection.

Mr. Fatchett: Has the Secretary of State noticed a recent survey by Oxford polytechnic, which showed that half the head teacher posts vacant in London and the south-east were not filled on the first advertisement and that schools had run for some time without a head teacher? Has the right hon. Gentleman noticed the recent comments by the National Association of Head Teachers, which has expressed its concern about the increasing burden placed on head teachers by the Education Reform Bill? The association has predicted that there will be an increase in the number of early retirements and suggested that Government action is needed to prevent head teachers from leaving the profession. In particular, the association has proposed expenditure of £35 million to establish a staff college for head teachers. Will the Government react positively to that proposal?

Mr. Baker: We shall certainly improve the quality of head teacher training. The task force, which I shall establish later in the year, will plan that. I want to involve the private sector, because private sector management training will be important. In those authorities where budgets have been delegated to heads, the heads have welcomed that move. They have found their jobs more interesting and their control of their schools better. I am sure that head teachers across the country are awaiting the implementation of our Bill.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is no higher vocation than that of head teacher or deputy head teacher? Is he aware that they require reasonable sanctions with which to deal with difficult and recalcitrant pupils? Has my right hon. Friend seen last week's report by the National Association of Head Teachers, complaining that there have been no proper substitute discipline sanctions for corporal punishment since its abolition about two years ago? Will my right hon. Friend do something about that?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend was a deputy head teacher who decided to become a Member of Parliament, and teaching's loss is our gain. He brings great experience to the House. The power of head teachers to control disruptive behaviour is an important matter. Some head teachers feel that their powers have been undermined, and that is one reason why I have set up the Elton committee to report on the matter.

Nursery Education

3. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the variability of the level of nursery education provision offered by different local authorities.

4. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what planned programme of expansion of educational provision for children between the ages of three and four years he expects to occur over the next three years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): The variations in education provision for the under-fives across the country reflect differences in local authorities' needs and priorities. The Government's current expenditure plans provide for the number of three and four-year-olds in nursery and primary schools to increase in line with the projected increase in their age cohorts up to 1992.

Mr. Cummings: Will the Minister reflect on the statement by the Prime Minister, who, as Secretary of State for Education and Science in 1972, called for nursery provision for 90 per cent. of four-year-olds and 50 per cent. of three-year-olds within 10 years? Has the Minister changed his mind? Does he intend to make the necessary resources available to meet this pressing need?

Mr. Dunn: Since 1979 the proportion of three and four-year-olds in nursery or primary schools nationally has increased from 37 to 44 per cent. The proportion of four-year-olds in such schools now exceeds 75 per cent. compared with 55 per cent. in 1979. The proportion would be much higher if rising-fives were included.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I welcome the improvement, but does my hon. Friend agree that there are many areas where the playgroup movement makes an important contribution and that many people welcome the variation in provision and would by no means agree that universal nursery school provision is the right approach?

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend is right. The Government regard the playgroup movement as an important form of provision for under-fives and we always encourage it.

Mr. Flannery: Is there not a great and deliberate gap in the answers that the Minister is giving about nursery education? Throughout the country, and especially in the south, Tory authorities have practically no nursery education, because they want to keep the rates down. Last week members of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts were in Dorset, which has virtually no nursery education, and where they have preschool playgroups which are cheaper in every way. Is it not apparent that Tory authorities are trying to educate ordinary children on the cheap, and that only in Labour areas do ordinary children go to nursery school?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman goes too far. The Opposition have plenty of ideas for spending other people's money, but not one sensible idea about how to create wealth. It is clear to me that nursery education for all would be very expensive and, furthermore, would not be appropriate for all children. How do the Opposition propose to pay for nursery education for all?

Mr. Thornton: Does my hon. Friend accept that variation in the provision of nursery education is to be welcomed and that the content of the curriculum is more important than the definitive form of the provision? Does he accept, however, that there are considerable misgivings about the number of four-year-olds who are being taught in primary schools and for whom the timetable and curriculum are wholly inappropriate to their years? Will he consider that point?

Mr. Dunn: The admission of under-fives to reception classes is at the discretion of local education authorities. It is important that the provision for those pupils should be appropriately and adequately resourced. The Government are aware that the presence of significant numbers of four-year-olds can give rise to problems in some areas and, through the agency of Her Majesty's inspectors, we are closely monitoring the situation.

Mrs. Clwyd: Surely the Minister is not disagreeing with his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who favours—or favoured—nursery education for all. The Minister spoke about costs. In the past 10 years, however, total public spending on child care services, including local authority nurseries, has hardly increased, despite the increase in the numbers of women going out to work and the increasing demands for provision reflected in survey after survey. Surely the truth is that the Government have no targets, no standards and no concern for the needs of the under-fives. The Minister apparently has no comment to make about the vastly differing provision available in the LEAs. What does he have to say about Labour Hounslow, which provides 64 per cent. of its children with nursery education, and about Gloucestershire, which provides no nursery education?

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I ask the hon. Lady to be brief and to ask a question?

Mrs. Clwyd: It is a simple question. Why do the Government continue to ignore the needs of the under-fives?

Mr. Dunn: I remind the hon. Lady that the Government plan to provide for an increase of about 5 per cent. between now and 1992 in expenditure for the education of the under-fives. That is on top of a 25 per cent. increase in expenditure over the past five years.

Mr. Rathbone: I reject the Opposition's criticisms, but does my hon. Friend accept that there is increasing awareness of the importance of pre-school education for children, not least so that they can take advantage of the improved teaching standards that the Government are bringing about in primary and secondary education? Will the Government therefore plan for an extension of nursery education for all children?

Mr. Dunn: The Government have always accepted that some pre-school experience is beneficial for the under-fives, both at the time and later, but this sector must compete with others for the resources that are available. However, I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Inner London Education Authority

5. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent assessment he has

made of the effects of his proposals for the funding of education in London, following abolition of the Inner London education authority, on the quality of education in London and the south-east.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: From 1990 LEAs in London will, under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Bill, be financed in the same way as other authorities in England. Our education policy in inner London is to improve the quality and increase the accountability of the education service.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not incongruous that the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), the Minister who is responsible for these matters, should be begging me to go to the Inner London education authority to secure funds for the Merchant Navy college, Greenhithe, which is in his constituency, when he is cutting the money for ILEA and promoting its abolition? Can we not, on a more bipartisan basis, find some way forward whereby the future of this college, this national facility, can be safeguarded?

Mr. Baker: When the hon. Gentleman talks about a bipartisan policy, that is the time to count the spoons.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Answer the question.

Mr. Baker: I am about to answer it. I know that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) takes a great interest in the future of the Merchant Navy college in Dartford. The future of the college is a matter for ILEA, and I understand that ILEA has been reviewing its future for many months. That is a quite separate question from the transfer of responsibilities to the boroughs. I understand that ILEA will be taking a decision shortly.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend not find it extraordinary that when the Inner London education authority takes an interest in the Merchant Navy college in Dartford, all of a sudden it wishes to abolish it? Does he not consider that it is more than a coincidence that that abolition by ILEA, a Labour-controlled authority, should be in the constituency of one of the Education Ministers?

Mr. Baker: As I have already said, I am rather on the sidelines, because it is a further education college. Therefore, it does not come to me in my role as the Secretary of State for Education and Science. I understand that ILEA has been looking at the future of the college for a very considerable time, and it is for ILEA to decide whether it wishes to retain it.

Mr. Straw: Does the Secretary of State accept that the financing and future arrangements for the transfer of ILEA to the London boroughs is a matter of great importance? That is why, despite the fact that we profoundly disagree with the policy, Labour London boroughs, in the interests of the children of London, are co-operating with a will to secure an orderly transfer. Does the Secretary of State accept that he needs to measure up to his responsibilities? Since the service could not cope with cuts during the transfer, when does he intend to guarantee the finances of ILEA? If it is important to him, can he explain why twice as many civil servants are working on the education of a few hundred children in city technology colleges as are working on a transfer of education that affects 270,000 children in London?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman asks me how many of my civil servants are working in the unit. I gave him the reply to that question in *Hansard*. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that many other civil servants in other parts of my Department, at middle management and senior management level, are concerned with ILEA. I am very pleased that since the decision of the House of Lords all individual London Labour boroughs have visited my Department's unit. It is quite clear that, constructively, and apparently with some relish in many cases, they are planning to become local education authorities in 1990, when the boroughs will inherit all the schools and colleges as going concerns and will have the resources to maintain them.

Mr. Ashdown: HON. MEMBERS: "Where is the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith)?"—The House may be assured that I would rather have a leadership election in my party than no leader at all, as in the Labour party. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us return to the question.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Secretary of State say what estimates, if any, he has made of the extra costs to be imposed on London ratepayers because of the appointment of chief education officers and senior officers, some at £40,000 a year, in every London borough, and why he believes that that will reduce the cost of education in London, about which he has complained so much?

Mr. Baker: We are glad to see the hon. Gentleman back in his place. Clearly he is keeping the education portfolio warm, just in case matters do not work out.

As to the cost being borne by inner London boroughs, I have already said that there will be grants for the current financial year of about £3 million, and of about £10 million for next year, to assist them in meeting the expense of preparing for the 1990 transfer.

Burnage School, Manchester (Inquiry Report)

6. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has now received a copy of the inquiry report concerning events at Burnage school, Manchester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have now received a copy of the full Burnage inquiry report and of the legal advice Manchester city council has received. I am considering the implications of those documents carefully.

Mr. Bennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, while it is vital that all schools promote racial harmony and tolerance, the anti-racist, doctrinaire policies adopted by the Burnage school in Manchester and by some Labour local authorities elsewhere are in danger of alienating the vast majority of parents and pupils, and thus of being counter-productive?

Mr. Baker: What happened at the Burnage school was a very tragic episode, and anyone who reads the report cannot help but be moved by the tragic sequence of events. I agree that good race relations are not best served by the

clumsy application of anti-racist policies. Mutual respect and tolerance must be the key pillars of any race relations policy.

Mr. Bradley: I hope that when the Secretary of State has considered the documents, he will publish them in the Library, so that everyone can read the report, and so that the unwarranted criticism of the school which has been made yet again in the House by the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), can be put in its place. We may then have an opportunity to congratulate the school on the efforts that have been made over the past two years, and to congratulate the staff, governors and parents on their invaluable work in trying to enhance the school. Does the Secretary of State agree that the best way forward is to recognise the valuable work done by Manchester city council on race relations policies and their implementation in Manchester schools? I hope that he will support such policies and provide adequate resources to ensure that they are continued and extended in Manchester and throughout the country.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman asks me to publish the report, but it raises complex legal matters on which I am still receiving advice. I must bear in mind that the inquiry was not the same as the judicial public inquiry held in the case of the Zeebrugge and King's Cross disasters. It is not a question of a cover-up, but of where the public interest lies in relation to the rights of those individuals named in the report. I must take careful legal advice on that point.

Mr. Budgen: I remind my right hon. Friend that pernicious policies of reverse discrimination are widespread. When the local authority for Colton Hills schools in Wolverhampton wished to introduce the teaching of Punjabi to all children on a compulsory basis, and when some of the parents——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question concerns Burnage school in Manchester.

Mr. Budgen: With great respect, Mr. Speaker, it is about the principle there.

Mr. Speaker: Order. With great respect, it is about events at Burnage school.

Mr. Budgen: Is it not the case, Mr. Speaker, that such events may recur elsewhere, for such policies are being opposed in many schools? When parents protest, they are rudely and roundly described as racist, in a way that is counter-productive.

Mr. Baker: Some of the report's conclusions comment on the application of anti-racist policies. However, the incidents mentioned there relate very much to Burnage school. There are other schools in the Manchester area where similar policies have been pursued, but not with such tragic consequences. I make it clear to my hon. Friend and to the House that there is no place in our schools for any manifestation of racial antagonism or intolerance. We are pursuing a range of measures to overcome racial disharmony.

Education Reform

7. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the progress of the working parties established in relation to the national curriculum.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): My right hon. Friend is expecting final reports from the mathematics and science working groups by the end of this month. These reports, together with my right hon. Friend's comments, will be published in due course. Working groups for English and for design and technology were set up on 29 April. The English working group has been asked to report on the primary stages by 30 September and on the secondary stages by 30 April next year. Interim and final reports of the design and technology working group are to be submitted by 31 October and 30 April respectively.

Mr. Hughes: To avoid any confusion about the teaching of history as part of the curriculum, will the Minister make it clear whether she supports the Secretary of State's view that the teaching of history is an integral part of the curriculum foundation course, or whether she supports the Prime Minister's view, expressed in the Oxford university magazine last year, that the teaching of history is a luxury?

Mrs. Rumbold: It is perfectly clear from the way in which the Education Reform Bill is formulated that history is regarded by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and, indeed, by the Government, as one of our foundation subjects. Therefore, history will be taught within the foundation subjects in all schools as and when the working party reports to us.

Mr. Latham: Will my hon. Friend proceed at a leisurely pace on the setting up of the working group on foreign languages, since it is not immediately clear from where the staff to teach that discipline are to come?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will take note of my hon. Friend's comments on that matter. It is our intention ultimately to set up a working group on the teaching of foreign languages, and the supply of teachers will form part of our considerations when the working groups have reported and the national curriculum is introduced into our schools.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the Secretary of State ensure that some of the working parties consider health education? Will they support the view of the Minister for Health that anti-smoking campaigns should be pursued in schools? If so, will the Minister consider what will happen in city technology colleges? Will the Government make sure that the basic curriculum is followed there as well as in other schools?

Ms. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will fund the city technology colleges when he is satisfied that the core and foundation subjects are being satisfactorily taught as part of their curriculum. We expect health education to be part of the schools' curriculum outside the core and foundation subjects, and also part of the cross-curricula themes, of which we would expect the science working group in particular to take note.

8. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further steps he is taking to ensure that head teachers and governors are adequately trained for their expanded duties under the Education Reform Bill.

Mr. Dunn: We propose to give priority within the local education authority training grant scheme to training which will support heads and senior teachers in implementing the initiatives introduced in our Bill. My right hon. Friend has also recently announced proposals to establish a task force for management training. We further propose that education support grants should be available in 1989-90 on £5 million of expenditure on the training of school and college governors, and £25 million of expenditure to ensure that head teachers and governors are properly supported during the introduction of financial delegation to our schools.

Mr. Boswell: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Education Reform Bill opens new perspectives for head teachers and gives school governors a proper job to do for the first time? Does he further agree that the training opportunities that he has outlined today, and the Government's publicity campaign, may and should alert many more people in all walks of life, including business, to the opportunities that they will have to influence education at the level of the individual school?

Mr. Dunn: Yes, Sir. To that end, over 3·5 million copies of "Shouldn't you become a school governor?" and nearly 750,000 copies of "School governors—a new role" have been distributed. The leaflets have been widely welcomed and there is continuing demand for them, especially from schools. The opportunities ahead are exciting.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister recognise that many people who are concerned about education are worried that head teachers, rather than being involved in education, will increasingly become business managers, and feel that this will be detrimental to the education of our children? Can he give an assurance that we will be able to find governors who are able to give the time that is necessary to deal with the new responsibilities that will be laid upon governors? It is not all about training. We need people who are able to give the time that is necessary as well.

Mr. Dunn: In the context of the first part of the question posed by the hon. Member, I believe that the reverse is the case. All our provisions, especially financial delegation, will allow head teachers to devote more time to the improvement of education in their schools, rather than constantly banging on the doors of the education office to get minor things done which are time-consuming. With regard to the second part of the question, it is incumbent on all of us in this Chamber, and many outside, to ensure a supply of highly motivated, enthusiastic individuals who are ready to serve as school governors, irrespective of the source from which they might come.

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend agree that before one can train school governors one has to find them, that one of the most effective ways of finding them is by increasing the use of volunteers at all levels within the schools, and that people can graduate from being volunteers helping the school to being school governors? Will he undertake to look very seriously at the possibility of expanding the use of volunteers to assist in the education of our children? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: They have sacked all the governors in Kent.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: And they have sacked all the governors in Staffordshire.

Mr. Dunn: If I am allowed to answer the question, I should like to point out that the reforms upon which we have embarked are giving governors more say in the management of their schools. This should make the role of a school governor, and school government, much more attractive to many people who have previously not considered it. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) goes on about the county of Kent. I ask him to address his interest to what has taken place in the county of Staffordshire.

Mr. Cryer: If the Minister has a moment, may I ask whether it will not mean a massive increase in expenditure to train these heads and governors, with no educational advantage? Head teachers and governors in my constituency of Bradford, South are desperately pressing for money from the Government to increase the number of buildings. As the Minister knows, there are 500 temporary classrooms. All this training will not get round the enormous problem of making sure that there are adequate premises, which is the Government's responsibility. When will they face it and provide money to replace some of the 500 temporary classrooms in my constituency and elsewhere in Bradford?

Mr. Dunn: I am absolutely horrified by the question posed by the hon. Member. I know that he has been out of the House of Commons for some time, and will undoubtedly be so again, and I must point out to him that our capital programme is much improved and that most of what he said is both rubbish and irrelevant. Secondly, the reforms on which we have embarked will encourage a more positive attitude from those who are, and those who wish to become, school governors under these reforms.

Open Enrolment

9. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he plans to introduce open enrolment in schools.

Mr. Dunn: From September 1990 all secondary schools will have to be prepared to admit as many pupils as they can accommodate. Many admissions authorities should be ready to respond to parental demand before that date and we shall give them every encouragement to do so.

Mr. Smith: Is my hon. Friend aware that this policy of open enrolment in schools has been widely welcomed by parents in south Buckinghamshire because of the increased choice that it will give them? Will my hon. Friend do all that he can to ensure that there is no slippage in this programme? Could it not be brought forward to 1989?

Mr. Dunn: We considered the question of timing during our deliberations, especially in Committee. It is clear to us that this policy can be adopted by schools and local authorities now. Many local authorities follow a policy of

open enrolment, much to the satisfaction of parents in the communities that they serve. Because we recogniseed that open enrolment would pose an administrative problem and place further demands upon local education authorities and governors, we decided to introduce it from September 1990.

City Technology Colleges

10. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a further statement about the financing of city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: Overall planned expenditure on the city technology colleges programme is £86 million in the present public expenditure planning period. To date more than £20 million has been pledged by sponsors towards the capital costs of establishing CTCs. The normal running costs of CTCs will be met by Exchequer grant.

Mr. Turner: Will the Minister confirm that the Secretary of State still believes that the substantial cost of CTCs should be borne by the private sector, especially since he made that speech to the Conservative conference last year? Also, if there is to be fairness, what contribution is he prepared to make to state-maintained schools in those areas where CTCs are being set up? What funds will be available for state-maintained schools to advance their science and technology teaching?

Mrs. Rumbold: In the first place, this is the greatest amount of money ever pledged from the private sector to support schools. Private sector money is most welcome to support my right hon. Friend's inspired initiative in setting up these new schools for children who live in deprived urban areas. The Labour and Alliance parties could have assisted in the initiative had they been more willing as local authorities to give planning permission so that buildings that are no longer required could have been used for this extraordinarily good initiative, to enable children to gain from the education that their parents want for them.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is in Toronto for an economic summit meeting.

Mr. Livingstone: Will the Leader of the House take time today to consider the grave security implications arising from three letters by Airey Neave to a former active officer in MI5, recruiting that officer to do freelance work for the Conservative party, updating disinformation and propaganda exercises against the Labour Government? Will he set up an inquiry to consider how it was that Airey Neave knew that this individual had been working for MI5, how he knew how to contact him, and how he was aware of the existence of that black propaganda exercise if he was not involved in it?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman is obsessed with this subject. I have nothing to add to the many answers that have been given on the subject already.

Q2. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Hicks: Will my right hon. Friend convey to our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister our congratulations on the leading role that she has taken in the economic summit on the important subjects of the world economy, drugs, and terrorism? Does he agree that under her stewardship Britain is now recognised as a world leader and not the sick man of Europe, as we were known under the Labour Administration?

Mr. Wakeham: It is clear that under the Prime Minister and this Government Britain plays a leading role in world affairs. The value of the sound and sensible policies that we have pursued has been recognised throughout the world. Only on the Opposition Benches do hon. Members cling to out-dated and unworkable policies.

Mr. Kinnock: Do the consequences of the policies of which the right hon. Gentleman was speaking include the revised estimate for the balance of payments deficit for the first quarter and the anticipated £10 billion deficit for this year, despite massive oil revenues?

Mr. Wakeham: The 1987 current deficit is less than half of 1 per cent. of the GDP, compared with 3 to 4 per cent. during the mid-1970s. The cumulative surplus of £21½ billion from 1980 to 1987 compares with a deficit of over £5 billion from 1975 to 1979.

Mr. Kinnock: It would only be confirming with the right hon. Gentleman's customary fairness to set the massive oil revenues against the figure that he now produces. As he cannot be content with the possibility of a £10 billion balance of payments deficit and a £20 billion trade deficit, will he tell us what the Government intend to do to close those gaps?

Mr. Wakeham: The economy has come through major fluctuations in the price of oil without crisis and, because of our sound economic policies, the prospects remain excellent. The stock of United Kingdom overseas assets at the end of 1987 were provisionally estimated at £90 billion, or 21 per cent. of GDP. Our invisible surpluses are the largest in the world.

Mr. Aitken: On a rather more important security matter, will my right hon. Friend find time today to go down to GCHQ and find the Government's top code breakers and cryptologists and ask them to provide an English translation of the incomprehensible gibberish that appeard in this morning's *Independent*, under the headline "Labour's defence policy: Neil Kinnock explains"?

Mr. Wakeham: I have the greatest admiration for the effectiveness of our security system, but I do not believe that the people concerned could understand the gibberish coming from the Labour party.

Q3. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Michie: Will the right hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to distance himself and the Government from the statement that was made in another place last week suggesting that lotteries should be produced as an inducement to people to pay their poll tax early, in a lump sum? Does he agree that such a blatant bribe will be anathema to many people, and that in Scotland it is nothing more than a bribe, or, at best, a gimmick that would in the end benefit only the well off?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not one of those who are very enthusiastic about lotteries. I believe that the community charge introduced in Scotland is a much fairer tax than we have had before and will be seen to be a much better basis of paying for local government than heretofore.

Q4. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hanley: Further to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), will my right hon. Friend do all he can tonight to secure the successful passage of the motion relating to financial assistance to Opposition parties, because I, and no doubt the whole House, need good research from the Labour party so that it can explain the differences between its defence policy at the general election, last week, this week and no doubt next week?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with my hon. Friend, but he has set an ambitious target in seeking to follow all the variations in policy proposed by the Labour party. I fear that even the significant increase in financial assistance to Opposition parties which I have proposed and which I hope my hon. Friends will support would not be sufficient to enable them to explain all their policies.

Q5. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the Leader of the House ask his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister how she reconciles the policies of two of her Ministers? One of them has urged a smoking ban on all teachers to ensure that at least half the children who might take up smoking will not do so, and the other is accepting money from British-American Tobacco for the establishment of a school when the chairman of that company says he would expect that the school would not have in it any anti-smoking campaigns.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government's policy on smoking is well known. Health warnings are clearly given, with the support of the Government. British-American Tobacco is a company with a wide range of interests, and the Government welcome its support for education.

Mr. Rathbone: In the light of the Government's magnificent lead in tackling international drug trafficking, will my right hon. Friend tell the House how the Government plan to support the international day of action against drug misuse and illicit trafficking, which was approved by all members of the United Nations last November and will take place on Monday?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government attach high priority to international co-operation against drug misuse. The international day of action against drug misuse has been re-scheduled for Monday 27 June. The Government's anti-drug strategy is kept under review by a ministerial group on drug misuse, and it will meet on that day to take stock of progress and to make plans for future action.

Q7. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Janner: When the Prime Minister returns from her journey abroad, will the right hon. Gentleman please refer to her for her personal attention the plight of children with special needs who are being educated in special schools throughout the country? Will he especially ask her to look into the reason why, with the cuts in the Health Service and the mix-up in the Department of Education and Science, thousands are unable to walk or to use their facilities as they cannot get the physiotherapy that they need? Since April thousands more have lost the free school meals that they should have. Why are these resources being taken away from the children who need them most?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government have provided substantially more funds for the disabled and for education than in the past. It is up to local authorities to decide how best to spend their resources.

Q9. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kirkhope: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is very encouraging to hear the words of Mr. Hammond, the leader of the EETPU, extolling modern work practices? Does he also agree that it is rather depressing that the Trades Union Congress and leading unions do not appear to share Mr. Hammond's views?

Mr. Wakeham: I am certain that among the millions of our citizens who are members of trades unions many want to see Britain prosper, work practices improve and outdated practices disappear. It is a pity that some trade union leaders do not seem to reflect the views of their members. Mr. Hammond is reflecting his members' views.

Q10. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some monents ago.

Mr. Haynes: Will the Leader of the House be honest with the House and the people about supporting the private Member's Bill concerning ports in Yorkshire? Will

he admit that it is related to the privatisation of the electricity industry? Why do the Government not be honest about the thing and let people know?

Mr. Wakeham: Private Bills come before the House under the general direction of the Chairman of Ways and Means. The Government's position on the Bill will be made clear in the speech made by the Minister in the debate, and I look forward to listening to it.

Q12. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some monents ago.

Mr. Fatchett: Last night the Government intended that the House should debate regulations that would increase the price of concessionary television licences for old-age pensioners from 5p to £5 and reduce the number of old-age pensioners who could qualify for such licences. How do the Government justify such a mean attack on old-age pensioners?

Mr. Wakeham: I have agreed through the usual channels that the order that was unfortunately lost last night will be retabled on the Order Paper to enable the hon. Gentleman and others to make their points on another occasion. The point at issue was that the original arrangemens, which had worked for a long time, fell foul of some legal decisions, and the Government propose to put forward what they believe to be an equitable solution in a difficult area.

VAT (European Court Decision)

3.31 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the judgment delivered by the European Court of Justice today in the case brought by the European Commission on certain of our VAT zero rates.

The court ruled that the United Kingdom was not in breach of its treaty obligations by zero rating private housing, animal feeding stuffs, seeds and live animals yielding food for consumption. However, it ruled that the zero rating by the United Kingdom of a number of other goods and services was not permitted under European Community law. In broad terms, these items are: the construction of buildings for industrial and commercial use, water and sewerage services supplied to industry, news services supplied to other than final consumers, fuel and power supplied to other than final consumers, and protective boots and helmets purchased by employers. I have placed the full text of the judgment in the Library of the House.

I should make it clear that this adverse judgment is based on an interpretation of existing Community law to which the United Kingdom gave its assent in 1977. It has nothing whatever to do with the Commission's proposals for the approximation of VAT, which are not law and could not become law without the unanimous agreement of all member states.

The Government will study carefully the detailed terms of the court's judgment, against which there is no right of appeal and with which it is obliged to comply. The Government will consult interested parties, including trade and professional bodies, and also charities, on how the judgment can best be applied in practice. Legislation to implement the judgment will then be brought before the House for approval as part of next year's Budget. I can give the House an assurance that no changes will take effect before 1 April 1989.

In the meantime, I am concerned to avoid the damaging effects of a period of uncertainty for the construction industry and its customers, and to mitigate the effects of the extension of VAT to non-domestic construction. I therefore have the following decisions to announce.

Non-domestic construction, the sale of new non-domestic buildings, and the sale of building land for non-domestic developments will be taxed at the standard rate of VAT from 1 April 1989. All contracts entered into before today will continue to be zero rated. Public sector construction programmes will be protected by allowing, where necessary, compensating adjustments to the relevant central Government expenditure provision. Full refunds of VAT on non-domestic construction will be available to health authorities and local authorities.

Owners of non-domestic property will be given the option to charge VAT on rents, and on sales of used buildings, from 1 August 1989. This option will apply to existing buildings as well as new ones. Where it is exercised, landlords and tenants will be able to reclaim VAT on input costs in the normal way. This means that, where buildings are occupied by fully taxable businesses, neither landlord nor tenants will be worse off. To protect tenants who are not fully taxable, any VAT on rents will be phased in over two years. For charities, the transitional period will be five years. I hope that it will be possible to publish draft Finance Bill clauses relating to non-domestic construction by January.

The estimated yield from the proposals that I have announced will be some £65 million for the initial year, 1989-90, rising to a full year level of £160 million in 1991-92. That compares with the full year yield of £425 million that would accrue from the tax if the measures of mitigation which I have just announced were not introduced.

A consultation document on the changes affecting non-domestic construction will be available in the Vote Office and Library when I sit down. A more general consultation paper on the other aspects of the judgment will be available shortly. Much remains to be considered and there will be full consultation by the Customs and Excise on the implication of the changes.

We find ourselves obliged by undertakings Her Majesty's Government gave in 1977 to impose VAT on non-domestic construction and certain other services. I have announced today measures to mitigate their impact and to minimise uncertainty. I assure the House that there will now be full consultation so that the necessary legislation can be properly considered and prepared for next year's Finance Bill.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The whole country will be disappointed at the outcome of the European court's judgment. Yet again new taxes are to be imposed on the public against the wishes of Government and Parliament. However, is the Economic Secretary aware that we welcome the court's decision not to insist on the imposition of VAT on all building for housing, animal feed, seeds, and live animals used as food for human consumption. Before implementing the court's decision, will he consult all interested parties carefully so that appropriate transitional arrangements can be found and so that those with contractual obligations are not unfairly penalised?

As some building land is to become subject to VAT, how does the Economic Secretary propose to define it? Will he confirm that, although the construction of schools and hospitals will become subject to VAT, full relief will automatically be available for any and all VAT payable in the future by the authorities responsible for those schools and hospitals when constructing the buildings, and for any associated expenses?

Will the Economic Secretary undertake to ensure that any extra moneys necessary to pay VAT on fuel for schools and hospitals will be provided by the Exchequer? Will county councils be fully reimbursed for any VAT that they may have to pay on road construction? Does he intend that VAT to be paid on construction of railways will be paid for by the travelling public, or can he give an undertaking to the House that the Exchequer will reimburse British Rail for all extra VAT costs? Can he assure the House that the Channel tunnel construction, until completion, will not be subject to VAT?

Will the Economic Secretary go the Commission to try to obtain derogation for some or all of the items to be subject to VAT, or can he introduce a second lower tier? If that is not possible, will he try to obtain an agreement within the Council of Ministers for a fairer and more just interpretation of the sixth VAT directive so that items such as these and spectacle frames, which have been the subject of legislation in the past, can be free of VAT?

Does the Economic Secretary think it fair that the United Kingdom should pay all the costs of the court case, in spite of being vindicated in two important areas?

It is a black day when the taxation of the British people is decided by other than their Parliament. The Common Market can succeed, but it is not going about it the right way.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman suggested that there will be universal disappointment at the ruling. However, we have won on the most important issue of private homes, and that will be greatly welcomed. There will also be recognition that the fundamental commitment to the sixth directive was taken by the Labour Government in 1977. It ill behoves the Labour party to express disappointment now.

I have made it clear that there will be full consultation with all those affected by the decisions relating to the implementation of the points that I have made and the other items covered by the ruling. The definition that we propose on building land is that such land without planning permission for domestic housing will be subject to VAT, but we shall obviously consult on how that will be interpreted in practice. I assure the hon. Gentleman that schools and hospitals in the public sector will be fully reimbursed for any VAT that they may incur. County councils likewise are automatically reimbursed for all VAT on all items that they purchase. That will consequently apply equally to roads.

I imagine that the constructors of the Channel tunnel will also secure registration for VAT and be able to reclaim VAT. However, I will confirm that and write to the hon. Gentleman if there is any difference.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's question about seeking derogation or a lower tier rate, any attempt to seek derogation from the European Commission would scarcely be credible since the Commission brought the case. As for the lower tier rate, we believe that it is far better to have a single positive rate and an extensive zero rate. We do not want to return to a complex system with multiple rates.

We understand that the Commission will not be seeking payment of its costs in the court case. That is the normal practice in the circumstances. We will have to pay our costs, the bulk of which are internal. Only some £7,000 of consultancy fees and counsel opinion costs were incurred.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Is the Minister aware that he is absolutely right to stress that the decision does not affect the fundamental issue of zero rating? Will he take careful note of the court's view that the Commission does not dispute the legality of the zero rating system in general? May I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on stating that the right system is one with zero rating and a single positive rate? Will he fight for that in the political negotiations which are to come? In general, I believe that it is right that my hon. Friend has abided by the rule of law, even though that is the consequence of a decision taken by a predecessor Government.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's remarks. I confirm that we shall stick to a single positive rate and the extensive use of zero rating, as has been the practice. I believe that my right hon. Friend oversaw that system when it was introduced. It is correct that in the court case the Commission did not try to overrule our basic right to have zero rates. We welcome that.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Economic Secretary to the Treasury accept that the judgment seems eminently reasonable and that the Government are to be congratulated on arguing successfully for an exemption for domestic housing, which clearly is a case on its own? Will the hon. Gentleman therefore confirm that now there is no VAT—a policy which has been upheld—on domestic house new building but that there is still VAT on renovation, restoration, and the like? Does he accept that in the next Budget the Government's inner city policy should require further tax changes, in addition to the changes that the Minister has already announced, to give incentives to people to restore and to build in the inner city rather than equal encouragement to build on green field sites?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman will probably be in a very small minority in welcoming the judgment as a whole, although possibly he is harking back to the dead parrot manifesto of his erstwhile leader, who wanted VAT extended to almost everything. There will be no change to VAT on renovation and repairs in relation to domestic properties and we do not propose to make any changes.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): When the legislation necessary to give effect to these somewhat contentious proposals is before the House and the House amends or rejects it, what then?

Mr. Lilley: Exactly the same consequences would flow as would always be the case if we failed to implement legislation passed to us from the European Community.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): We have heard not so much a statement as a mini Budget. Is this not another brutal reminder of the extent to which the House has ceased to be master of its own affairs? Is it not a clear breach of faith? Were we not assured that the existing United Kingdom zero rate would continue until the Council, by a unanimous vote, agreed to adopt what it called a "Europe without fiscal frontiers"? Have not the procedures laid down by the Commission for review under article 28 simply been flouted and ignored? Is not the court acting ultra vires? In those circumstances, what obligation has Britain to carry out the court's ruling?

Mr. Lilley: The right hon. Gentleman is correct in saying that the ruling is a brutal reminder of the decision taken by the Government of whom he was a member. He is also correct in saying that we will retain a zero rate. There is no question of the court acting ultra vires; it is intepreting the sixth directive that was agreed by the House and the Government in 1977. Any attempt to remove zero rates could be taken only with the unanimous consent of all member states, including this country.

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): Does my hon. Friend accept that there will be great relief that the Government have acted so promptly in outlining the precise measures that they intend to take in response to the judgment? Nothing could have been worse than a long period of delay with uncertainty. Does he also accept that the construction industry will be especially pleased by the offer of an option for taxation and that the public spending targets will be upgraded to take account of VAT that the Government will now charge on their construction projects?

[Mr. David Curry]

Will my hon. Friend remind the House that the mitigation measures have cost the Treasury a substantial sum? Will he speculate on whether the Opposition would have been in a position to grant such generous mitigation?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks, the last of which is very apposite. I cannot imagine that a party committed to such widespread increases in public expenditure would have been prepared to forgo the large amount of revenue that we have forgone by mitigating the measures. I hope that the construction industry will welcome the decisions that we have taken today, although it will not welcome the ruling itself any more than we do. It sought—and we have endeavoured to provide in the statement—a delay before its implementation so that there would be time for consultation, protection of existing contracts, the option to rent and protection of public sector construction programmes. We have provided for all those and more, because we have also suggested that the procedure be phased in over a couple of years—five years in the case of charities—which, in fact, goes beyond what the construction industry sought.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Does the Minister agree that the ruling is a total routing of the Government by the European court? Is that why he has hidden the fact that the entire costs of the case have been awarded against the Government? Is it not true that this Parliament has lost because it has no option other than to accept the new legislation that the Minister will propose? Is it not also true that the people of the United Kingdom have lost because they will have to spend £160 million more per annum in higher costs throughout the land? Have not the Government surrendered their authority to an agency outside the United Kingdom?

As Northern Ireland has no local authorities other than district councils, what will be the position of education boards and of housing associations that provide ancillary facilities for elderly residents in their complexes? Will they, too, have to pay VAT?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman is not correct in saying that this is a complete routing. I have already said that we won on the crucial point of domestic housing. However, he is correct in saying that we have no option but to implement the ruling of the court, which is a consequence of the treaty obligations that we entered into in 1972 and the subsequent decisions taken in 1977 specifically affecting VAT.

In response to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), I said that the costs were very small—only £7,000 of out-house costs. We do not expect to have to bear the costs of the Commission, which usually expects to bear its own costs.

I believe that education boards and housing associations in Northern Ireland will be protected in the same way as are comparable authorities in this country. We will, of course, be consulting as to the precise definition which is appropriate within the ruling for residential property, and what will constitute residential property in that context, and that consultation will apply throughout the United Kingdom. I welcome comments from Northern Ireland as well as from elsewhere.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Further to the question of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), if we are to adhere to the principle of no taxation without representation, are we not now on the way to transferring the fiscal powers of the House to that supranational institution which the House, by statute, has elevated to a Parliament?

Mr. Lilley: The decision to transfer some powers of taxation to the European Community was taken much earlier. This is merely a consequence of it. No transfer of the House's powers to the Community can be made without the consent of the House. We have a veto in these matters.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Economic Secretary undertake to consult his colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry as to the effect of the ruling, particularly in regard to VAT on new commercial and industrial construction, and on the level of investment forthcoming in the next few financial years in Britain? Does he agree that that will have a particularly harsh effect on regions of high unemployment such as Wales? Will he consult the Department of Trade and Industry and his Treasury colleagues about whether the level of investment will now drop because of the combined effect of this ruling increasing the cost of construction of new building, the national non-domestic rate in areas where it will increase such as my own constituency in Cardiff, plus the South American-style inflation in the building industry in the past year? If that has a devastating effect on the level of investment, will he agree to reconsider bringing in investment allowances to compensate for the effect of the EEC ruling and to preserve the level of investment?

Mr. Lilley: The level of activity in the construction industry in this country is extremely healthy; the industry is growing fast. We are determined that its prospects should be preserved, and that is why I have announced an extensive range of measures to protect its future. I believe that the industry will be able to continue growing well, nationally and in Wales. In particular, we have protected the position of the public sector.

The main burden of the extra tax which cannot be passed on or reclaimed from the Government will fall on industries such as the financial services sector, which is exempt from VAT and therefore cannot claim back VAT on the cost of inputs. That is an important industry, even in Wales, but it is not the principal industry in Wales, as it is in parts of England and Scotland.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Contrary to what the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) said, is it not clear that the impact of this decision on the final consumer will be very limited, mainly because of the victory on private sector house construction? What will be the effect of the decision on the retail prices index?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is quite right. The effect of the decision on the man in the street will be negligible and unnoticeable. There will be no effect on his housing costs, and the effect on the retail prices index will be extremely small. When £160 million of extra tax is spread across the whole of consumer expenditure, it is a fraction of 1 per cent.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): If the Minister is right and Parliament has a lingering power of veto, why

does he not invite Parliament to use that veto, and, instead of producing legislation imposed by the European court, why does he not produce legislation to repeal section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972 which would place beyond any doubt the power of this Parliament to raise money and decide expenditure, instead of accepting the continuing drift and erosion of our powers so that this place becomes something like a parish council and the European Community strips away all our powers?

Mr. Lilley: It ill behoves the hon. Gentleman to talk about losing our lingering power of veto since he voted in favour of that measure when it was brought before the House in 1976.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): No, he did not.

Mr. Lilley: That was on 29 November 1976. Unlike the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who voted against the measure, the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) voted in favour.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): I warmly welcome the extended introductory period in applying these measures to charity. Is my hon. Friend aware that the judgment's consequences for charities are serious and that the annual expenditure on unrecoverable VAT of the 45 charity organisations which are members of the Charities VAT and Tax Reform Group will rise from £6·2 million a year to more than £12 million a year? Is my hon. Friend aware that the effect of this judgment on charities is the same as if my hon. Friend had announced an increase in the rate of VAT from 15 per cent. to 30 per cent.?

Mr. Lilley: I pay tribute to the role that my hon. Friend has played in voicing the concern of charities generally about the impact of VAT before this ruling. I recognise the important consequences for charities of that ruling. Naturally, we shall consult my hon. Friend, and the organisations which he represents, to ascertain how best to deal with the consequences of the ruling, within its scope and latitude.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Minister agree that if, in 1975, the British people thought that tax would be levied on public facilities, such as roads, railways and water, they might have given a different answer? Does he recall that the Prime Minister has made no statement on taxation of domestic water, which is in the next package which awaits the House? When the hon. Gentleman talks about a veto, will he correct himself and agree that, although the Government may have a veto under the treaty of Rome, at the moment the House has not?

To stop such problems arising in the future, would it not be better for the House to pass a motion saying that any future VAT package should be passed by an affirmative resolution of the House and not be entirely in Ministers' hands, even if it is in the Prime Minister's name? Is not such a provision entirely within the terms of the treaty of Rome, retaining those few powers that the House has left in that respect?

Mr. Lilley: None of today's rulings has any bearing on consumers. I do not think that if they had been known at the last election—I hope that I correctly interpret the hon. Gentleman's question——

Mr. Spearing: At the referendum.

Mr. Lilley: I do not think that if the rulings had been known at the referendum they would have had any impact on the outcome.

On the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the Government and the House, I stand corrected. He is right. If any change were to be made, it would have to be made in the manner that he suggests; but it would not necessarily obtain a majority in the House.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Does my hon. Friend recall that, when the House agreed to the directive in 1977—without my support—a clear assurance was given in good faith that this kind of decision could not be made because we had residual powers under article 26 of the sixth directive, provided the Council of Ministers unanimously decided to abolish exemptions? As the assurances in this case and many others are being overturned and, basically, breached by the various institutions of the Community, can my hon. Friend, who has given a splendid answer today, give us an assurance that the Commission has said that it will not seek any more cases of this sort, or does my hon. Friend foresee the power of the House being slowly eroded, not by what we or the Common Market do but by the institutions taking more and more power and authority?

Mr. Lilley: Under the sixth directive, the British Government were entitled to maintain zero rating where it was for a clearly defined social purpose and for the benefit of the final consumer. The court has ruled that these specific items, on which we lost, were not for the benefit of the final consumer. The court merely made a legal judgment as to whether those items fell within the directive, to which the House assented with that caveat and definition in 1977. Any changes in exemptions from zero rates of VAT which are not made on that legal basis in conforming to the legislation can be made only by unanimous decision of the Council of Ministers and, therefore, with our consent. That applies to any wholesale changes that anyone might seek to make, including those proposed recently by Lord Cockfield.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The Economic Secretary dealt at length with non-domestic construction. How closely has he analysed the impact of that, and the decision to impose VAT on fuel and power supplies, on industry? Will he undertake to examine the matter to establish whether particular industries or areas will be affected by the extension, and will he introduce measures in mitigation similar to those that he has announced for non-domestic construction?

Mr. Lilley: The overall impact of VAT on fuel and power supplies for industry is comparatively small. The vast majority of industries affected will be able to reclaim the VAT that they pay as an input cost. Therefore, the decision will have no impact upon them except possibly a small cash-flow effect. The only major exceptions are the financial services industries, which will have to bear the cost of VAT on their fuel and power; they cannot reclaim it because they are exempt from VAT.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): My hon. Friend said that the effect of the judgment on the consumer would be nil. Does he not agree that, given time, the judgment will ultimately affect the cost of land upon which non-domestic buildings were constructed? In that context, will he reconsider whether two years will be long enough,

[Mr. John Heddle]

given the length of the planning process? Similarly, will he have regard to the effect that the judgment may have on inner-city renewal—on mixed buildings, shops, offices, houses and flats?

Mr. Lilley: I think that I said that the effect on the consumer and the retail prices index would be minimal rather than nil. We acknowledge that there is likely to be a full year revenue in 1991-92, when the charges are fully operational, of £160 million, which will obviously have to be paid for by someone. To the extent that it affects consumer goods, it will be paid for by the consumer. To the extent that it comes out of profit margins, it will be paid for by investors and shareholders. To the extent that it comes out of land values, it will be paid for by landowners. A two-year phase-in period is perfectly reasonable. The industry did not ask us for any phase-in period; we have gratuitously offered the two-year period, which we think will be beneficial. The period for charities will be five years to give them longer to adjust.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Does the Minister agree that the court's judgment as it affects protective boots and helmets is unreasonable, especially as to the final consumer—the employee—the equipment is vital? Will he assure the House that safety in factories and other places of work will not be jeopardised as a result?

Mr. Lilley: I do not think that there is much point in criticising the reasonableness or otherwise of the judgment. It has been made and there is no appeal, and we have to try to implement it as sensitively as possible, using such discretion as remains to us. By and large, protective footwear and helmets are required by health and safety legislation. There will not be a fiscal penalty on employers who purchase them because they will be able to offset the purchase cost against VAT and reclaim it. It will not make a great deal of difference to them. although we should have preferred to have kept the original system.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Does my hon. Friend agree that there is widespread feeling on both sides of the House that we have already surrendered too many powers and that we have gone too far in allowing the sovereignty of this House to be removed? Will he assure us that, unlike their predecessors, the Government do not plan to give away any more powers in negotiations on tax harmonisation?

Mr. Lilley: It is manifest from the response to my statement that the sentiments expressed in the first part of my hon. Friend's remarks are echoed on both sides of the House; that is a simple fact. I recognise that there is concern about these matters. We are certainly jealous of the powers of the House and, as regards the proposals on the table from Lord Cockfield, we have no intention of acceding to proposals that would restrict the right of the House to retain zero rates.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The Minister made a clever debating point. He has been briefed well. Can he tell us how the Tory Opposition voted in 1977, when the matter came before the House? Before he tells me that I also voted for the measure that night, may I confirm that. Having reversed the results of every other vote cast during that Labour Government's period in office, why do not the Government reverse that vote as well? I assure the Minister that he has my full permission to reverse that vote, and I shall help him to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) made a specific point about safety helmets and footwear. Will the Minister give us an absolute assurance that the Government will watch developments carefully and that no damage will be done to health and safety at work? The Minister speaks eloquently about the construction industry, but some of us have a greater feeling for those who work in the industry than for those who own it.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his compliments on the quality of my briefing and his revelations about the inconsistency of his voting habits. The Government are not in the habit of standing on their heads that frequently and we do not intend to do so on this occasion.

The hon. Gentleman asked about how the then Opposition voted in 1977. From my examination of the records, they appear largely to have abstained.

I shall take up the hon. Gentleman's point about the health and safety implications of the protective clothing and helmets item and we shall make sure that health and safety objectives are not undermined.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): Will the Minister confirm that the permitted derogations for zero rating are not time-limited in any way? Will he also confirm that there will be no more court cases and that the unfortunate legacy of the last Labour Government is finally behind us?

Mr. Lilley: As far as we know, the Commission has no further disagreements with the existing structure of zero rates in this country. The Commission has clearly brought forth in this case all the aspects of the present structure with which it disagrees on legal grounds. My hon. Friend asked about the durability of our zero rates. As long as we insist on the retention of zero rating for exports, we can retain zero rates domestically as well. We have no intention of conceding that point while we wish, as we do, to keep the right to retain zero rates.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): The Minister alluded to the Labour Government's bringing in VAT. Does he not agree that it was a Tory Government who almost doubled it and that the recent Budget made matters substantially easier for the rich? In face of his difficulties, would it not be a good idea to recommend to the Chancellor that in his next Budget he cuts the rate of VAT substantially? He should restore high income tax for those in the higher income bracket and substantially cut consumer taxation which affects the poor.

Mr. Lilley: One thing that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary did when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1979 was to simplify the system so that we had just one positive rate of VAT instead of two rates of VAT and the multiple rates of purchase tax that we had prior to that. I am determined that we should not go back to a multiple-rate system of VAT. Whenever I think of it, I almost feel the shade of Sir Gerald Nabarro hovering over the House and imagine him raising all the absurdities that arise from multiple rates of indirect taxation. I entirely reject the proposal of the Labour Front Bench

spokesman, the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), that we should have a lower rate of VAT alongside the present rate. I do not think that that would be helpful.

Mr. John M. Taylor (Solihull): Does my hon. Friend agree that, regardless of the merits of the arguments about migration of powers, it would be far simpler to have VAT on everything at a lower rate than 15 per cent., and thus do away with all the contradictions and anomalies?

Mr. Lilley: That might have a brutal simplicity, but it is not a policy that appeals to the British Government.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Does the Minister recall the manifesto of the Government in office at the time of the referendum, which said that no new tax would be levied on the British people without the support of British Ministers and the British Parliament? Is he not humiliated that this Parliament is being robbed of its powers over taxation? As that comes on top of Common Market interference with the Government's industrial policy in relation to the Rover Group, should we not increasingly seek the repeal of section 2 of the European Communities Act to bring those powers back to the House?

Mr. Lilley: It was the Labour Government who in 1975 held the referendum and gave the assurances. It was the same Labour Government who in 1977 gave their permission to the sixth directive under which this court case was heard. They fulfilled the claim that there can be no changes to the tax system without the assent of the British Government, but they then gave that assent.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will my hon. Friend reflect on the fact that the ruling shows that the British Government achieved a considerable success in winning their case for the exclusion of domestic housing construction, particularly as I understand that VAT rates are applied to that sector in other continental countries? Will my hon. Friend confirm that no VAT will be levied on private individuals for fuel and power? Will he also note that the judgment seems to comment favourably on the principle of zero rating, which is this Government's policy?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. He is right to point out that domestic heating was the big and potentially painful item had we lost this case. I never doubted that we would win it. The position is now clear and the whole House and country will be relieved to know that on that issue we won. My hon. Friend is correct in saying that the European Commission never sought to impose VAT on fuel and power for individuals. He is also right in saying that during the case the European Commission accepted Britain's right to have zero rates and did not contest that right. The court seemed to endorse it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): If the Minister wants to complete the history lesson, why does he not refer to the fact that on 28 October 1971 it was a Tory Government, supported by the present Prime Minister, who dragged an unwilling Britain into the Common Market, along with such allies as Lord Jenkins, Shirley Poppins and the rest of them? Is he aware that some of us fought against that decision, which turned out to be an unmitigated disaster, and that in 1977 the Labour Government, bogged down with the Lib-Lab pact, went along with it? If the Minister wants to take the history lesson a bit further, it is no use rabbiting on about vetoes and all the other technicalities. The truth is that the only way to stop this happening is to get out of the Common Market and prevent this bureaucracy, this bankrupt Common Market—£5 billion in the red once again and wanting another £900 million loan from the British people this autumn—from running our lives.

Mr. Lilley: I admire the hon. Gentleman, first, for his consistency and, secondly, for his willingness to criticise the Labour Government. I think that we can learn from both aspects.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Can we please not have any talk about this decision being welcomed by the construction industry? The industry will be appalled by the rate of 15 per cent. Why has my hon. Friend agreed to impose VAT on contracts as from tonight, although that provision is to be included in a Bill that will not be introduced until next year? That was not done with beer, and there is no possible justification for it.

Mr. Lilley: I certainly did not suggest that the construction industry would welcome the ruling. I suggested only that it would welcome the decisions that we have taken to mitigate the impact of the ruling. The industry made mild allusions to the possibility of a lower rate, but only as an alternative to the option to tax, which was the first preference and the one for which we have opted.

Mr. Latham: But why impose it as from tonight?

Mr. Lilley: If we had not made it clear that contracts entered into before tonight are zero rated and that those after tonight by implication will not be, there would have been a tremendous incentive for people to bring forward contracts and there would have been a boom and bust in the construction industry.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): So what?

Mr. Lilley: The construction industry was very anxious to avoid the possibility of a boom and bust because of people rushing to complete contracts ahead of the next Budget or introducing new contracts ahead of the next Budget. We listened very carefully to the industry and introduced this provision at its request.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Will the Minister confirm that all other countries run more than a single rate of VAT and that it would be possible for the Government to introduce a lower band of VAT? Is he saying that the Commission's proposals for the single market will be vetoed all along the line and all the time? Does he not believe that it would be far better if charities were given a complete derogation of VAT? The only reason for that not being done is that the Government do not want to do it rather than because there is a legal impediment to that process being undertaken.

Mr. Lilley: It is true that virtually all our partners in the Common Market have more than one positive rate of VAT. However, we consider that our system is simpler and more desirable. Also, it has a social benefit, in that certain supplies that are more likely to be consumed by those who are on low incomes tend to be zero rated. It is not, therefore, a regressive tax.

We shall not assent to Lord Cockfield's proposals on tax approximation because we do not approve of them. There is no question of having to introduce a veto because

[Mr. Lilley]

the proposals have failed to gain the support of other countries. They have been extremely widely criticised by other member states, many of whom have a range of difficulties over them. There is certainly no question of the Government vetoing the proposals on some occasions but not on others.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is my hon. Friend aware that, despite the assurances that he has given that the Commission is now well satisfied with our system of value added tax, following the decision of the European court, Treasury Ministers will come to the Dispatch Box again and again over the coming months and tell the House that VAT is to be altered or extended in a way that is not approved of by Her Majesty's Government?

Is my hon. Friend further aware of the inconsistency of his statement? He said, first, that we are required to implement the judgment of the European court, and, secondly, that that implementation requires the approval of the House. There can be no requirement to implement if there is also the right of this House to reject what the Government propose.

Mr. Lilley: I am sure that I did not express a view about the European Commission's mental state about our zero rates. I have no idea about its internal state of satisfaction with them. We are well satisfied with the present tax structure and we intend to retain it. Proposals for change may emanate from a variety of spheres, but they will always remain proposals unless they have the assent and the consent of this Government and this House. Under the European treaty to which we gave our consent—some willingly and some unwillingly—in the early 1970s, this House must consent to legal measures that are agreed to by the combined countries of the European Community. If the House failed to do so, there would be a constitutional impasse, the consequences of which would be very serious.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Will the Minister confirm that when we accepted the sixth directive in 1977 we were assured that it precluded changes in zero rating without the unanimous decision of the Council of Ministers? Will he accept that this is a change of what is loosely called the Commission's mind? That change has been ratified by the European court, which is essentially just an instrument of European unity. Will the Minister confirm that we can throw out the legislation without it coming into force under section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972? If that is so, why does he not give hon. Members a free vote so that he can test how his hon. Friends feel about this grovelling abdication of Britain's rights?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Member must take up with the Ministers who were concerned with the matter in 1977 any assurances that they gave in respect of the sixth directive. However, it has always been the case that it is only possible for us to introduce zero rates under that directive that conform to the criteria that they are for clearly defined social purposes and for the benefit of the final consumer. It is solely on their alleged failure to fulfil those criteria that the European Commission was able to take this country to court and, in some respects, win its case. In others it lost. It was unable to alter the law of the land or of the Community unilaterally, and any changes in the law will require the Government's consent and that of Parliament. It has always been the case in this country that laws emanating from this place must be interpreted as is appropriate by courts when there is any dispute as to their meaning.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): In view of the Minister's comments about the effect of this measure on the financial services industry, was it correct for him to say that there will be no effect on housing costs? Is it not likely that banks, insurance companies and building societies will pass on their VAT commitments on the supply of gas, electricity and water, which will result in at least marginal increases in borrowing costs for those of us who are buying our houses on mortgages?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is correct and there could be a few arithmetically detectable implications of the kind he suggests. I do not believe that they would be detectable by the consumer because they would be so small as not to be measurable against all the other changes. The total revenue collected as a result of this measure, when it is fully implemented, is likely to be about £160 million per year. When that sum is spread over all the industries which will bear it, the overall effect will be very small, and it will not seriously alter the cost of housing or anything else.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my hon. Friend accept that many of us have a genuine personal respect for the fact that he has made for our country the best that he can out of a very difficult situation? However, we keep on being told that we are jealous of our powers, but in the next breath we are told that we must consent to this, that and the other. As the country is now being run, week after week, another regulation is brought before the House and hon. Members are told that there is nothing they can do about it. Ultimately, Parliament must decide who runs the country. Are we to be the United Kingdom or are we, by stealth and by the death of a thousand regulations, to become the "United States of Europe", which is something for which this country should not and will not vote?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his opening remarks. I agree that there is an excessive passion in some quarters of the Community to introduce harmonisation measures that are not always necessary and to pursue legalistic points which make no effective change to the amount of tax which people bear but merely alter the name by which it is known and from whose pockets it comes and to which it is then returned. We deplore such unnecessary changes, but they are the consequence of our adherence to the treaty of Rome. Unless my hon. Friend is suggesting that we should resile from that treaty, we must accept those consequences, while arguing with the Commission that it should not pursue too vigorously unnecessary harmonisation measures.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Does not my hon. Friend deprecate the fact that, as fast as the Chancellor simplifies and reduces taxes, the Community appears to frustrate his efforts?

Mr. Lilley: I am not sure that this measure vastly complicates matters, although it creates a certain amount of tax churning, which is to no one's great benefit. I acknowledge my hon. Friend's basic point that it is far more important to simplify and reduce taxes than it is to

harmonise items for which there is no international trade. After all, I do not imagine that many people export houses or buildings from this country, or that enormous distortion was introduced by our having a different system previously for taxing protective helmets from that which applied on the continent.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Is my hon. Friend telling the House that a problem arises as a result of the Labour Government failing in 1977 to understand the implications of their own legislation, or that it is a consequence of the European Commission subsequently changing its grounds in a way that could not be foreseen? If the latter is true, that is certainly a matter of constitutional importance. If the former, what other problems remain unresolved in this area as a result of the Labour party's inability to understand its own policy?

Mr. Lilley: It is always possible, with the benefit of hindsight, to have 20/20 vision. However, at the time it could have been foreseen that some cases might be brought under those aspects of the legislation specifically stating that any zero rating had to be in respect of a clearer defined social need and for the benefit of the final consumer. It might not necessarily have been possible to predict absolutely the court's ruling on all the items, but to avoid the possibility of any such court cases it would have been necessary at that earlier stage to have agreed to a wider permission in the sixth directive than that to which we assented.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): While undertakings entered into by a former Labour Government may oblige the present Government to seek the House's consent to extending VAT in accordance with the judgment, can my hon. Friend confirm that there is nothing in the judgment requiring us to apply VAT at the current standard rate? Could we not comply with the letter of the judgment by introducing a rate of 0·00001 per cent.? In this instance, are not the merits of the simplicity of a single rate system outweighed by the importance of the House insisting that its will to maintain zero rating as near as possible shall prevail?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is correct, in that the court has not ruled that we must apply the standard rate. It is up to us to choose, but the law applies a constraint in respect of which low rate will apply. It is stated in the directive that the low rate must be sufficient to cover all the VAT likely to be reclaimed on the inputs into the industry to which that low rate applies. It is difficult to calculate what the lowest rate could be, but I recently saw a study by Arthur Andersen and Co. suggesting that the lowest rate we could apply in those circumstances would be as high as 10 per cent. We see little advantage in having a second tier rate of 10 per cent. alongside one of 15 per cent. That would cause difficulties for business and industry, as well as boundary problems.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Is my hon. Friend aware of the considerable concern there is in private industry and commerce at the inability to recover VAT, particularly among service industries, and the considerable privilege that local government enjoys in being able to recover VAT? Are not the concessions that my hon. Friend has announced this afternoon another example of the Treasury erecting a fence of privilege around local government and public enterprise to the detriment of private enterprise, which completely contradicts the Government's policy of privatising local government services?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is correct, and those who are exempt from VAT often regret that they are unable to reclaim the tax on their inputs—though they probably welcome the fact that they do not have to pay the tax on their outputs. Local government has long enjoyed exemption. Many years ago an assurance was given that services financed from the rates would be reimbursed their VAT. That continues, and it automatically applies to the measures announced today. We have not given local authorities any special new privilege but have merely taken advantage of an existing one.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The Government are proud, and quite rightly so, that they have made life simpler for business and industry, but what my hon. Friend has announced today is a bureaucratic nightmare. My hon. Friend says that it is a small one, but it is a bureaucratic nightmare none the less. The only businesses that will benefit from it are the legal and accountancy professions. My hon. Friend is also a democrat, and he knows that right hon. and hon. Members will vote for what they feel is correct.

Can my hon. Friend expand on the answer he gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen)? What happens if the House votes down a Government proposal on VAT? Will we all be clapped in irons by the European court? What will happen about the tax? Will it be applied or will it not be applied? Is the House sovereign or is it not sovereign? The House ought to know.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend goes a little far in describing this measure as a bureaucratic nightmare. It extends the VAT system—which has its complexities, but which in other ways is a simple, structural tax—to an area where it did not apply before, or where it did not apply in full. We have introduced a number of transitional measures, which always creates a certain amount of complication. However, it will be possible for industry, by and large, to cope. It would certainly prefer the kind of measures that I have announced to automatically proceeding without the measures of transition and mitigation that I have announced.

As to the constitutional consequences of the hypothetical circumstances in which the House should vote against a fiscal measure required of us by the European court, the whole House must be aware that such action would create a constitutional impasse. I may be a democrat but I am not a lawyer, so I cannot elaborate. If I did so, you, Mr. Speaker, would rule me out of order.

Mr. Harry Ewing: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is now genuine confusion because it is only during the last two or three questions and answers that it has become apparent that legislation is to be introduced into the House to back up the Economic Secretary's statement. In certain circumstances under the treaty of Rome all that is required is the Government's agreement and not that of the House. All I am asking is that it should be reinforced that legislation is to be introduced into the House and that it will be a House of Commons matter rather than purely a Government matter.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that I can help the House. I listened carefully to the statement and I understood the Minister to say that new clauses would be introduced in the Finance Bill next year.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was out of the Chamber during the later exchanges on the statement because I went to obtain a copy of the Customs and Excise document. It is not the fault of my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary, but the document was not available in the Vote Office until 4.22 pm whereas the Minister implied that it was available while he was speaking or would be available when he had concluded his statement.

On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you again guide and help the House? You may agree with me and other hon. Members that during education questions and Prime Minister's questions, and now during the statement, although the subjects are important, the questions and answers have been of exceptional length. Is not that a growing tendency that is preventing other hon. Members from asking their questions? I think that on this occasion I speak with the moral authority of someone who was not seeking to catch your eye.

Mr. Speaker: I judged the statement to be of such importance that every hon. Member who wished to ask a question should be called and I did not curtail proceedings in any way. I cannot always promise to do that.

Mr. Biffen: Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing), Mr. Speaker. I believe that what is promised for the Finance Bill next year is probably a pioneer in these experiences where the House is invited to validate a judgment of the European court. The point that I had in mind was not necessarily that it should be rejected, but that the House should make amendments, the House being satisfied that those amendments were within the spirit of the European court's ruling.

I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker—obviously not now, but at some future moment, although the earlier this is resolved the better for the House—on how it is determined whether an amendment that is put down is within the spirit of the court's judgment and whether the House is entitled to take a view that that decision is consistent with the court's judgment without merely accepting the say-so of the Treasury Bench. May I leave the matter there, Mr. Speaker? It is a matter of substance for the House that should be resolved and adjudicated earlier rather than later.

Mr. Speaker: I am not sure whether I can help. All I can say is that I shall consider carefully what the right hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Latham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. According to the statement made by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary, the potentiality of the tax will be imposed on contracts signed after midnight tonight. Are we to assume that there will be no Ways and Means resolution, or any other vote of the House, before next year's Finance Bill Committee?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot answer such a question.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should have asked the Economic Secretary these questions when he was in a position to answer them. I am afraid that I cannot do so.

Mr. Spearing: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a procedural matter, if not for you, perhaps you could tell us for whom, because it cannot be for the Minister. Following the point made by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), if the Minister is to try to impose a tax from midnight tonight, surely there must be either a constitutional provision or a Standing Order, which we have for the Finance Bill and the Budget resolutions, as I recall, which gives power for such executive action to be taken in advance of legislation.

The question that arises from the exchanges—not the Minister's statement—is what sort of constitutional mechanism exists, or what Standing Order there is in the House, which permits that executive action to be taken consequential to a European court judgment rather than consequential to a statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he opens his Budget. I think that that is the point.

Mr. Speaker: The House heard what the Economic Secretary said. I think that he said that new clauses were to be circulated to obtain the opinion of the House on this matter. I do not think that I can answer that question.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. What we are asking is by what authority is taxation raised. The Treasury Bench tells us that the authority will come forward next year by amendment to the Finance Bill. We should like to know by what authority a tax is raised as of midnight tonight.

Mr. Speaker: These are all questions that should have been put to the Minister rather than to the Chair. This is not a matter of order.

Mr. Skinner: I think that your last remark, Mr. Speaker, was correct. You have been placed in some difficulty because one would have thought that by this time the Minister responsible, or his mate on the Front Bench, would have jumped to the Dispatch Box to remind the House how the Government will get over the 12-month period between the potentiality of taxes being raised from tonight and permission being granted by this sovereign House next year. If you will just cast your eye round the corner, Mr. Speaker—I know that you do not want to —there is a fellow there with a bit of paper in his hand who is anxious to tell the Minister something. He has now put that paper below the parapet. He has the answer that the Minister wants but he does not know how to get it to him and the Parliamentary Private Secretary has not been looking over there.

Mr. Speaker: We had better move on.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the five motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Docks and Harbours (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft British Waterways Board (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Amendment Order 1988, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Docks and Harbours (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Amendment Order 1988, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Agriculture Improvement (Amendment) Regulations 1988, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Agriculture Improvement (Variation) Scheme 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1056), be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Several hon. Members have approached me because they have received a writ that has been served on every Member of the House of Commons and upon every Member of the other place from a litigant in Sheffield's High Court. I have been in contact with the High Court in Sheffield and I am informed that the writ is genuine and that we shall all receive a copy of it. I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker, on how we should deal with the matter.

Mr. Speaker: As far as I know, I do not appear on the writ.

Mr. Hind: You do.

Mr. Speaker: My copy must have gone astray then. The hon. Gentleman had better let me look into the matter.

British Identity Card

4.37 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to introduce a British identity card; and for other purposes.

With the British passport due to disappear in 1992, the time has come for us to introduce a British identity card and I intend that it be British passport blue. There can be few people who are not asked to supply proof of identity from time to time and many are regularly obliged to do so. These days we cannot enter most clubs, as well as many places of work and Government buildings, without having to identify ourselves. Moreover, it is virtually impossible to cash a cheque without a cheque card.

The identity card that I propose will be issued to everyone over 18 years of age. It will be the size of a credit card and will contain the holder's photograph, his or her name and address, date of birth and signature. It will be computer readable which will minimise fraud.

An identity card of the type that I propose will help in the battle against football hooliganism. It will enable immigration authorities to identify hooligans upon whom I hope the courts will soon be able to impose travel restrictions. It will assist football clubs in identifying those whom they wish to ban from their grounds. It will also help in the fight against terrorism and crime in general.

One of the problems in identifying the IRA is that its members are free to enter Britain from the Republic of Ireland without a passport or, indeed, any form of identification. After a terrorist attack such as the appalling atrocity at Lisburn last week, it would greatly assist the security forces if those manning road blocks could readily ascertain whether people had come from far afield or were merely going about their normal day-to-day business.

Some of the nastiest crimes today are those inflicted on the elderly. It is now commonplace to read in the newspapers of crooks and thugs worming their way into old people's homes, often posing as gas men, meter readers or council officials. An instantly recognisable identity card from which details could be taken before admittance would help to deter those who prey on the most susceptible members of our society.

I recognise the fear that an identity card system could be seen as an intrusion on the privacy of the individual. An important part of my Bill will limit the information included on the card and limit those who will have access to that information. Clearly, the Revenue and the DHSS will be able to insist on its production to help eliminate fraud, the police will be able to ask for it when a crime has been committed or is anticipated and immigration authorities will be entitled to inspect it. That will help in the fight against terrorism and should eliminate the need for passports to travel to other countries in Europe.

It will be up to the holder to decide whether to show the card to private individuals. If he does not, the person asking to see it will be able to draw his own conclusions, in the absence of a reasonable explanation.

I know that some will oppose the introduction of an identity card on the ground that it will infringe civil liberties. But the liberty of law-abiding citizens in Northern Ireland is already infringed by terrorists, the liberty of the elderly is infringed by bogus officials and the

[Mr. Tony Favell]

liberty of decent football fans to watch a football match free from violence and obscene gestures should be maintained.

My Bill will be of great benefit to honest, law-abiding citizens, which most British people are, and I commend it to the House.

4.42 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I oppose the measure which the hon. Member seeks to introduce. The introduction of identity cards is a wholly undesirable practice, far more associated with dictatorships than with democracies, except in wartime. There are, of course, various kinds of documentation relating to national insurance, health services, and so on, which are for specific reasons. However, such documents do not have to be carried on a daily basis, and one can be pretty certain that once an identity card is necessary it will be a requirement that the citizen carry it around with him on all occasions; he will be so required by the police. As I have said, the practice has far more in common with Eastern Europe than with Western-type democracy.

This is part of an authoritarian tendency in the Conservative party to try to control the lives of citizens as much as possible and have records on everybody in the country. I suppose that it is not surprising that a party which showed no concern and made no protest when Cathy Massiter exposed what was happening in the security services, when people were being questioned, had files drawn up on them and had their telephones tapped, should want to continue down a road that is completely undemocratic.

It is nonsense, as the hon. Member knows full well, to say that the issuing of identity cards will stop the football hooligans who are such a disgrace to our country, or stop crooks entering the homes of elderly people. The hon. Gentleman is certainly misleading the House when he makes such remarks.

I believe that this country requires less documentation and less control over the citizen. That is why I believe that acceptance of the hon. Gentleman's proposal for an identity card in peacetime would be a retrograde step. Tory Members who vote for the Bill—there will be no Opposition Members—will show clearly that they want to continue down the road of further controls on the private citizen. We have said that it is the Conservative party, not the Labour Opposition, which is so keen on Eastern Europe practices and the hon. Gentleman, by his Bill, make our point very well indeed.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motion for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 114, Noes 172.

Division No. 369] **[4.44 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Curry, David
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Holt, Richard
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Knapman, Roger
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McCrindle, Robert
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Price, Sir David
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rost, Peter
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Townend and
Mr. Jacques Arnold.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Body, Sir Richard
Bradley, Keith
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald

Fields, Terry (L'pool B G'n)
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foulkes, George
French, Douglas
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John (Norwich South)
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. (C'nauld & Kilsyth)
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Howell, Rt Hon D. (S'heath)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John (Coventry NE)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hughes, Sean (Knowsley S)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Barry (Alyn & Deeside)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd S W)
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester S)
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Arg'l & Bute)
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. (W'shawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Redwood, John
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan (Bootle)
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton & F'bury)
Smith, Rt Hon J. (Monk'ds E)
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew (Angus E)
Welsh, Michael (Doncaster N)
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. (Carm'then)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Noes:
Dr. Lewis Moonie and
Mrs. Maria Fyfe.

Question accordingly negatived.

Higher Education Diplomas

Motion made and Question proposed,

That this House take note of European Community Documents Nos. 8242/85 and 6944/86 and the supplementary explanatory memorandum of 22nd April 1988 submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on higher education diplomas; and supports the Government's intention to work for the early adoption of a Directive which reflects the United Kingdom system of professional training and regulation and facilitates freedom of movement for professions within the European Community as an essential element of a single Community market.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Mr. Speaker: I should inform the House that a manuscript amendment to the motion has been tabled by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). The hon. Gentleman was fully entitled to do that. There is provision for such an amendment to be decided upon, without debate, under the Standing Order. I have given careful consideration to the amendment, but I have decided not to select it.

Question put and agreed to.

4.57 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful for the information which you have given to the House. Can you confirm that the document was discussed in Committee only this morning and reported to the Table only an hour or so ago, thus making it difficult for any hon. Member such as myself who attended to place formally on the Order Paper an amendment which would normally have appeared tomorrow? I take it that you would feel that, although the procedure is in order, it is not only unusual but in its haste deprives hon. Members and the public from seeing what the Government are up to.

May I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to confirm that under Standing Order 102 it is possible for the motion to be separate from the motion in Committee, that it is amendable, and that in selecting amendments you will maintain the precedent set by Mr. Speaker Lloyd in 1974 in respect of amendments to Common Market motions?

Mr. Speaker: I accept that this is an unusual procedure. I agree with the hon. Member that normally the House should have time to consider motions that are on the Order Paper and have an opportunity to amend them when it is legitimate to do so. I cannot give reasons to the hon. Member or to the House for my non-selection today, but I will be pleased to see the hon. Member privately.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister explain the indecent haste and why he did not put the motion down for tomorrow?

May I put a point to you, Mr. Speaker? As we have seen earlier today, more and more legislation which affects our affairs is originating in the EEC. Are you convinced that the scrutiny procedures of the House are adequate? I doubt whether they are. May I ask you to consider this privately and come back to me with your view?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot ask the Minister to give an explanation to that because the Standing Order requires me to put the Question forthwith, as I have already done. I have every confidence in the Select Committee on European Legislation and its Chairman. What has been done today is in order.

Orders of the Day

School Boards (Scotland) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

EXPENDITURE ON ESTABLISHMENT AND SUPPORT OF SCHOOL BOARDS

'The identification and monitoring of the additional expenditure reasonably required for the establishment and continuing support of school boards will be the subject of separate and ongoing consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.—*[Mr. Norman Hogg.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

5 pm

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I expect that the speeches by Opposition Front Bench Members today will be brief, but that will not understate the case that we shall make on a number of important matters that we considered in Committee, not least the question of expenditure, which exercised the Committee to some extent because of the considerable difference of opinion between the Under-Secretary of State and Opposition Members.

New clause 1 is a direct consequence of our debate in Committee. It would ensure that extra expenditure required for boards would be subject to separate and ongoing consultation with COSLA. That appears to be appropriate, because COSLA is the recognised body which speaks for Scottish local government and is the collective voice of Scotland's education authorities, as has been recognised for some time. I and my hon. Friends believe that COSLA is best able to undertake separate and continuing identification and monitoring of additional expenditure reasonably required for school boards.

The financial memorandum to the Bill states that the cost is likely to be very small. The Minister went so far as to say that even that cost would be offset by savings arising from the abolition of schools councils. I do not wish to rehearse all the arguments made in Committee, but the information that is now to hand amply demonstrates that the Minister's view on that matter is erroneous and his estimate that school boards will cost the Exchequer and, ultimately, local authorities some £5 million is wrong.

The Minister rejected all the well-documented arguments advanced by Dumfries and Galloway regional council. I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) here, because, in Committee, he eloquently argued the Dumfries and Galloway case that the cost of school boards to that authority would be some £600,000 which, in terms of the whole of Scotland, would mean a cost of some £20 million.

The Minister did not accept that case. He argued that Dumfries and Galloway regional council was overstating costs such as travelling expenses and suggested that there were unjustifiable extra staff costs. However, from the information now to hand, it appears to be the Minister who has misunderstood the situation and is understating the costs in every area of the boards' anticipated activities.

What COSLA is now saying appears to destroy the arguments advanced by the Minister in Committee. First, COSLA estimates that the outturn cost of running schools councils is £700,000. Secondly, it makes its assessment of the full costs of the boards in much detail and on clearly defined assumptions. For instance, it assumes that extra functions will not be delegated by the authorities to the boards. It says that it has proceeded on the basis of the cost of the boards' activities alone; in other words, minimum costs.

It is also assumed that board members will claim travel allowances on the basis of 21·3p per mile, which is the rate prescribed under section 46 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. That expenditure was specifically endorsed by the Minister in Committee. The total estimate, including the costs of staffing and financial information support, elections, training, staff replacement, advertising and janitorial overtime adds up to approximately £17·2 million or £5,682 per school.

If the Minister tells us that COSLA has got its figures wrong, he will have to be every bit as specific as COSLA has been in arriving at the figures that I have put to the House. It will not be good enough just to rely on the arguments that the Minister arrayed in Committee. He will have to do considerably better than that.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): The hon. Gentleman will recall that, in Committee, we discussed the estimate produced by Dumfries and Galloway regional council. Does he acknowledge that COSLA, in carrying out its further estimate, has taken into account and accepted many of my criticisms of the estimates made by Dumfries and Galloway?

Mr. Hogg: I am receiving all sorts of advice from my hon. Friends, but I shall not engage in an argument with the Minister over that point. I accept some of what he says, but, none the less, we have before us a detailed statement from COSLA, dated 16 June 1988, which was circulated to all Scottish Members. If the Minister responds to the question of whose figures are right, he will have to challenge the basis on which COSLA has arrived at its figures.

I have considered carefully what COSLA has said about delegated functions, school board meetings, committee meetings and appointment of committees, as well as about the general support required for the operation of those committees and have concluded that it has been conservative in its considerations. It has not overstated its case. It relies on the experience of its officials and of the education authority officials in Scotland. When we take that into account, we must conclude that COSLA is making a reasonable estimate of the costs.

It is important that the people of Scotland should know that they are being asked to find additional expenditure from the education budget of some £17·2 million. They never sought to have that expenditure imposed on them, because they never made any demand for the kind of school boards that the Minister proposes. I conclude, therefore, that it is unreasonable expenditure which we should not be making. I would not choose to spend £17·2 million in that way, but would direct my attention to other education priorities.

I realise that the Minister does not accept my figure of £17·2 million and is instead persuaded that the school boards will cost considerably less. *[Interruption]* My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) says that

the Minister will tell us exactly why. I hope that he does and I am looking forward to his speeches. I listened to them attentively in Committee. Some were better than others. Some fell away in the middle and others ended rather dramatically. He even ended them occasionally by saying that he would go away and look at a matter. It is too late to look at this particular item and I hope that he will tell me that new clause 1 is so reasonable and appropriate, in that it places a responsibility on COSLA as the correct and appropriate body to do the job that we envisage for Scottish local government, that it is the right and proper course for him to accept it. I am confident that he will do so.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): It will probably alarm the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) to hear me say that I have a great deal of sympathy with some of the points that he made. We have all received from COSLA the figures about which he spoke. I have some comments to make about those figures, but as I do not have the expertise that is available to my hon. Friend the Minister, it is preferable to listen to what he has to say. However, one point that I shall put to him is that there is a slightly different but acceptable method of meeting the concern of COSLA. The hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth was right to say that the Bill puts new duties on Scottish local authorities for which the authorities have not asked. Therefore, there is a strong case for considering a specific grant for this expenditure.

In Committee my hon. Friend the Minister did not accept the proposition of a specific grant on the ground that in general terms COSLA has been opposed to that in the past. That is true and there is a general argument that specific grants limit a local authority's discretion in allocating total expenditure to different heads. However, a specific duty is being placed on education authorities and much of the expenditure is not at their discretion. Some matters are at their discretion, such as the number of representatives that they send to meetings, but much of the other expenditure—for example, on elections, and the number of meetings of school councils—is in a sense demand-led and not under the control of the education authority. Because there is a specific statutory duty and because much of the expenditure is not under the control of the local authority, there is in principle a strong case for making this expenditure the subject of specific grant. I appreciate the arguments that my hon. Friend the Minister put against that in Committee, but I hope that he will reconsider.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): While I do not think that the new clause is entirely felicitously worded, its contention is valid. I hope that the Minister will not be drawn into an argument about what the costs are likely to be because I think we can all agree that whatever they are they will be additional to any costs that are currently incurred. An argument about how exactly they will turn out is not important. It is important that the Minister is introducing legislation that will increase costs to local authorities that are already stretched in this area.

The Minister is entitled to say that his ideology allows him to introduce the Bill and that Parliament should vote on it. Most local authorities will be bitterly resentful, and rightly so, if they are told afterwards that they have to find the money out of their general pool to pay for the Minister's ideology. They will be subject to threats of rate capping or cuts in the rate support grant if they are unable to contain themselves within budget. It would be appropriate if the consultation were about securing proper and adequate funding.

The Government are in an extraordinary position. In the last two years they have introduced two pieces of legislation specifically for Scotland and have stomped the country preaching about the need for local authorities to cut their functions, interventions, costs and expenditure. Yet the Government have introduced two of the most expensive pieces of legislation that any local authority has ever had to face. One is the introduction of school boards involving thousands of new people who will have to be serviced. The Bill provides for that servicing.

5.15 pm

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): Is the hon. Gentleman against school boards?

Mr. Bruce: That is an extraordinary intervention. The right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I would be in favour of school boards if they were a partnership. *[Interruption.]* The Minister should allow me to finish. I would be in favour of school boards and the powers presented in the Bill if they were introduced in a spirit of partnership between parents, teachers and pupils. I am not in favour of school boards in which parents have a majority that they did not seek and do not want. I shall speak about that later. The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) would serve his electors better if he was prepared to represent that view which, as he knows, is the view of parents in his constituency.

The Minister is entitled to introduce a Bill in which he believes, but it will involve local authorities in costs. They are hard pressed and their resources are stretched, particularly in education. Local authorities are entitled to say what our constituents are generally saying, which is that they do not want the Bill as it stands or the proposed powers. If the Government want them, they must be prepared to pay for them rather than taking resources from other areas of education to provide for the Bill's implementation. The new clause is designed to cover that.

The Government are introducing the most expensive alternative form of raising revenue for local authorities that it is possible to devise. They expect local authorities to recruit extra people, to take on extra computing facilities and to incur extra costs to collect a tax that may produce no more—and probably less—revenue in net terms. The Government tell the people that the Bill is about efficiency and about reducing the cost of administration, but it specifically increases costs and does not increase efficiency and democratic accountability.

I do not think that the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) would go to the stake over the wording in his new clause. However, the principle of local authorities being asked to implement the Bill and to take on the cost is wrong. They should be fully reimbursed for implementing the Bill and should at least be fully consulted about its implications. That is all that the new clause asks, and my colleagues and I support it.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I was astounded by the speech of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) because he spoke against the principle of school boards. I would have understood the hon. Gentleman's stance if he had spoken

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

against the original consultation paper. To hear him speak one would think that nothing has taken place since then, whereas we have seen an enormous number of modifications and changes in the Bill. I am still unhappy about one or two parts of the Bill but its general thrust is right. We want to see greater participation by parents in schools. I can tell the hon. Member for Gordon that since the changes in the Bill the representations that I have had in my constituency have not been about its principle, which is what the hon. Gentleman spoke about.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), I have a good deal of sympathy for the new clause. That sympathy is not based on the assertion by the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) who said that he did not reckon the spending of more than £5 million was worth while. It is worth spending some more money if that leads to better participation, more involvement and more interest by parents in the running of our schools. That will apply especially if some further improvements can successfully be made before the Bill leaves Parliament.

I, too, remain unpersuaded by my hon. Friend that the figures that he originally gave for what the school boards will cost will prove adequate. We have added some more activities for the boards and I hope that we shall be successful in increasing the size of teacher involvement on them. I have consistently said that that was necessary. I freely acknowledge that some of these changes will involve costs that are additional to those that my hon. Friend envisaged when drafting the Bill. All the evidence that I have seen from regional education authorities—from that of my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and from Grampian—and the COSLA seems to show that the costs are likely to be higher than those outlined in the financial memorandum to the Bill and thus far given by my hon. Friend the Minister. I am sure that since the Bill was drafted my hon. Friend has taken a fresh look at the finances involved.

I do not want the school boards to be unsuccessful because of lack of resources. This is a good initiative. Let us make sure that it works and has the necessary resources. I agree that some local authorities and regional councils did not support the schools councils and do not want the school boards. Even so, I think they are a good and worthwhile development. As some of those authorities are uncertain about the value of this proposal, it is wrong that they should have to find money from other resources for the running of the boards beyond the amounts that my hon. Friend has earmarked for that.

I ask my hon. Friend to re-examine this matter and I look forward to hearing what he has to say. He and I want the boards to have enough money and to work. Let us not launch the new initiative short of funds and resources, thereby making it less likely to be successful.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I had hoped that we would hear a breakdown of the £5 million figure from the Government so that we could contrast it with COSLA's £17 million—but that has not been given so far. We live in hope that we shall hear one in the next hour or so.

I want to pick out some points from the COSLA paper. It assumes that the school boards will meet, on average, six times a year, which does not seem unreasonable, given that schools may face crises of various kinds that might necessitate their meeting far more often. COSLA reasonably presumes that one education authority rep would attend three meetings of a school board a year on average. That, too, hardly seems excessive. Indeed, it would be reasonable to expect some reps to attend all six meetings—or more, if there were more.

COSLA assumes that the cost of running the service of clerks to the board will be £4·70 an hour, including national insurance, which seems hardly unreasonable—unless the Government intend to privatise the service and let some extremely underpaid clerk from a jobcentre do the job. Perhaps that is what they have in mind.

COSLA points out that the staffing costs cover providing professional advice and information support services—local education and finance staff—and the costs of attendance at board and committee meetings, but do not include the manpower costs of training. In other spheres of local government activity they would be included. Does the Minister think that this is a fair account of the true costs of running the service? In areas such as building and works it would not be considered so.

The Minister has promised us figures; I hope he will not delay in letting us have them, so that we can know the Government's real intentions.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): The hon. Members for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) and for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) started from the wrong premise, that there have been swingeing cuts in local government expenditure. That, as we all know, is wholly untrue. Everyone knows that there is far more local government expenditure now than ever before—*[Interruption.]* Everyone except Opposition Members, that is. There have, however, been cuts in the grossly inflated budgets of councils that thought they could spend the world—in which case Ministers have had to call them to order. Good housekeeping is as important in 1988 as it has been for 100 years or more. Opposition Members do not understand facts like that.

The hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) was kind enough to mention my involvement with the new clause in Standing Committee. The costs are important. My hon. Friend the Minister has been most helpful and constructive in meeting the chairman of my education committee and her colleagues. They feel that the Bill has made constructive progress in Committee. So pleased are they with it that they have already set up six pilot school board schemes, which will go into action in August. There will probably be a seventh by the end of this week. That shows how a reasonable education authority has seen the importance of the Minister's policy, has taken a constructive interest in the Bill throughout its passage —and before, by commenting on the consultative papers —and has demonstrated how a local authority should handle this sort of issue in the interests of the parents, pupils and teachers in its area. That is all good news.

I thank my hon. Friend for the trouble he has taken to meet the representations of my education authority. Of course, he has not accepted every point that I raised in Committee, but he has accepted a significant number of them. I welcome the concessions that the Minister has tabled as amendments. Has he had second thoughts about the overall costs to local authorities? In Committee, we differed about the amount that Dumfries and Galloway had worked out for its school boards as compared with the computerised sum that was worked out for the whole of

Scotland. There was an enormous difference between my authority's and his Department's estimates of the costs. Whatever the costs are—£1 million, £5 million or £15 million—the education authorities want to know that they will be covered within their overall grant from the Scottish Office and that the costs will not come out of existing funds that are earmarked for other purposes.

I echo the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith): if we are to set up the boards we should not ruin them by a shortage of funds. We must be wholehearted about this and make sure that costs, travelling expenses and so on are allowed for. As my hon. Friend knows, I believe that the proposed boards are marginally too small, and I should like a four or five-person increase in the size of boards that look after 1,000-pupil schools. I hope my hon. Friend will say a little more about costs, which worry local authorities. I say that as one who represents a local authority that is taking a constructive line on this and welcomes the Minister's proposals.

5.30 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Unlike the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), I object first to the boards, both in principle and in form, and secondly to the amount of expenditure that it is intended will be provided for them. It is nonsense to say that it does not matter whether that expenditure is £1 or £1 million, because any money spent on the boards could be used for other purposes and to provide badly needed resources in Scotland.

Grave issues are involved in terms of the form of the boards and the expenditure. It is not sufficient for the Minister to point out that in the past he has had to correct one or two minor errors in the estimates made by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, because minor mistakes made in the past by someone else do not justify the Minister making a major mistake now.

Our first objection is that any expenditure should be levied on boards which have been set up under the apparent guise of extending choice. We are all for choice, provided that it is real and not theoretical. However, we contend that expenditure is being planned for boards which do not substantially increase the choice of the vast majority of parents. Secondly, the boards could be taken over by unrepresentative groups. As the Minister knows, the boards will have the power to veto all senior appointments. Possible embarrassments and disruptive tendencies could arise from the formation of the boards. The power to raise funds could be interpreted by some as the power to levy charges.

We have raised these objections before, but they become more forceful when it is intended to spend money on the formation and implementation of some of the boards. That could be overcome if the Minister could point to any desire, evidence or empirical facts to suggest that there is a demand among the population in general for such expenditure on school boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Perhaps I can assist the hon. Gentleman. We are debating the costs of establishing bodies that will involve parents in schools. As the hon. Gentleman asks for evidence, may I take it that he is opposed to the proposal of Strathclyde regional council that there should be one school council per school, which would be every bit as expensive in terms of administrative support? I should have thought that that gives the hon. Gentleman the evidence he wants. I am sorry that he obviously does not support the authority's proposition.

Dr. Reid: It would no doubt be extremely interesting to discuss the proposals for participation which are being put forward by almost everyone but the Minister. He will forgive me if I point out that the subject of today's debate is his plans. All the empirical evidence on those plans suggests that the overwhelming bulk of the population in Scotland oppose them. The overwhelming majority of parents, who are supposed to benefit from the boards which are being foisted on them, are opposed in principle and in practice to the form of the participation that the Minister suggests. Therefore, it is our contention that expenditure on such boards is also opposed by the vast majority of parents.

We have also raised a point about the apparent discrepancy in the amount of expenditure. That is important because it obviously matters whether the difference between the Minister's estimates and those of COSLA is £1 million, £5 million or £50 million because the money that is being pushed in that direction could be well and better employed in other ways in Scotland.

We contend, as does COSLA, that the Government propose to spend just under £18 million on the proposed school boards. Predictably, the Scottish Office estimate is that the overall cost of the school boards will be about £5 million. I have no doubt that the Minister will surprise us at the end of the debate by admitting that he has perhaps been a bit wrong here and there, and by coming up with a revised figure and suggesting, spontaneously and not as if it was planned in advance, that we might compete with the new figure and distribute it in the form of specific grants, something which he has been trying to impose throughout the Committee stage but which has been rejected. However, by courtesy of a few planted comments from his Back-Bench colleagues, the issue has been raised again today.

There is such a major discrepancy between what COSLA maintains as being the cost of the school boards and the Minister's estimates that he must offer us not an overall global sum, but a detailed breakdown of the costs that lie behind the estimate which he will then ask us to accept. The unit costs of each school board can be anything from £5,000 to £6,000 for central support costs and basic administration.

I commend COSLA's briefing to the Minister. We do not claim—and it is not claimed—that every sum in it is absolutely correct to the nearest penny. As the Minister has said, there have been one or two modifications in the past. However, as I have already said, it is not good enough for the Minister simply to point out minor aberrations in the past, because that will not justify a major aberration on his part today.

If the Bill is to be steamrollered through the House in its present inadequate state, it is incumbent on the Government to adopt a more realistic attitude to the financing of the boards. The Government should realise the implications and be willing to support the reasonable costs which will inevitably be incurred if the school boards are foisted on unwilling parents, teachers and communities.

It is obvious that local authorities, and especially COSLA, must be involved in the ongoing consultation about expenditure, first, to monitor the expenditure,

[Dr. Reid]

secondly, to ensure fairness both to the boards—if the Government insist that they should be set up—and to the regional authorities, and, thirdly, to ensure that in future there will be some independent verification of the costs of running the boards and of the legitimacy of the benefits derived from such costs.

I hope that even at this late stage the Minister will have a rethink. In fairness to the boards that the Government wish to be established, to the authorities which will have a major role to play in education and in overseeing the boards, to the public, who are seeing money being spent on a project that they did not want in the first place, and to Parliament, which wants an independent estimate and survey of how much is being spent, I hope that the Government will accept the proposition of my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg).

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) was at least honest and told the House that he was against the setting up of the boards in principle. We respect his honesty.

I advise the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) that I have never listened to such humbug in my life. It was a repetition of some of the humbug that we have heard from him previously. He was speaking against the principle of setting up the boards. However, he knows that the people in his constituency, and certainly, as far as I can ascertain, the people in the areas north of the Tay—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Gordon was only too happy to talk about the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith). Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will recognise that it is a fact that north of the Tay, and certainly in Tayside, North—I trust that the hon. Gentleman will not try to tell me what is going on in Tayside, North—*[Interruption.]* I have listened to humour from Opposition Members in previous Parliaments. We see different faces now on the Opposition Benches from those in previous Parliaments.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): There are more and more of us each time.

Mr. Walker: Opposition Members come and Opposition Members go. We are here——

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan) *rose*——

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is a new boy. He should sit down. When he has earned his spurs, he can stand up. After all, we know that one problem that we face in relation to school boards, and other matters, is the fact that the Scottish National party depends on lies for its message. As I keep telling the House, it puts out lies in my constituency. However, its lies will be found out. When hon. Members interfere in my constituency, I can only conclude that they are concerned about their own weak position.

Mr. Andrew Welsh *rose*——

Mr. Walker: Yes, I give way to the hon. Gentleman, who has been interfering in my constituency.

Mr. Welsh: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman says that, because he could not be more wrong. I do not interfere if I can help it—certainly not to my knowledge—in the constituencies of other hon. Members. In relation to the particular instance that he mentioned, one of my constituents is a member of the organisation which sought an interview with the Minister. The hon. Member is very good at publicly threatening to sue people, but he never delivers. Instead of making big noises, I invite him to do something for a change.

Mr. Walker: I assure the hon. Gentleman that when he knows me better he will know that I fight on grounds of my choosing—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman should listen carefully. First, he was interfering in my constituency, whether or not he has a constituent who wants to be a member of a committee, because the whole matter relates to my constituency and to my constituency only. I shall see the hon. Gentleman at a time and place of my choosing, and not when he chooses.

There is no question but that in Tayside, North parents wish to become much more involved in schools. They are looking forward to the Bill becoming an Act so that they can become part of the school board system. They are very keen on that because they recognise that the Government have introduced prudent, sensible and caring policies which this Bill represents. The Government have also devolved powers to people in so many of the Acts that have been passed. The school boards will devolve power to the parents and that will help the running of our schools.

Parents have a direct interest in what happens in schools. In the country areas people are certainly very interested and concerned to be much more directly involved in what is happening. That is part of the community spirit in country areas.—*[Interruption.]* I can speak for country areas because by constituency contains 2,000 sq miles of Scottish countryside. People in country areas have always been much more interested in community activities and will welcome the opportunity to be part of the operation of the school boards when they are introduced.

I have read new clause 1 very carefully and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will reject it. Of all the bodies with which one would want to have ongoing consultations, COSLA would be the last. Having read some of the material from COSLA recently—*[Interruption.]* This is my advice to my hon. Friend the Minister and he can accept or reject it. I certainly would not accept new clause 1.

The Minister should give us a commitment that the Government will set up the boards and that the cost of running the boards is justified because we believe that they are good for Scottish education. There should be a commitment that the bill will be met. We do not want the Government to set up a consultation process that will produce a constant running battle and running sore. After all, we know that the Opposition are against school boards in principle. If the Opposition are against them in principle, they will argue against them all the time.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: The juvenile tendency wing of the Tory party is a very difficult act to follow, but it is an easy act not to emulate.

I am concerned about the proposals for school boards. They look like yet another example of the process whereby central Government create extra burdens, responsibilities and financial outgoings for local authorities, yet do not give them the resources to meet those extra burdens and outgoings. We have seen that so often in legislation—for

example, in raising the school leaving age and passing Act after Act placing extra burdens on local authorities, but failing to provide resources to meet the burdens. I believe that the school boards are another example of that.

New clause 1 seeks to give COSLA a national monitoring and co-ordinating role on behalf of its members. That is exactly COSLA's role. It can provide a national picture because it has representatives from all over Scotland who can see what will happen when the school boards are implemented. COSLA has the machinery and expertise to provide a national picture of how the disparate local school boards are operating.

I know of no mechanism for an annual conference of school boards or a way for the boards to share experience or ideas. As a national group, local authorities should have some means of monitoring nationally the costs of school boards, and the ability to make representations to the Government on the basis of that monitoring and the information received. COSLA could carry out that national co-ordinating and monitoring, especially as the regions and island councils are responsible for education and will be carrying the financial burdens and responsibility to pay out the money to implement this legislation.

We are still entitled to ask how much the changes will cost. There is an amazing disparity between COSLA's estimates and those of the Government. COSLA estimates that it will cost £17·9 million to set up the school boards while the Government's estimate is only £5 million. There is a difference of tens of millions of pounds in the calculations. Will the Minister tell us on what the Government base their calculations? Education authorities are being asked to find money from their existing very stretched budgets to fund the new legislation. That is unfair on local authorities.

As COSLA has produced its financial calculations in detail, it is incumbent on the Government to do the same. COSLA has detailed its assumptions about the number and length of meetings. What are the Government's assumptions? COSLA has detailed its calculations about education authority input, the number of school board members, travel costs, annual average mileages and payments to clerks. Will the Government detail their figures so that the House can decide which set of figures is accurate and what the real burden will be on local authorities?

COSLA's members will have to bear the costs of the legislation. They have clearly done their homework. What calculations have the Government carried out? The Government are imposing the burdens in the legislation. What calculations have they carried out to compare with COSLA's? We and COSLA are entitled to know the figures and I hope that the Minister will address COSLA's figures in detail.

I support new clause 1 because I believe that COSLA cannot be ignored as the Government are intent on ignoring it. COSLA is a national governmental organisation and it will have a positive contribution to make in the implementation of the Bill when it becomes an Act. I hope that new clause 1 will be accepted and that, instead of ignoring COSLA, the Government will treat it with the seriousness that it deserves in implementing the legislation.

5.45 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) is not alone in being unpersuaded by the Minister's figure of £5 million as the cost for implementing the school boards system. It would be difficult to imagine any Scot who would be persuaded by that figure with the possible exception of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who is persuaded by anything that his Government Front Bench colleagues tell him.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): And he still has not been promoted.

Mr. McAllion: As my hon. Friend says, he still does not get promoted.

I warn hon. Members to be very wary of the intervention made by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). He said that he had a great deal of sympathy with the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld (Mr. Hogg). My first reaction to that was that I had not been listening properly to my hon. Friend. The hon. Member for Eastwood argued in favour of specific grants and I then knew why he had made his intervention. In Committee the Minister spent a great deal of time trying to persuade Committee members to accept that the expenditure for school boards that we were demanding should be provided in the form of specific grant so that the Minister could then hit us with the phrase that he used in Committee:

> "COSLA has fought tooth and nail against specific grants for specific activities in local government. It has argued that specific grants undermine local democracy, that the money should be provided as a rate support grant and that it should not be tagged to school boards."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 26 April 1988; c. 99.]

The hon. Member for Eastwood intervened because he was trying to draw Opposition Members into arguing on behalf of specific grants so that his hon. Friend the Minister could shoot those arguments to pieces in terms of COSLA's policies. We must be very wary of the intervention of the hon. Member for Eastwood.

I very much support the concept in new clause 1.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The hon. Gentleman should not see a deep conspiracy in every speech that I make. Does he agree that, while he has described COSLA's general policy, for which there are good reasons, there are specific grants? Does he also agree that if there were a specific grant, it would meet the point that the Opposition are making because it would be bound to be subject to detailed consultation?

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman fails to tell other hon. Members listening to the debate that the point about specific grants is that they are directly under the control of central Government. That is why COSLA is very wary of expenditure in the form of specific grants. COSLA's experience of central Government in education over the past 10 years is that they have continually cut the money available to local authorities to spend on education. That is why COSLA does not want a specific grant to fund expenditure on school boards. It wants that to be part of the rate support grant, but not so that it may be lost among other items up for discussion. That is why the new clause calls for support for school boards and for continuing

[Mr. McAllion]

consultation with COSLA to identify the additional expenditure that will be necessary through the rate support grant system to fund the school boards.

I draw the Minister's attention to the necessity of continuing consultation with COSLA about the probable expense of school boards. Tayside regional council was asked to provide details of the financial and manpower implications of setting up the boards, and its answer obviously forms part of COSLA's submission to various hon. Members. The council could not provide an exact figure because there were far too many imponderables. No precise figure can be put on the cost of school boards until they have been set up. We do not know the amount of financial and other information that will have to be made available to them. The Bill states that education authorities shall provide

"such information as the Board may from time to time reasonably request."

That is open-ended and authorities will not know what the school boards will ask them to provide or what the costs will be for providing that information. The Bill also states that the head teacher must seek the approval of boards for per capita expenditure.

A school board will not merely wish to know the per capita expenditure in its particular school—it will want to compare its figures with those of other schools in the area. Information will have to be supplied to every school board—and there will be more than 200 in Tayside—about per capita expenditure in all schools. That has enormous cost implications for education authorities. A structure should be established for local authorities to negotiate with the Government about the continuing costs of the school boards.

We debated the cost of the election arrangements in Committee. The Minister started from the premise that the ballot papers could be sent home with the children after school. It soon became clear to him that that simply would not work. In some areas children might be approached and asked for the ballot papers, or they might simply lose them. There will have to be a postal ballot of all parents in each school, and the costs will be enormous. However, at this stage the education authorities cannot even estimate them.

There is a similar problem with the appointments committee because a school board will be involved in a vetting process at the short-list stage for head teacher, deputy head teacher and assistant head teacher. Education authorities do not know the cost implications of that. The same is true about the remuneration for clerks to the school boards, as it is also true about the running costs. How often will school boards meet, at what time will they meet and what sort of funding will be required to support those meetings?

What about compensation to staff? The head teacher and other teachers will have to give up school time to attend school boards and new staff will have to be appointed to fill the gaps left in the timetables. No education authority can precisely estimate the full costs of implementing the school boards system. Tayside thinks that it will run into seven figures—more than £1 million. Yet the current cost of school councils is only £600 each. More than 200 school boards will be set up in Tayside and, as COSLA says, the cost is likely to be in excess of £5,000 per school board. That gives some idea of the seriousness of the problem, especially on a national scale.

The Government's figures are unrealistic and it is essential that the Minister takes the criticisms on board. He should accept new clause 1 because it would set up a mechanism that would enable the school boards system to be implemented successfully rather than being a dismal failure, which would cause even more frustration in and destruction of our school system than has already been caused during nine years of this Government.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): I support new clause 1. Most hon. Members will agree that, apart from the discordant note struck by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), there is a consensus on the need to match the role of school boards with resources. That is an important point to establish.

I am concerned about costs because there cannot be effective parental participation on the cheap. Perhaps the Minister wants to aspire to that, implement school boards for ideological reasons and then walk away from the reality of the costs. I hope that when he replies to this brief debate he will challenge my assertion and convince the House that he means business on the costs of supporting school boards.

While many Opposition Members have grave misgivings about school boards, there is a genuine interest in parental participation. I certainly do not have a vested interest in the destruction of school boards, once they have been implemented, simply because of a lack of funds. If the Government are investing politically in the development of school boards, it is incumbent upon the Minister to tell the House tonight that adequate resources will be available.

My confidence was not reinforced by some of the Minister's replies in Committee to questions about school boards, their role and how the mechanisms of funding would work. He was challenged about support services for what, in Scotland, is called the clerking of the boards. That is an essential function because without proper administration many boards will be unable to do the effective work required.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will know that this afternoon the House heard a statement about the extension of VAT to building for commercial uses and various other things. During that statement, the Minister told the House—perhaps inadvertently—that that was based on a directive that the House had approved in 1977. In fact, the directive was debated by the House on a take note motion——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman is continuing a debate on an earlier statement. What is the point of order for the Chair?

Mr. Marlow: The Minister put forward proposals on the basis that the House had approved the original document. The House has not approved it—it took note of the original document. Therefore, the basis on which we discussed it today was erroneous.

I do not believe that it is the Minister's fault, but it would be both right and appropriate for the Government to make some explanation of the misapprehension under which the House labours at the moment. It is an important issue and large sums of money are at stake——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has made his point and put it on the record. It is not a point of order and it has nothing to do with this debate. He must find other ways, as I am sure he will, of pursuing the matter.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have made it clear that it was not a point of order.

Mr. Hogg: My point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the advice that you have just given to the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), who raised a bogus point, was absolutely right. However, those of us who represent Scottish constituencies are most anxious to prosecute the proceedings of the Bill in an orderly manner because it is important to the people of Scotland. It does not help when hon. Members representing English constituencies make a nonsense of our proceedings. That is not acceptable to the Opposition Front Bench—nor, I believe, is it acceptable to the House.

Mr. McLeish: The intervention by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) requires no comment from me, although I feel that it was an abuse of the House. Indeed, the Scots on the Opposition Benches have just heard our Front Bench spokesman making that point.

I was probing the question of support costs for the proper functions of school boards. The Minister was asked in Committee about how the costs could be contained, and he made a fairly remarkable statement. When pressed on how the committee of administration would function, the Minister suggested that one of the school board members should take the minutes. I found that quite incredible. We are talking about a major innovation in education in Scotland. The Minister is laughing, but we are used to that. We treat education in Scotland with respect, unlike the contempt which oozes from Ministers at every possible opportunity. When pressed on important items of costs, the Minister was quite happy to run away from them and throw out some political snippet as to how local authorities in Scotland could contain the costs.

6 pm

Mr. Bill Walker: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that in Committee a number of hon. Members were interested in the point that he is now making? It emerged that it was being suggested that the members of the school boards —and I cited my own constituency where I know that lawyers, dentists, doctors and others hoped to be members of the proposed boards—would be only too happy to take on the duties of being secretary.

Mr. McLeish: I enjoyed greatly that intervention, because it summed up more adequately than I could, amateurism versus the professionalism that Scottish education has exhibited over the years. Bankers, dentists, retired people, probably some generals will be brought back from the colonies to man the school boards—an excellent contribution to the future quality of school boards.

To highlight two or three issues which give cause for concern, I shall refer to the excellent COSLA paper which was produced as a briefing. First, no one would dispute the fact that at this stage it is impossible to identify the amount of expenditure required for the boards to function. We seek to ensure that the Government take seriously the fact that a large amount of new expenditure will be needed, and consequently the Government will have to say to the local authorities and the representatives of the education unions that if reasonable costs are put forward for such a venture they are willing to support those costs.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman referred to the position I took in Committee about clerks, which was that clerks should not necessarily be local authority employees. As he also referred to the COSLA briefing document, will he comment on the fact that the COSLA estimate of the costs of providing the clerks' services are in line with what I told the Committee, that is, that it does not make the assumption that they should be local authority employees? I wonder whether his criticism and derision that has been directed at me is also directed at COSLA.

Mr. McLeish: I would never withdraw any derision that I aimed at the Minister because I believe sincerely that the Minister's attitude towards Scottish education is, in the main, highly negative and destructive, so I shall not take any instructions from him about my interest in and my contribution to the welfare of Scottish education.

We have identified the first point: the Government are willing the end but are unwilling to consider the means of delivery. My second point has been made, but it needs to be stressed. Scottish education authorities are facing massive constraints on their expenditure at present. There is no way in which they can make up the substantial shortfall between what the Government provide for school boards and what is necessary for the proper, effective functioning of those boards. I hope that the Government will take that seriously.

The local authority in my constituency, Fife regional council, an excellent education authority which puts excellence first, will be faced with a possible bill of about £1·2 million for implementing the school boards. Whether it is £1·5 million or £500,000, it is a very significant sum of money, and £1·2 million would represent 1 per cent. of its total gross expenditure on education. My concern is that the spending possibly of £1·2 million by 200 schools requires the Government honestly to reassure the House this evening that if such costs are incurred they will be met by the Government. School boards were their idea, and clearly, if they want them to be successful, Fife regional authority, and other education authorities, must have a reimbursement of costs, because most education authorities will look positively at the legislation when it is on the statute book. Will the Minister, in his reply, make that absolutely clear? Whether we are talking about £5 million or £19·5 million is irrelevant. It is the principle of whether the new boards can function effectively if the Government walk away from their responsibilities for the expenditure.

Finally, specific grants have been mentioned. Our concern is that the Bill paves the way for opting out in future. If we accept specific grants, that will be another attack on local education authorities because it will increasingly centralise decision making and direct funding to education. That is not wanted by the education authorities, the education unions, or by the Opposition. It will be a further nail in the coffin of publicly provided education in Scotland. I hope that, apart from providing reassurance about funding, the Minister will reject specific

[Mr. McLeish]

grants which would bypass education authorities and create the hostility that is so prevalent in education and that the Opposition wish to dampen down.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am slightly puzzled by the hon. Gentleman's remarks about specific grants. New clause 1 provides that

"the establishment and continuing support of school boards will be the subject of separate and ongoing consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities."

The new clause does not specify who the Opposition wish to consult with COSLA. I find it hard to believe that they meant the Government, because, clearly, there are already consultations between the Government and COSLA about local authority spending and the rate support grant. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) from a sedentary position says, "Separate". That is the point which I wish to draw to the attention of the House. If the funding of school boards is to be subject to separate consultation and to be labelled as separate from the rate support grant, by any test of the meaning of specific grants—which my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) was calling for—that would be a specific grant, because it would be subject to separate negotiations and would have a separate purpose.

I realise why the Opposition are determined not to embrace specific grants. It has nothing to do with opting out; it is because it is COSLA's policy to reject the notion of specific grants. I am all the more puzzled because on Second Reading and throughout the Committee proceedings I gave specific and clear undertakings that the cost of school boards would be taken into account in the rate support negotiations, that we did not wish this initiative in any way to be impoverished, and that we would provide the resources which were required to make the school boards function. I am at a loss to understand why the Opposition are asking the House to support the new clause.

Mr. McLeish: Perhaps the briefing that the Minister has received has not been as good as it would have been if this were a Government new clause. It is clear that new clause 1 is about the volume of expenditure being separately discussed between various parties. The Minister knows that specific grant allocation is about the mechanism of the delivery of the finance. He should not confuse the two issues. He is doing that. Will he not accept that new clause 1 means that the volume should be discussed? Specific grants go much further than anything in new clause 1.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman has a funny idea of what is a specific grant. A specific grant is a grant which is given for a specific purpose. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that in the rate support grant discussion account should be taken of school boards and that they should be subject to negotiation, I have already given that undertaking. Even now, as we speak, that process has begun and negotiations are taking place between COSLA and the Scottish Office on the appropriate level of support provided within the rate support grant settlement to meet the cost of the school boards, in anticipation of the House giving the Bill its consent. The hon. Gentleman is chasing an illusion and, having heard his account of what a specific grant is, I can better understand how we have reached this position.

Mr. McAllion: The Minister has said in Committee and on Report that he will take account of the requirements for funding implementation of the school boards system. That is very different from saying that he will guarantee that the Government will fund the costs, whatever they are, as they become apparent through consultation between himself and COSLA. Will the hon. Gentleman guarantee that, when the costs become obvious to him and local authorities, the Government will fund them and not leave it to local authorities to find the money from among their other revenue expenditure?

Mr. Forsyth: There are several judgmental qualifications in the hon. Gentleman's question. As part of the negotiations, the cost of school boards will be fully taken into account, but I am not prepared to give COSLA a blank cheque whereby whatever it says the costs will be becomes the amount provided. If that were the basis on which we funded local government, there would be no need for negotiations and we would be back in the position faced in 1978, when Labour was in government. I am getting tired of repeated questioning on whether the school boards will be funded in this way. I shall carefully consider the suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood that we should consider a specific grant for this purpose. In the meantime, I am prepared to operate on the basis of negotiations with COSLA, taking full account of the costs that it wishes to take on board.

The hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) pressed me to look at COSLA's estimate, and I have done so carefully. In Committee, I said that we thought that the cost would be about £5 million. I acknowledge that COSLA, unlike the hon. Gentleman, has found a saving of about £700,000 from the abolition of school councils, which is on the basis of a comparable figure to ours, putting our estimate at £5·7 million in total.

COSLA's figures are a little questionable. I acknowledge that the Opposition have been generous enough to accept many of the arguments which I put in criticism of the Dumfries and Galloway estimates. I believe, from memory, that COSLA's estimates have changed from £12 million to £15 million to £20 million, and now the estimate is down to £17·6 million. There has been a degree of movement by COSLA——

Mr. Galbraith: Flexibility.

Mr. Forsyth: I am happy to be flexible. Whether we are talking about £5 million or £10 million as a proportion of the total expenditure in education, we are dealing with very small sums.

Mr. McLeish: One per cent.

Mr. Forsyth: Less than 1 per cent., and, by our estimate, rather more than the equivalent cost of two extra pupils in an average secondary school.

It is difficult to understand how boards with only basic powers—the basis of COSLA's estimate—meeting six times a year are likely to need more than £3·5 million of computer hardware and how it is possible that each board will consume £1,200 of stationery and telephone calls in a year. The estimate for training, at £2·4 million, is a ballpark figure for which no basis is given. It is a little difficult to understand, given the Government's undertaking that we shall fund training centrally. COSLA's global estimate includes nearly £1·8 million for staff replacement costs. As I pointed out in Committee, we have

already arranged for that aspect of the impact of school boards to be accommodated within the new staffing standards, which we aim to publish, in line with our undertakings, before the end of the current school year. There is no need for that to be included in the estimate. When one strips away even those more dubious assumptions, we are talking perhaps about an estimate that lies between £5 million and £10 million, rather than £17 million. As I have said repeatedly, we are not absolutely thralled to the idea of £5 million. The negotiating machinery exists and, by now, COSLA should know how to use it.

6.15 pm

After a good Committee stage, when a number of positive suggestions were put forward which I was happy to accept, I am dismayed that the Opposition should claim to support the Bill's principle but criticise the financial implications when the Government seek to put it into effect. In an intervention, I said that Strathclyde region had a stance, as part of the Labour party's policy, of one school per council. It is difficult to understand how a school council for every school, with the additional powers that Labour proposes, would be significantly cheaper than the school boards, with the limited powers which are the basis of COSLA's assumption.

Mr. Norman Hogg: We are not attempting to argue costs on that basis. We are simply saying that there should be a separate monitoring apparatus within the structure —COSLA—because we are far from persuaded about the Minister's estimates, which are now between £5 million and £10 million.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman must not put words into my mouth. By taking out the more obvious items that should not be included, we are arguing about between £5 million and £10 million. I am not saying that my estimate is £10 million—far from it. I am saying that it is a matter for negotiation. I accept what the hon. Gentleman states in all honesty is his position, but that was not the position taken by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) or some of his other colleagues, who clearly argued against the principle of the Bill and said that this was not a proper use of funds.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East was at pains to emphasise the costs of providing the reports, statements and other information that the Bill will entitle a board to receive and request. That was another example of the kind of objection to the Bill's principle about which I am trying to persuade the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth. The Opposition appear to be arguing for a restriction on a board's access to information, whereas the Scottish Labour party claims that parents are interested in that access. Labour Members find themselves in a curious position.

Mr. McAllion: By referring to the additional information that would have to be referred to school boards, I was making a point about the cost to the education authority of supplying that information. The Minister did not take that into account. He does not make sufficient sums available to allow education authorities to provide the information required by school boards.

Mr. Forsyth: I have repeatedly given undertakings that those costs will be met through the rate support grant. The hon. Gentleman must accept what we say. That undertaking will be met. The Opposition's insistence on not accepting it leaves me entitled to take the view that basically they oppose the principle of the Bill and seek to argue against it.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Does the Minister realise that the rate support grant will meet up to only 52 per cent. of the costs and that ratepayers will have to find vast sums to subsidise the system? That will be a massive burden on taxpayers and ratepayers in Strathclyde, which is a huge authority. The Minister's proposals will cost a lot of money. Will he comment?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman needs to take account of the effect of having school boards where the people who see how the money is being spent in the schools can form judgments. My view is that the proposal is likely to make significant savings and create within the education system a body of people who can police it more effectively than councillors, albeit with the best of motives, who are remote from what is happening on the ground. The hon. Gentleman needs to put that point in the balance.

I was asked about the rate support grant. I am sure that, like me, the hon. Gentleman will be delighted that this year the Government's allocation for education has been increased by no less than 9 per cent., which is well ahead of inflation and provides ample scope for absorbing a number of initiatives.

Mr. Graham: That is irrelevant.

Mr. Forsyth: I thought that the hon. Gentleman was worried about the basis of expenditure. I should have thought that he would be delighted that the Government have been able to increase expenditure on education by no less than 32 per cent. in real terms since 1979.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) rightly expressed her worry about the provision of adequate training for members of school boards. I assure her that a comprehensive package is being prepared, which will include a variety of training material and information for board members and which will be funded centrally. We are also working on training for head teachers, whose management role will include working with the boards. That training will include material on their new relationships, so I think that the hon. Lady can rest assured.

Mrs. Fyfe: I accept the Minister's assurance on those aspects of training. However, I was referring to the background training costs for professionals who will be required to service the committee. That cost will have to be included in an account of the true cost of running such boards.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Lady has made a separate point, which will undoubtedly be taken into account. Certainly we have borne it in mind in our estimates. It will be open to the boards to decide where to purchase additional training. We shall provide them with a budget for that purpose. Some enterprising local authorities may even be able to produce training packages which are competitive and those authorities may make a profit on the exercise. The boards themselves will test what is appropriate material, exercising their own discretion in the market place.

Mrs. Fyfe: I am anxious that the Minister has forgotten the undertaking that he gave to me earlier when I intervened to ask for a breakdown of the Government's own figure, which was then £5 million. I am interested to hear the breakdown if the figure is as much as £10 million.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Lady asked me to give a breakdown of our estimate of £5 million. That sum was made up as follows: £250,000 for elections, £286,000 for members' travel allowances, £554,624 for training, £3,360,000 for administrative support and £559,376 for miscellaneous purposes. I hope that I have helped the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Fyfe: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it really permissible that the Government's figures should be gabbled at us at enormous speed? We should have the figures on a sheet of paper before us so that we can make a proper study of the proposals.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): They will be published in *Hansard* tomorrow.

Mr. Forsyth: I am sure that the hon. Lady will wish to study them and to question me again. I shall be happy to answer any points she may wish to raise.

My hon. Friends made a number of points. May I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) how much I appreciate the help that we have had from Dumfries and Galloway and the remarks he made about the Scottish Office and its ability to work with that council.

Some hon. Members are concerned about the costs and believe that the Government do not have their estimates right. We have provided funding to help the pilot study to operate in Dumfries and Galloway and we shall be considering carefully the experience there. Part of that experience will enable us to form an assessment of the likely costs that will arise and of which we shall take account. It will also enable us to test some of the training material and to form a view before the legislation comes into effect. We are profoundly grateful to the chairman of the education committee and the director of education for the co-operation and help that they have given us.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) advised me not to analyse the COSLA estimates. That was good advice but I was unable to take it, following the strictures of other hon. Members. He asserted that local authorities were stretched in their education budgets. That is untrue, because we have provided substantial extra resources—nearly one third. The hon. Gentleman said that he would favour providing the funds if the school boards were a partnership. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries was right to point out that the hon. Gentleman wanted it both ways; he was arguing in favour of the principle and against the practice, which is a position often taken by his party.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) pointed out that I had given undertakings in Committee that would add to costs. I acknowledge that, but they will provide for a more effective school board system and I can assure him that there is no question of the Government seeking to pare the resources for school boards with the result that they fail or do not operate as effectively as possible.

We believe that the school boards will improve our schools fundamentally by bringing parents, school staff and the wider local community into closer involvement. Those benefits cannot be quantified easily. Nevertheless, they will be significant and enduring. We are not arguing for school boards at any price. The cost nationally will be modest—as I said, at the most a fraction of 1 per cent. of current local authority spending on education. I therefore urge the House to reject the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 209, Noes 278.

Division No. 370] **[6.26 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*

Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & D'ale)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McFall and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela

Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 2

Composition of Boards

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 2, line 9, at end insert—

'(d) persons (to be known as "community members") who are representatives of community groups, and who shall be elected jointly by members of the staff of the school and by parents of pupils in attendance at the school.'

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 35, in page 2, leave out line 10 and insert

'in such numbers as are prescribed in Schedule 5 to this Act.'

No. 2, in page 2, line 11, leave out subsection (2) and insert—

'(2) The prescribed number of parent members shall not exceed the total prescribed representation of other groups on the School Board.'.

No. 34, in page 2, line 11, leave out subsection (2) and insert—

'(2) The number of parent members shall equal the combined representation of other groups on every school Board'.

No. 39, in page 2, leave out lines 13 to 15.

No. 38, in page 2, leave out line 18 and insert 'Schedule 5'.

No. 37, in page 2, line 27, leave out

'variation of regulations made under this section or'.

No. 10, in page 2, line 37, leave out from third 'a' to end of line 39 and insert

'parent member (under subsection (1)(a) above), and who is also eligible as a staff member (under subsection (1)(b) above) may be a candidate for election to the Board in one capacity only.'.

No. 27—a new schedule—

'Membership of School Boards

1. The composition of a school board will be linked to the size of the school measured by the number of pupils in attendance. Except as provided in paragraphs 3 and 4 below, the number of members in each category will be as shown in the following table:

Number of pupils	*Parent Members*	*Staff Members*	*Co-opted Members*	*Total*
1— 100*	3	1	2	6
101— 500	4	2	2	8
501—1000	5	2	3	10
1001—1500	6	3	3	12
over 1500	7	3	4	14

* Not applicable to single teacher schools.

2. The number of pupils will be assessed at the time of the school census each year.

3. Single teacher schools will be treated as a separate class with two parent members and two co-opted members.

4. Subject to section 2 of this Act, an education authority may draw up a scheme to make different provision for different schools and for different classes of schools than that provided for in this Schedule.

5. Such a scheme made under paragraph 4 above must be submitted to the Secretary of State for approval.'

Mr. McFall: The Opposition wish to highlight four main themes in these amendments: the community aspect of school boards, the parental majority, the composition of school boards, and parents who are also teachers.

Amendment No. 10 proposes that a parent shall be eligible for school board membership as either a parent or staff member. If individuals are not allowed to choose whether they stand as staff or parent members, we shall be disfranchising them, when there is no need to do that. Individuals should be allowed to stand in either capacity. A staff member could bring to the board a degree of experience that did not necessarily owe to their being a member of the staff but simply because they are a parent. The individual should be allowed to apply that experience to the benefit of the board.

We are advocating also that individuals should be elected to the board jointly by staff and parents. The school itself is part of the wider community and is not cut off from it in any way. Sadly, even the Bill's title incorporating the word "Board" relates to a 19th century concept, showing that the Government have not caught up with the reality of modern day schools and education. The wider community must be involved in the working of the school and should be allowed to make a contribution to it.

Over the past six months, I have received at least six HMI reports on different schools in my own constituency. Each and every one of those reports has a section headed "Community Development". Inspectors judge schools by the level of their involvement in the local community and also by the personality and thrust of the head teacher and the degree to which he or she engages the involvement of the wider community in the work of the school. As inspectors attach that degree of credence to that aspect, to the extent that no HMI report omits a reference to community development, we suggest that the community should be involved in the work of school boards and their decisions and deliberations.

We contend that there should be no parental majority on school boards, and we have an impeccable source for such a recommendation—the parents themselves in Scotland. There were 7,600 responses to the proposals, which was so overwhelming a response that the Minister allowed extra time for them to be considered. A major theme of those responses was that the concept of partnership is important. Time and time again, parents expressed the view that they wanted greater involvement and to take more decisions, but that they also wanted

teachers and educationists to look after their children, not only other parents. Their main reason for thinking that way was because they are aware of the danger of a prejudiced minority group gaining power. They prefer instead to put their faith in teachers to do what is best for their children's future.

The subject of parental control touches on a number of other areas. A recent article in *The Times Educational Supplement* quotes Mr. Alistair Marquis, head of Bankton primary school, Livingstone, when addressing a recent conference. He warned that the danger of parent-dominated school boards was that they would retard progress in integrating children with special needs into ordinary primary schools. He said that such boards could dictate to head teachers on matters they did not understand and would obstruct sound educational development. There is no more sound an educational development than special needs schools. That head teacher was concerned about the concept of school boards as contained in the Government's proposals.

6.45 pm

I refer also to a letter published in the *Glasgow Herald* on 7 April in the wake of the controversy at Jordanhill school concerning the question of opting out. One of the parents involved, Mr. Clement, wrote that there were dangers in attempting to transfer the detailed management of schools to school boards dominated by parents. His message was that what teachers needed most from parents was support overall, and not just from a small number of them. That was the view of a parent who had experienced the process of parental involvement over those past crucial months in Jordanhill's history.

The Government's proposals will do nothing for the majority of parents. They are justified on the grounds that they will involve parents in the education of their children and will give real decision-making powers. I contend that, as in Lewis Carroll's "Alice Through the Looking Glass", the Government use words to mean exactly what they choose them to mean—neither more nor less. Despite the Government's rhetoric, their proposals will do nothing for parents. In justifying that remark, I refer the House to the Government's regulations for the composition of school boards and the domination of parents over all other groups.

A secondary school having between 500 and 1,000 pupils—which is typical of most secondary schools in my own region of Strathclyde, which is the largest in Scotland—will be allowed five parent members. Thus about 2,000 parents in a typical Strathclyde school will be represented by just five of their number, who will have the overwhelming majority on the school board. Those five members will account for just 0·25 per cent. of the total number of parents concerned, which must be a matter of primary concern to all concerned with education. We argue that the Government should allow the board's structure to be defined by Parliament. That can be arranged in a simple tabular form, as proposed in amendment No. 27. There, the number of parent members is equally matched by the combination of teachers and other interested parties. Such a composition will fairly reflect the common interest in the school's work—being shared by parents, teaching and non-teaching staff, and the local education authority. An absolute majority of parents would be detrimental to the proper consideration of important matters.

In Committee, the Minister indicated that he was prepared to give this matter further thought. I ask him to do so on the basis that there is a need for stability in education today, so that the issues facing Scottish education may be properly addressed. In the wake of the teachers' dispute, stability is needed, especially with the introduction of innovations such as standard grade, the 16-18 action plan and the TVEI course. Other areas of importance include nursery and adult education. We need partnership and consensus, and the proposals in the amendments make sense. We ask the Minister to reinforce the comments he made in Committee and to think, and to think again, about these proposals.

Mr. McAllion: I support the arguments put forward by forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on this group of amendments. In particular, I want to draw attention to schedule 5, which deals with the role of teachers on school boards.

Earlier today some hon. Members met representatives of teachers' unions, COSLA and parent bodies to discuss school boards. They made clear to us their unhappiness about the Bill, the composition of school boards and the relationship between parents, teachers and other interested bodies. In particular, the parents' representatives echoed the anxieties of many other bodies, such as the Church of Scotland, schools councils, other political parties and teachers' organisations, which were discussed in Committee. That is a measure of the divisiveness of the concept of parental majority on the school board.

The parents made it clear that they would like to see the Government trying to achieve a partnership between the home and the school through reform in the schools and through the involvement of more parents. The object of a partnership between parents and teachers and all the other groups associated with education is defeated by including within the Bill the divisive condition that there should be a parental majority on every school board who would thereby have a stranglehold on the board's activities.

The parents stressed the importance of trying to achieve a balance on the school board. For example, one drew attention to the tremendous difference between his experience in the local parent-teacher association and on the school council. The parent-teacher association was dominated by parents with only a few teachers involved and was described as a kind of inquisition of the teachers. It was not constructive or conducive of anything good for the school. The school council achieved a better balance between teachers and parents. There was more constructive debate and the school, parents, teachers and everybody else benefited. The parents wanted to achieve an even discussion within the school board system. They fear that the parental majority, upon which the Minister is insisting, will prevent school boards from achieving anything of any worth.

The parents to whom we spoke were also disappointed about the lack of staff representatives on the school board. My hon. Friend has already drawn attention to that fact. They realise that if there is to be a partnership more teachers will have to have representation on the school boards. Many school boards of schools with up to 1,000 pupils could have only one staff representative and that would be likely to frustrate goodwill.

The parents also wished to see other divisive elements removed from the Bill—for example, the right of the school board to veto the per capita expenditure proposals

[Mr. McAllion]

of the head teacher. They saw no need for that. They felt that a good head teacher—almost all head teachers are good—would be concerned to carry the school board with them so that there would be no necessity for the school board to have such a veto. The head teacher would consult the school board and take on board its views.

Another concern is that the parental majority so admired by the Minister involves only up to four parents. They could be a strong unrepresentative clique dominating the school board, and the mass of parents with children at such a school would have no means of influencing them.

In Committee, the Minister said that he could envisage circumstances when there would be no need for school boards to have an annual general meeting with the parents of the school if nothing had happened in the past year to justify holding such a meeting. If the Minister were serious, that would suggest that school boards would do nothing. However, parents consider that school boards should be accountable to the vast majority of parents who should be able at least once a year to meet the school board to discuss with it what has been going on in their name.

Similarly, the Bill allows education authorities to delegate powers to school boards with the agreement of the school board and the education authority. That means that delegation can take place without reference to parents. There is a provision in the Bill which allows the delegation of powers from an education authority to a school board and, where there is conflict between the two, the matter is referred to the Secretary of State for Scotland and the parents must be balloted on whether a delegation of powers should be allowed. If there is agreement between the education authority and the school board, parents need never be referred to, and that is another omission from the Bill. Powers can be delegated to school boards without the parents ever being consulted.

Those are the issues with which this group of amendments attempts to deal.

The teachers' representatives made it clear that they want to see an increased representation for their people on the school boards. Recently I went to see my son playing for the school team in a cup final in Dundee. *[Interruption.]* St. Colomba's primary school in Dundee swept the board and took all four trophies. However, this is a serious point because such school teams could not exist without the tremendous efforts made by teachers. I was speaking to one of those dedicated teachers who gives his own time to school football teams. He told me that if the Government bring in school boards with only one staff representative, because the role of the teacher has been so downgraded under the Government, he is beginning to wonder whether all his years of effort have been worthwhile. That is the effect that the Government's divisive measures are having on staff representatives throughout Scotland. The Minister should take that on board and start thinking seriously about it.

The Government's proposal for a parental majority on school boards is a device whereby they can undermine the influence of education authorities and teachers in Scotland. We know that the Minister's concept of education in Scotland as he would like to see it is different from that which is current among the vast majority of Scottish people and from that held by teacher associations and education authorities. He cannot break down the resistance of education authorities or teacher associations, who will not give way because they have won the argument, and he is now trying to get round them by creating a school board with a parental majority which can create a kind of dictatorship of small cliques of parents who think like the Minister and who, like the Minister, want to see what the Bill has always been about. It has never been about parental involvement or improving the quality of education in our schools; it is about paving the way for the Bill that will come after this one—the Bill that will allow schools to opt out of local education authority control.

When we spoke to the parents at the meeting this afternoon, someone made the point that for a number of years this Minister and previous Scottish Ministers have been creating a climate in Scotland whereby parents will begin to want to opt out of local education authority control. They have been starving education authorities of the necessary funds with which to provide quality education. They have been creating the climate whereby people will say that they would be better off outside local education authority control.

Now the Government are creating the institutional mechanism by which that opting out of education authority control will be achieved—the school board system with a parental majority based on a small unrepresentative clique which thinks like the Minister. It is all about dividing Scottish education, breaking up the comprehensive system and creating a two-tier system of education in Scotland. For those reasons I support the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton.

Mr. Allan Stewart: We have had what might be described as a hard-line speech from the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion). It became fairly clear that he is against the whole concept of meaningful parental involvement in Scottish education.

It is a misapprehension held by the Opposition, and, I regret to say, by the Government, that there is some kind of continuum between school boards and opting out. As I said in Committee, I believe that the two concepts are fundamentally different, because this is about parental involvement—it is not about parental choice—while opting out, of course, is about parental choice.

7 pm

It is worth commenting that members of school boards will have the same accountability as hon. Members of the House; they will be subject to re-election by their constituents if people wish to stand against them. We are not subject to election if other people do not stand against us or do not put up candidates against us, but I am bound to say that that happy state of affairs is not very common.

It is also inherent in any system of parental involvement that unless the only form of involvement is a mass meeting of all parents one will have a system whereby a small number are elected.

My main point is to contradict the impression which the hon. Member for Dundee, East may have given to the House that parents are against a parental majority. I do not doubt for a moment that he accurately reflected the view of those to whom he referred, but it is clearly not the view of the Scottish Parent Teacher Council, which is a very representative body. *[Interruption.]* It just shows Opposition Members' ignorance of the existence of

organisations which are interested in parental involvement in Scottish education. The Scottish Parent Teacher Council is accepted by all knowledgeable Members—that does not necessarily include all hon. Members present—as the representative body of parents on this issue.

I want to read a couple of sentences from a letter of 17 June, which I imagine was sent to all Scottish Members, in which the council stated:

"SPTC wishes to re-emphasise its support for the parental majority on School Boards, whatever the actual numbers of parent, staff and co-opted members prescribed in regulations by the Secretary of State."

I think that it is worth quoting the council's reasons for that. It says:

"School Boards will be essentially consultative bodies and simple numerical democracy demands that parents be in the majority."

It goes on to make the valid point that

"Teachers already have a powerful influence on what happens in schools via staff meetings and union representation. Parents need School Boards for consultation purposes far more than teachers."

That is common sense and I hope that as these debates continue the other points raised by the council may be referred to by hon. Members. It is important for the House to recognise that parental opinion as represented through the council is clearly in favour of a parental majority on school boards.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: This group of amendments includes amendment No. 2, which stands in my name and makes the same fundamental point about parental majority as amendment No. 27, which I think that we may vote on and which I acknowledge develops the arguments quite constructively.

This group of amendments and this part of the Bill are in a sense for many people the core of what the Bill is about. I said in Committee, and I am happy to repeat now, that some elements of the powers that are being devolved in this Bill I am glad to see and support, but I do not believe that there is a demand and a wish that parents have an absolute majority. This feeling has been expressed by a wide variety of organisations—excluding the one which the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) has just referred to.

Parents want a partnership, and these amendments seek to set up that partnership. These bodies are not consultative, as the Scottish Parent Teacher Council claims, but have real powers, which is something that the Government are boasting about. It is quite a different matter to suggest what should apply to a consultative body when we are talking about a body with defined executive powers, which the Minister would not wish to be otherwise. I therefore support these amendments and the principle behind them.

I find it rather extraordinary that, given that the Minister who is handling this Bill is also the Scottish Health Minister, he seems to have a rather different perception of different types of professionals. On other issues he seems happy to suggest that doctors and consultants are professionals whose views must be taken into account by the Government and the public. However, it would appear that teachers are professionals who must be brought to heel by the Government and the public. That seems to be a rather discriminatory view.

I find myself in a rather unusual situation and one that might even be a bit embarrassing, because in this area of parental power I support the Conservative party's Scottish manifesto and it is Government Members who are not doing so. The Conservative manifesto said that the Government would introduce increased powers for school councils. My own party's manifesto and policy have followed exactly that course. So I very much support increased powers for school councils. Had some of the powers in this Bill been applied to school councils set up on a partnership basis, they would, in my view, have been welcome and acceptable.

In reply to the charge levelled against me by the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), may I say that if the Minister is prepared to accept my amendment No. 2 or amendment No. 27, that will sufficiently change the calibre of the Bill to make for a genuine partnership, and I would then be inclined to vote for the Third Reading of the Bill, because I recognise that there are powers in this Bill that are worth passing on. The Minister had better accept that my views are not simply my own but have been expressed by parents throughout Scotland who do not believe that the parental majority is the right way to create the spirit of partnership in our education system that we certainly want, even if the Government do not.

I want to refer briefly, by way of illustration, to the figures produced by Education Alert and Lothian parents action group, which were made available yesterday. I do not know whether the Minister has a copy, but I suspect that he has. A random selection of parents in Grampian-Lothian predominantly, but with 20 per cent. from outside those two regions, were asked:

"Do you approve of parents having an overall majority?"

The answer of 77·8 per cent. was no. They were then asked:

"Do you think additional staff should be elected?"

and 87·9 per cent. said yes.

It seems to me, therefore, that a substantial body of opinion does not believe that parents should have an overall majority but thinks that teachers should have increased representation on the boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned this survey, which he described as a random selection. I wonder whether he noticed that over 17 per cent. of the respondents were parents who were also teachers, which scarcely seems representative. He has quoted the survey carried out by a partisan group. Does he not recall the System 3 poll, which showed that 52 per cent. of the sample in Scotland supported the idea of school boards with a majority of parents?

Mr. Bruce: Yes, I do. I have seen that and I remember that we had an extensive debate on it in Committee where the terms of the question were put in doubt by hon. Members. But I do not deny that it was published. The Minister said that this was a partisan group. The group would say that the only thing that is partisan about it is that its members are parents who care about their children's education.

If the Minister wishes to give some other explanation of what he means by that, I think that he should tell the House. Otherwise he has made a totally unwarranted and unjustifiable allegation. The Minister should be grateful for the work which the group has done. It has tried to find out the genuine views of parents. I do not suggest that the Minister should take it as a definitive result and abide by it, but he should not dismiss it so contemptuously because real concern has been expressed by a substantial majority.

[Mr. Bruce]

The Minister makes the point that over 17 per cent. are parents who happen to be teachers. That is an interesting comment from the Minister. He is suggesting to the House, and presumably to the public, that only parents who are not teachers have a right to say how their children should be educated and that we are not entitled to benefit from the contribution of parents who happen to be teachers. Even if we disregard parents who are teachers, an overwhelming majority of those who responded did not believe that parents should have a majority but wanted teachers to have greater representation. Therefore, that was a devious response by the Minister who knows that he is on weak ground and is trying to devalue legitimate arguments which were put to him to express a different view.

The issue is crucial. Knowing that we would soon be dealing with the Bill on Report, in the few weeks since the Committee finished, I have taken the trouble to ask parents and teachers in my constituency what they felt about the Bill. The Minister will be surprised to hear that I stressed certain positive concessions which he made. The recent exchange between him and the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) confirms that opting out is not a component of the Bill but will require separate legislation, which most of us expect to be in the Queen's Speech for the next Session of Parliament.

Allowing for that, I was surprised at the vehemence with which many parents said to me that they did not believe that the Bill would improve the effective running of schools. Indeed, they were concerned about its implications. These views were expressed by individuals, by groups of parents whom I met at their request at two schools in my constituency within the last two weeks and at forums which were well attended by genuinely concerned, intelligent parents who had a real interest. They expressed grave reservations about the Bill in general. They said repeatedly that they could accept aspects of the Bill but not on the basis of parents having an absolute majority; they believed that there had to be partnership.

The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside is entitled to his views and he can speak for his constituents, but he is not entitled to try to score points off me on the balance of representation. He has been anxious to persuade the public and his constituents that he has influenced the Government substantially and that the Bill is now acceptable. That is a legitimate position for him to take, but his constituents will have to make their own judgment.

My constituents are telling me that they are less than convinced that the Bill is acceptable in its present format. That is why they believe that the amendments proposed today would improve it. I am serious when I say that the amendments would improve the Bill sufficiently for me to vote for the Third Reading, though not because I think that school boards are the right way forward. I repeat that what was promised in the Conservative manifesto seemed to me to be the right way forward, which was to give powers to reconstituted school councils. In those circumstances, some of the powers in the Bill could have been properly and legitimately attached to school councils. That would have been a popular and radical reform as opposed to a reform which is motivated by the Minister's ideology and which paves the way for a development in education which is resented.

What the Minister promised when he first published the proposals has been substantially modified. No doubt the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside will claim credit for that, but the Minister's views have not been modified one iota. To the extent that he can extend the powers within the Bill, he will; to the extent that he cannot, he intends to bring forward new legislation in the next Session of Parliament to enable him to do so. At the end of the day the crunch is not whether people trust the Bill but that they do not trust the Minister because he is not trustworthy on this issue. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the word slipped out without the hon. Gentleman realising it and that he would want to withdraw it.

7.15 pm

Mr. Bruce: I take your rebuke, Madam Deputy Speaker. Perhaps I may rephrase it more delicately. My constituents know that the Minister remains committed to proposals which he published before the Bill came forward and that he will not relent in future from seeking to implement those powers. For those reasons, they have no confidence in the Bill because they know that it is a step in a process which fundamentally they are likely to reject, and on which they have made clear their views.

The amendments are central to the crucial point in the Bill. Unless the Minister is prepared to accept that the parental majority should be modified and that staff representation should be increased, confidence in the working of school boards will not be extensive or widespread. I do not expect the Minister to respond constructively. I do not believe that he or his colleagues, who think that the Bill as it stands is likely to create a radical new dimension within Scottish education, are correct.

My constituents are substantially satisfied with the way in which the schools in their area work and with the relationship which they have with teachers. Although there are aspects on which they would like to have more power, which I support, they do not support the powers proposed in the Bill. I support the amendments. If the Minister seeks to reject them, I will be unable to support the Bill in its entirety.

Mr. Graham: I spent nine years on Strathclyde regional council. During that time I went frequently to school councils. I was always impressed by the debates. When there were votes, the councillors divided not on parent/teacher lines but on issues, and the weight of argument won the day.

I support the amendment proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall). It is sensible to proceed on the basis that if the Government are keen to have parental involvement, they should also want the involvement of teachers and other people. It should be a cohesive group so that when it is discussing problems concerning schools and education there can be a full debate.

I have had experience of people attempting to take over school councils. Generally they have failed because they could not put forward a decent, sound argument. We will not see a deliberate takeover if there is a cohesive group.

The Minister is smiling. I have smiled at the Minister regularly because of some of the nonsense in the Bill. This is so serious that there is no smile on my face now. I am angry because the Government did not take advantage of a golden opportunity to reform school councils. I do not claim that school councils were perfect. There were many faults. But if the faults had been removed we might have had a better system than the Government have proposed.

The Government's attitude is that school teachers are the enemy. We should bear in mind that it is the teachers who are educating our young people to take the country hopefully into a better world. I have no hesitation in supporting the amendment.

It is incredible that the Government will not allow so many people who have children at school to play a part in school boards because they are in education authorities. In Strathclyde alone, more than 50,000 people are employed by the regional council. I have seen examples of school teachers playing an admirable role in school councils. It is lamentable and disgraceful and shows a lack of talent to take those people away from making a major contribution to their children's education at school. Their experience can be invaluable, whether as a parent or as a teacher, yet the Government will deny such opportunities.

I believe that the Minister received a copy of a survey carried out by Bishopton primary school which clearly showed that the majority of parents were opposed to the Government's proposals for parental involvement and the whole school board scenario. I remind the Minister that that area is not particularly a Labour stronghold. A Tory was returned in a recent district election, so I can assure the Minister that it is not a hot bed of radicalism. It is an area which might support the wetter instincts of the Conservative party, but the people opposed the Government's proposals for school boards. I am sure that the majority of those people would have liked to have seen some effort to improve and develop school councils and to encourage them to play a more meaningful role. If the Government have sufficient funds for schools, we should have parental involvement so that our children might be better educated. We should not be squandering valuable time and finance.

I am convinced that there will be a short surge of interest when we establish the school boards, but I bet anyone in the House that, in a couple of years' time, there will be no school boards in many schools because the parents will be sick of them and will leave it to the teachers and kids to get on with the business. I am not at all hopeful for school boards because I believe that they will become small in number and will eventually disappear.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am almost prepared to take on that bet with the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham). Perhaps we can have a word afterwards about the stake that he might be prepared to put on it.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman on one point. The experience of school councils in my part of Scotland has not been of division on any lines, certainly not on the basis of party politics or professional background, whether teacher or parent. The decisions taken by those school councils were reached through consensus and on the merits of the arguments and I hope that that will continue to be the case. That will be the case in most areas because those people who wish to become involved will do so in the best interests of education and of the children attending the schools.

I have my doubts about the matter and my hon. Friend the Minister knows that I still have reservations that any one group should form a majority on the boards. I strongly support the proposal that the parental group should be the largest single group, but I part company with my hon. Friend on the question whether parents should necessarily have a majority. None the less, I understand my hon. Friend's arguments and those put forward by the Scottish Parent Teacher Council, which strongly supports a parental majority. It is not worth getting too worked up about the matter for the very reason that I have given, that there will not be division along particular lines, so, although I believe that my hon. Friend is wrong, I shall not oppose him on this matter.

However, I am most anxious about teacher representation. My hon. Friend knows my views on that, but I do not believe that the proposals recommend a sufficient number of teachers, particularly in respect of smaller schools. I was not the only Committee member to hold those views, although I felt particularly strongly about the matter. My hon. Friend said that he would reconsider the matter. I should be much happier if he would assure us that he will agree to increase teacher representation on school boards.

Mr. Salmond: I wish to give a brief welcome to this group of amendments, particularly amendment No. 9, which puts forward the case for community representatives. It raises a particularly interesting argument because it involves a constituency of electors which includes both teachers and parents and is worthy of the Minister's serious consideration.

I want to take up the main point—the balance on the schools board between parents and other representative groups. I share the concerns expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, although I part company with the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), as I believe that the issue goes to the heart of the anxieties of many people in Scotland about this measure. The nub of the concern is the fear that an unrepresentative minority and a determined clique of vested interests will attempt to seize control of the school board and, therefore, will still have substantial influence —through, for example, the vetoing of the headmaster's spending plans or the presence of parent representatives on the appointments committee—over children's education and matters that were part of the ceiling powers in the Minister's original proposals.

If parents did not have an absolute majority on a school board, that would remove many of the concerns because the school board would have to progress by consensus and take into account the views of parents, teachers, co-opted members, and, I hope, community representatives. The school board could still exert its considerable influence over those key areas, but only when it was operating through a consensus of its members. If clause 2(2) is left as it is now, with an absolute majority, there will be grave concern that a determined minority of parents may seize control of a school board.

The Minister takes an interesting view of the various responses that he has received to the consultative exercise. He has received probably the most clear rebuff of any Scottish Office Minister in recent times as a result of the first consultation exercise on this measure. There were

[Mr. Salmond]

7,600 responses, which showed no enthusiasm for a parental majority. The report of Education Alert, showing that about 78 per cent. of the sample were opposed to the idea of a parent majority, has already been mentioned. The Minister dismisses that out of hand, as he is wont to do. His reaction to the various rebuffs that he has received has been to attempt to rubbish the questions asked.

I clearly remember being on a BBC television programme with the Minister when the studio audience voted overwhelmingly against his proposals. Only two people in the audience were in favour of his argument. The Minister said that the wrong question was being asked. He then proceeded to set the question to be put to the audience and, lo and behold, still only two people came to his support. It is a remarkable argument. The Minister may wish to intervene to correct my recollection of the numbers. I concede that there may have been more—perhaps three or four—but there was a substantial majority against the Minister's proposal, even as he phrased it. The House will have to treat with great caution the Minister's attempts to rubbish clear indications of the force of Scottish worry about an absolute parental majority on school boards as somehow being an inappropriate sample asked the wrong question. Quite clearly the Minister does not even pay attention to answers to his own questions.

7.30 pm

When the Minister replies to the debate, he will have to tell the House whether he will pay attention to the serious concerns being expressed by the vast majority of Scottish Members about the school board proposals. Will he make some concession to the points that we are putting forward on behalf of our constituents or will he rely on the majority in the recesses of this place, the "Morris gun" majority, and make no concessions whatever? That is the fundamental choice that the Minister must make when he replies to the worries expressed on this group of amendments. I await with interest the Minister's reply.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) place such emphasis on the views of the Scottish Parent Teacher Council. In another context Conservative Members like to cast doubts on whether bodies with rather grand-sounding names speak for the people for whom they purport to speak. I would question how many parents, far less teachers, the Scottish Parent Teacher Council speaks for in my constituency. The representations that I have received about the Bill have not been in line with the submission from the council on which the hon. Member for Eastwood placed such value.

There have been many representations about the Bill, but at this stage it is largely a matter of disinterest and slight suspicion rather than active hostility. Those who have been in touch with me have expressed opposition to what is seen to underlie the Bill. They have expressed concern about the idea of establishing a parental majority in bodies that are to have the proposed powers.

In line with their attitude on many pieces of mischievous legislation introduced by the Government, the overwhelming majority of the people of Scotland will have the good sense to have little to do with the Bill. The Bill will not have the effect that the Minister hopes, and it will not lead people down the philosophical road that he intends us to follow.

I agree with the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) that the vast majority of people in Scotland are well satisfied with the way that schools are run, with the quality of the teaching staff and the relationships between parents, teachers and communities. For that reason the Scottish people will not come forward in large numbers to seize power. I also agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) who said that in the majority of communities interest will subside fairly rapidly. He was also right to say that within school councils, as in any sensible organisation, members divide not along parent-teacher lines but on the basis of the argument. At least to some extent that will be a damp squib.

The underlying fear expressed by hon. Members in all parts of the House is the potential that exists for the highly motivated pressure group to take over a school board and to use it for its own purposes. That fear keeps coming through and there is nothing in the Bill to prevent such a takeover. A school does not have to be taken over by a politically motivated pressure group seeking to take the school down the road which in his more visionary moments the Minister has in mind—opting out and that kind of nonsense. It might be a group that has a stake in some bitter local controversy that in some way impinges upon the school. It might be a religious pressure group.

There are all sorts of pressure groups which at a given moment might think it a splendid idea to get three or four people on to a school board to exercise disproportionate control over the affairs of that school. Surely it cannot be healthy to legislate for such a possibility. If the Government are interested in the good of Scottish education, as opposed to some rather confused ideological point, they will take the Bill away and think about it again.

Mr. Salmond: Has the hon. Gentleman noticed that with the exception of the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) all the Conservative Back Benchers have opted out of the debate?

Mr. Wilson: If I had been called to speak slightly earlier I would have observed that nobody other than the hon. Member for Eastwood had opted in. The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) made a brief appearance. He appears to be the acceptable face of Toryism in his constituency, but for the time being I shall not put it any higher than that.

My final point is in support of the amendment that calls for community representatives. The legislation as drawn takes a narrow view of schools and their place in the community. It does not accept that many people who are neither parents nor teachers have an active and wholly proper interest in the working of schools. Many school activities provide opportunities for such people to participate, and that is where the interests of the wider community can be seen in the functioning of schools.

One aspect of the legislation that deserves comment is that for the first time in the long tradition of Scottish education the right of the churches to be represented on education bodies is to be abolished. Community representatives would not specifically redress that, but they would at least be an avenue through which—if it was the wish of the people electing community representatives

—the churches could be represented. The same argument could be made on behalf of various other groups that are presently disqualified from participation by the very narrow format of the Bill.

For a school with 1,000 pupils to have a so-called representative body on which there are five parent members, one staff member, and three co-opted members is far too narrow and selective. The whole idea that there must be a parental majority is misplaced. In the light of our electoral experience, the Opposition have great faith in the good sense of the Scottish people. We should not be too afraid of what the Minister is proposing. He is a zealot, but fortunately he does not have an army of zealots to lead. That has been the experience on other issues and it will be the experience on this one as well.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I am disappointed that the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) has disappeared because I was about to make a nice little joke. However, I had to chop it because the language of the Opposition gets very dangerous. I thought that the right hon. Gentleman was the only acceptable face of Toryism, but that may not be the case.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) was corrected for calling the Minister untrustworthy. I think that perhaps that was a little severe. The Minister cannot be trusted on this issue. I hope that that expression is acceptable. None of us trusts him on this issue. We know what he proposes and what the future holds. I know about the discussions that he is having in my constituency and about his opt-out suggestions to groups from the schools in my area. We know what it is all about and I shall be glad to hear the Minister deny that he has been having such discussions. We should like to be told whether he has been having them and whether he is encouraging groups in my constituency to think about opting out. He should be very careful about what he says because I may know all about his discussions.

The Minister made an appalling attack on the people who produced the analysis of the views of the randomly selected 435 people who answered the questionnaire, and he assumed that the figures were wrong. However, the facts are that 78 per cent. said no to an overall parental majority and 87 per cent. said that additional teachers should be elected. That was later corroborated in the careful analysis of control of expenditure. Eighty-three per cent. said no to total control of expenditure by the board, but 66 per cent. said there should be consultation on expenditure.

The figures ring true. People want consultation, not domination, which is what the Bill is about. The Government seek to create groups that will allow this peculiar, reactionary Minister and the Secretary of State to reverse the democratic history of Scottish education. This is especially dangerous because it involves a small group of people. In all our social and political life there are groups of activists. We are in politics because we were among the activists. Of course, we are not completely representative of the mass of people, who may be active in other directions.

Any group of people who involve themselves in a social, political, cultural or educational organisation do so because they are keen. Parents who involve themselves in education do so because they are keen on their children. By definition, those who involve themselves most are those who are interested in their children's future. But that is not necessarily the sort of people with which to constitute a board. A board should be able to take overall decisions for all the pupils in school, which a group of parents would tend not to be able to do. They are certainly motivated. In four or five years' time my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) may well be interested in the motivation of parents with children going to school. We should all congratulate him on a recent happy event. I hope that, as I would wish the boards to be, it was the result of partnership and consultation.

There is a group of people who, by definition, are concerned with all the children—especially with those who are not doing so well. Others may be concerned with high-flying children, but teachers have to be concerned with all pupils, above all those who require special care. Majority decisions of the council should be taken by teachers. If there is to be an imbalance of numbers, it should be in favour of the teachers, not activist parents. Parents and teachers say—almost everyone says—that this is so, but the Minister and the Secretary of State disagree. Yet the case is manifest.

The purpose of the Bill is not to extend parental involvement but to create a parental hegemony. Nothing could be more dangerous. The Government's proposition should be taken back; the Minister should listen to the voices of parents and teachers. He should establish genuine involvement. I am entirely in favour of boards being involved, but it is dangerous to give a majority of parents powers over expenditure and all other matters. We know about the sort of people the Minister is concerned with. We reject the motivation behind this Bill, which is why we shall vote against it. I ask the Minister to reconsider while there is still time and to do something about this matter in another place.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): One thing has been obvious in this short debate. This is the last overspill of the bitterness that the Minister and his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State feel towards teachers for the duffing-up that the latter gave them last year. That explains the Minister's failure to respond on this issue. The Bill is an attempt to remove some of the powers that the Minister alleged teachers have. Whole sections of the Bill reflect the Government's bitterness towards the teachers because of the way in which the teachers exposed the Government's failure to support education in Scotland.

7.45 pm

The original Forsyth proposals have had to be amended because the people to whom they were directed did not want the powers. The Minister has boasted of how he has listened to the parents when making his changes. But whenever parents are asked about this matter, in television studios, in opinion polls, in writing or through the schools council system, they have made it clear that they want changes to be made to this part of the school board proposals. The Minister and his colleagues have set their minds against those views, however. As I said, that is due to the Government's bitterness.

As other hon. Members have said, teachers are the one group in society to whom the Minister and his colleagues have failed to accord professional respect. They imagine that teachers are responsible for everything that they think is wrong with Scottish education. It is extraordinary, for instance, that in 1988 teachers with pupils at a school

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

cannot stand for election to that school's board. It is remarkable, too, that if those same teachers happen to be parents of children at a school they are classed with two other groups in society—lunatics and criminals. That is another example of the Minister's bitterness. At this late stage, with the overwhelming mass of opinion in Scotland against the Bill, the Minister is still not prepared to move, even when his hon. Friends suggest that he should make some concessions.

The Minister still has his hang-up: a determination to discipline the teachers. He tried to give parents the right to discipline them by giving them the responsibility for sacking teachers—and the parents did not want that. Now Forsyth's final revenge and failure to acknowledge the professionalism of Scottish teachers is to deny them even half the rights that parents enjoy on school boards——

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Perhaps it will enable the hon. Gentleman not to develop his argument if I point out that teachers are not eligible now to stand as candidates in regional elections. So the suggestion that we are putting them in the same position as prisoners and lunatics, as he emotively put it——

Mr. Ross: Criminals.

Mr. Forsyth: Prisoners would be a better word than criminals, since not all criminals are in prison.

Secondly, teachers are unable to stand for election as parents only in schools in which they teach. They can stand as parents in schools other than those in which they teach, so the limitation on their ability to stand as candidates is considerably less than their ability to stand and find themselves elected to the education committees of regional authorities.

Mr. Ross: That does not change what I said. The proposals do not allow teachers who have pupils at a school to stand for election to that school's board. In that sense the Minister puts them in the same category as criminals, and if he knows of criminals who are not in gaol I suggest that he immediately gets in touch with his colleagues in the Government and advises them of where they are. They are not in the Chamber right now, certainly, as the Minister is almost alone on the Conservative Benches. The Minister should say where these criminals are so that they can be taken into custody. We cannot have criminals loose in the land.

The Minister has emphasised my point by his determination to extract a penal reform from the teaching profession, which he does not like. I do not know why he does not like it—perhaps he had a bad experience as a youngster. He certainly seems to have had some bad experiences and he seems to blame the teaching profession.

To bring the matter back into perspective, the Minister does not and cannot deny my point that he is trying to pursue unfair and discriminatory proposals. He must know that public opinion in Scotland is overwhelmingly against him. If he really wants to claim, as he has throughout the debate, that he listens to those to whom he seeks to give more representation—the parents—he should listen to the parents on this issue and accept our amendments. Only then will we believe that he is not trying to extract what I began my speech by describing as "the Forsyth revenge" for the duffing-up that the teachers gave him last year.

Mrs. Fyfe: In the hope and belief that even this Minister can sometimes listen to reason—[HON. MEMBERS: "Please be sensible, Maria."] Well, I say that because earlier the Minister proposed that when there were adult pupils at a school, their parents—"the grannies" as he put it in Committee—should have a vote. However, he then thought better of it and I believe that the Government dropped that proposal. That is why I say that even this Minister can sometimes listen to common sense.

I do not want to make a speech, but simply to pose some questions. I hope that the Minister will answer at least some of them because they arise from our discussion this evening. What makes the Government so sure that enough parents will seek election and will keep on doing so? Are the Government not worried about the outcome for schools if, as is predicted by some of my hon. Friends, the whole thing eventually collapses because of lack of interest? What will the Government do if our warning proves correct and if, because of lack of interest, some nutcase groups attempt to take over? As has been suggested, that will rarely happen because in most cases the common sense of parents will prevail. Nevertheless, it is a danger that we must be aware of and it could happen. What are the Government proposing to do about it?

What about the fact that parents will be allowed to comment on matters such as curriculum and teaching methods, and expect answers from the head teacher? Does that not open up the danger that some highly influential parents—we talked earlier about the possibility of lawyers, doctors, university professors and army officers having an undue amount of influence on such decisions—may throw their weight about in a way in which other parents might not be able to cope with?

Why is there absolutely nothing in the proposals about ensuring that the education of girl pupils is given much more equal weight than it has ever been? We still face prejudice over the education of girls, who are refused access to certain courses, or discouraged from taking them. The proposals blindly ignore that area of educational provision.

In conclusion, why does the Minister think that he has a right to impose this legislation on people who clearly do not want it?

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Several points arise from the debate, but I should like to begin by welcoming the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) to the Opposition Front Bench.

The issues raised fall into four categories. The first relates to the position of teachers who are also parents in some schools. This point was raised by the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross). As I explained to him in my intervention, being able to stand for election for school boards and have a say in the running of schools is a considerable step forward on the current position because at present teachers are unable to stand for election to the education authority. I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman, and other hon. Members, would have recognised that.

The thrust of these amendments is to take the matter further and to allow staff in particular schools to stand as parent representatives or as teacher representatives. For

the reasons that I have spelled out in some detail in Committee, I do not regard that as desirable because it could result in the school boards becoming homogeneous.

The second issue raised was parental majorities and why the Government are insistent on having a parental majority——

Mr. Buchan: I know why.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman says that he knows why and I am sure that he is better qualified to know why than are most Opposition Members. It is because the Government are committed to parental involvement in schools and because we see the boards as providing parents with a forum and platform in the education system so that they can express their view. We recognise the argument for partnership, which is why there are places on the boards for representatives from the community and the teaching staff to be elected or co-opted. However, the boards will be the parents' forum in education.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) considered partnership, but he should take account of the broader picture. Through staff meetings, meetings which take place in school and through their professional bodies, teachers have the ability to make their input. Parents have no such ability and that is why we are providing that they should form the majority. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) argued, in doing so we have the wholehearted support and enthusiasm of the Scottish Parent Teacher Council, which was dismissed by Opposition Members. Instead, they mentioned partisan groups such as Education Alert and others which have consistently opposed the proposals and which have produced——

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman later.

Those groups have produced a poll which, to say the least, is highly questionable. The hon. Member for Gordon endorsed that poll, in contrast to the MORI and System 3 polls.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: That is the second time that the Minister has used the word "partisan". I should like him to explain what he means. Does he mean "partisan" because those groups do not agree with him or is he implying a sinister motive? Those groups represent parents who have a genuine interest and who have sought other people's views. Will he not acknowledge that?

Mr. Forsyth: It is a self-appointed group of people who have set themselves up to put forward their perfectly legitimate point of view, opposing the school boards. What I criticise is the hon. Gentleman asking me to be influenced by questionnaires that purport to have a random sample but which, on examination of their own data, show that 17 per cent. of the parents are also teachers——

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: No, I shall not give way. I am answering the point raised by the hon. Member for Gordon—*[Interruption.]* Such data do not prove that the survey was representative. If the hon. Member for Gordon thinks that 17 per cent. of parents are teachers, he knows even less about education than I had imagined. The questions in the questionnaire were poorly designed. They included:

"Do you think additional staff should be elected?"

and

"A Board may apply to the Local Authority for, and be granted, extra powers without consulting or advising the school's other parents or teachers. Do you agree?"

Those are hardly neutral questions.

By way of information I should add that under the provisions of clause 12 the statement made in the latter question is completely unfounded and untrue, as the hon. Member for Gordon will know from his experience in Committee. Therefore, I am entitled to make that point.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The third point raised related to community members for whom the hon. Member for Dumbarton sought to argue. We touched briefly on this issue in Committee when the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) argued that we were removing the right of Churches to be represented on school boards. There is provision, through co-option, for that to be realised. I am puzzled by the idea of community members because the electorate would not consist of the community. It would consist of parents and staff. That hardly seems to be an extension of democracy given that the same people, the parents and staff, will have the opportunity to elect representatives in their own way. The community can be adequately and more effectively represented through co-option as a result.

8 pm

It was also argued that we should define the structure of the school boards on the face of the Bill. I rejected that in Committee because it would bring in inflexibility. It would not enable us to consider questions like those my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) asked me to address, involving the numbers of teachers, or to do that in the light of experience. I can tell my right hon. Friend that we shall consult about the regulation.

I noted the point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside made in Committee about providing additional teacher representation, particularly for schools of between 500 and 1,000 pupils. I have not forgotten that and I have been heavily influenced by his argument. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not give a commitment tonight, because I would prefer to go through the consultation process prior to the regulations before I reach a conclusion. I do not want to make up my mind before I have heard what the teachers have to say.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: While thanking my hon. Friend for his comments, I must state that I was not referring simply to schools with between 500 and 1,000 pupils. He may have slipped up in that. I am concerned about schools with pupil numbers ranging from one to 500. We have one-pupil schools in some areas. It is important that there should be more than one teacher representative in some of the smaller schools.

Mr. Forsyth: That is a separate point. I hope that my right hon. Friend will bear in mind that the question of additional teacher representation would not apply in single-teacher schools. In schools with two teachers, the

[Mr. Forsyth]

second teacher would almost automatically be on the board. Three-teacher schools would have 90 or more pupils and that must be borne in mind.

The question of unrepresentative groups was also raised during the debate. We took on board the anxieties about those groups during the consultation process and in that connection the Bill contains a number of provisions, including the election of board members every two years and the requirement of the endorsement of the majority of parents voting in ballots where additional powers are sought. I believe that the ability for unrepresentative groups to take control has been diminished substantially. I could not help but note that the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) adopted a position in conflict with a number of his colleagues when he argued that there would be no interest, while others argued that there would be great interest from unrepresentative groups.

I believe that the balance is right and I ask the House to reject the amendment.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 195, Noes 259.

Division No. 371] **[8.03 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Maria Fyfe and
Mr. John McAllion.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher

Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clark, Sir W. (Croydon S)
Clarke, Rt Hon K. (Rushcliffe)
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre F'rest)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. (Stamf'd & Spald'g)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatf'd)
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony (CambsSW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon (Bury St E')
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth N)
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie (Epsom)
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. (B'ham H'll Gr')
Hargreaves, Ken (Hyndburn)
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen (Wolv' NE)
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas (Gr'th'm)
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'd-on-A)
Howarth, G. (Cannock & B'wd)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, David (Wirral W)
Hunt, John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger (B'ham N'thfield)
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby North)
Knight, Dame Jill (Edgbaston)
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian (Havant)
Lloyd, Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew (E Berkshire)
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. (New Forest)
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M (N'hampton S)
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris (Bath)
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Powell, William (Corby)
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn (Conwy)
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shelton, William (Streatham)
Shephard, Mrs G. (Norfolk SW)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim (Dorset W)
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan (Eastwood)
Stewart, Andy (Sherwood)
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M (Solihull)
Thompson, D. (Calder Valley)
Thorne, Neil
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (T'side North)
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

8.15 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I beg to move amendment No. 62, in page 2, line 10, at end insert

', and—

(i) an observer elected by the staff and students of the community education service in those schools which provide community education services; and

(ii) an observer elected by all registered mature students in secondary schools in which at least 5 per cent. of pupils are mature students undertaking Scottish Certificate of Education presentation courses.'

I direct the attention of right hon. and hon. Members to clause 14(1), which makes direct reference to a board's powers over the use of premises outside school hours, and which encourages their use by members of the community in which the school is situated. There is a glaring gap in the legislation because it does not show how a board can operate that recommendation and there is no mechanism in the Bill to establish the links between the community and the board.

The amendment attempts to fill that gap, and is especially important for those areas where community education centres are the schools themselves. I am thinking of rural areas, such as my constituency, where many of the primary and secondary schools are the community education centres. Some of the conurbations in Scotland have separate community education centres, as the hon. Members for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) and for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) —parts of whose constituencies I used to represent—are aware. In rural constituencies the schools are those centres, although I believe that in the Lothian region certain community schools are seen as the flagships for the whole concept. I am thinking especially of Wester Hailes, Dean's school and Livingston, where the schools and the community education centres are one and the same.

There are different methods of management and administration within the various areas. For example, in the Grampian region the head teacher controls the day use of the school and the senior community education worker controls the evening use. In Lothian the norm is for a single head establishment. I do not want to join in the debate about which system is better or more favourable

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

because that is not the issue at stake. However, there is a genuine concern in schools in my area about how the school boards will link with community education. The Grampian head teachers' association has been discussing the matter and various bodies have suggested different ways in which that aim could be achieved, but no firm conclusion has been reached. Currently, the college councils in the Grampian region ensure that the community education sector has full representation.

One suggestion is that there should be a sub-committee of the board—a sort of users' committee—that would negotiate the allocation of space. Perhaps one third of the board should be co-opted members, although that would not be effective in small schools such as Speyside high school in Aberlour in my area, where the school board will probably comprise no more than seven members. The sub-committee would, therefore, be very small and it would place an undue burden on members of the school board who were asked to become involved in a users' committee.

The first part of the amendment seeks to give the community education service direct access to the deliberations of the board. The Minister will have noticed that I am asking only for observer status and not for voting rights. The suggestion was that it could participate in the discussions and, perhaps, iron out problems, thereby saving later confrontation. I am seeking a straightforward involvement for people who would be democratically elected. It is not a major amendment, but I hope that the Minister will treat it seriously.

The second part of the amendment deals with particular situations in some of our schools. Adults are increasingly being encouraged to return to school as full-time pupils, particularly to study for Scottish Certificate of Education presentation work at O-grade and highers. When we discuss school education, there is the danger of thinking that pupils are always children. In many areas there is an increasing number of adult pupils who return to school. We should welcome that trend because it reflects the idea that education is a life-long process. It has benefited many people because they have gained a great deal of confidence and self-respect in later life by managing to achieve success in examinations.

I have spoken to head teachers in my constituency where that practice is well advanced, particularly at Speyside high school, and it seems that the schools have benefited greatly from the involvement of adult pupils. It has been suggested that young pupils who might not find a subject riveting and dynamic suddenly find that when adults are excited about that subject their enthusiasm spills into the classroom and the youngsters benefit from having older people working with them.

Adult education is also important at a time of high employment. No doubt the Minister will tell us that unemployment is declining in Scotland, but it is declining gradually and there is still a high and unacceptable level of unemployment in Grampian. Education is obviously beneficial to adults because it can help them to start a new career. At a time of declining school rolls it is beneficial for the schools concerned to have an increasing number of adult students participating in their daily life.

The second section of the amendment would provide an opportunity for those people to become involved in the school board. I have said that their observer status would exist only when at least 5 per cent. of the pupils registered in the school are mature students undertaking SCE presentation courses. I do not think that any school in Scotland falls into that category, but the provision would put down a marker within the Bill. I hope that the Minister will support the amendment or give us his opinion of the community education service and the involvement of mature students who return to school.

Mr. Norman Hogg: I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) said, and on behalf of the official Opposition, I strongly support her moderate and reasonable proposals. I hope that the Minister will respond positively to what she said, because her amendment deals with something for which the Bill does not provide. It is an oversight by us all that we have not dealt with mature students in secondary schools.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I am happy to support the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) particularly in regard to mature students in secondary schools. The intake of mature students was pioneered at the north end of Glasgow at St. Augustine's secondary school. It was very successful and those who were involved in it found that the presence of adults in classrooms which normally contained pupils of 14 and 15 years old had a settling effect on the pupils. That intake of adult students was taken up in one of the adjoining comprehensive schools, Colston secondary school. It is a pity that that school is under the hammer and is about to be closed. I do not wish to go into that argument as I have been through it before. The Minister saved Paisley grammar school, and it is a pity he could not save Colston secondary school which has an excellent reputation for mature students.

In constituencies such as mine, where unemployment is very high, some unemployed people feel that their only chance of getting out of the trap is to go back to school.

It says a lot for men and women who have brought up their families and who feel that they have missed out on educational opportunities, or did not have those opportunities, that they want to get back into the classroom. Like the hon. Lady, I feel that it would do no harm if those pupils had a say in the running of the school. After all, if they undertake a commitment to a course which sometimes takes two or three years, they have every right to know what is going on in that school.

My only criticism of the amendment, and I mean it as a constructive criticism, is that instead of being observers the pupils should have full voting rights. If we ask people to participate in the democratic process and to give up their time voluntarily, it would be a bit galling for them to have to sit through meetings without the full powers that everyone else had.

The community education service does an excellent job throughout the country, and increasing numbers of people are turning to it. I have often said to officials in the community education services that they are so enthusiastic that sometimes they overlook what other educational departments are doing. At least amendment No. 62 is one way of making sure that one hand knows what the other is doing. I am certainly happy to support the amendment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I begin by saying how much I agreed with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) until he urged me to support the amendment.

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However, I can reassure the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) that their intentions in supporting the amendment can be realised through the Bill.

It is obvious from the amendment that the hon. Lady had some difficulty in defining precisely with whom she was concerned. I have given that some consideration. If she looks at clause 6(3) and (10), she will see that a school board will have powers to establish committees—with up to one third of their membership being people who are not members of the board—which can look at particular areas of concern. That mechanism would go a long way to meeting the circumstances to which the hon. Lady rightly draws the attention of the House. Clause 6(10) provides that boards will be able to invite people to meetings as they consider appropriate, so there would be an opportunity for individual boards to follow the hon. Lady's recommendations.

The hon. Member for Springburn thought that people should have full voting rights and should be able to participate in all the deliberations of the committee. The Bill provides for co-option which could bring in representatives of adult learners or other people within the categories which the hon. Lady had in mind. Of course they would enjoy full membership and full voting rights on the board.

Therefore, I ask the hon. Lady to withdraw the amendment and to take comfort from the fact that the Government endorse the thinking behind the amendment, but we believe that the amendment is not necessary, and, because of the difficulties of definition, it could be more restrictive than the provisions in the Bill.

8.30 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: I thank the hon. Members for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) and for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) for their support of the amendment. The hon. Member for Springburn felt that there should automatically be voting rights. I was trying to guard against a situation in which a mature student could also be eligible as a parent member of the board. That is why I chose observer status. I was conscious of the fact that an additional restriction might be placed on choosing as observers people who were mature students because they had already sought the right to represent through their parental involvement.

I am disappointed that the Minister cannot support the amendment, although he supported its sentiments. It is a probing amendment to establish the Government's thinking. There was little reference in Committee to the community education service and the role of mature students—two aspects that needed airing during the debate.

I mentioned clause 6(3) on committees because some of my constituents believe that this measure will not serve the purposes of small schools. Speyside high school has a population of less than 500 and a committee would not necessarily be as effective as we would hope. The Minister has assured us that the Government are keen to have these sections of the community involved. I shall ensure that his comments are drawn to the attention of people in my constituency and elsewhere and will ask them carefully to note his comments. I hope that people will become involved as mature students or as members of the community education service. Given those sentiments, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Norman Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 43, in page 3, line 22, leave out

'instructors and auxiliaries involved in education'

and insert 'and support staff'.

The amendment is designed to do two things. The first is to improve the Bill's wording. The expression

"instructors and auxiliaries involved in education"

is a clumsy way of describing those persons who are not teachers in the accepted and statutory sense of the word, but who work in the classroom. Secondly, there are others involved in education in a school who are neither teachers, instructors nor auxiliaries but are very much involved in education, in the sense that they work in support of the professional staff and, therefore, have a place in the arrangements for membership of a board. I do not understand why they should be left out.

We discussed this matter at some length in Committee and I had hoped that we had persuaded the Minister that there was a clear case for doing something for janitors. I seem to recall that the debate turned on the question of janitors. I could say that amendment No. 43 is all about "janny power", which will give the *Hansard* writer something to think about. School staff who are not primarily education staff but without whom a school would not operate as an educational institution should have a proper place in the scheme of things. In many schools the school janitor is an extremely influential person. I do not mind saying that, in my experience as a Member of Parliament, the janitors at some schools in my constituency are more important to me than the head teachers because the janitors open schools on Friday nights when I turn up to meet my adoring constituents.

The purpose of the amendment is to ensure that all staff in a school are treated as equals in respect of the school board. This would create a good atmosphere among those who work in the school and leave the staff free to choose whomsoever they wish to represent their interests on the school board. Everyone would be part of a team designed to promote the education of children. That is why the amendment is right. I hope that the Minister will feel able to accept it.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I support the amendment. For some time, I was a full-time trade union officer representing school staff, including janitors—and I know the excellent work that they do. Schools would not be able to function properly without those staff whom, for want of a better expression, we would call manual workers.

There is some snobbery in the Minister's thinking——

Mr. Michael Forsyth *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Martin: The Minister shakes his head. I hope that he will prove me wrong. From time to time, he has made utterances about industrial relations, especially in the public services, and he has asked why we should have "them and us" attitudes. This legislation clearly sets out a "them and us" attitude. Why should the only staff on the boards be those with academic qualifications and school auxiliaries?

Anyone who has been connected with a school knows that the back-up staff are important—cleaners, janitors,

[Mr. Martin]

cooks and those who serve meals. In large schools there are maintenance staff, swimming pool attendants and green-keepers who look after the playing fields. If the school board can make decisions without those staff having an input, we could land in all sorts of problems. A board could decide the times at which school started, lunch was eaten and school closed. If such decisions are made without manual workers having an input, there could be disruption and those people might feel left out. If a school is to work properly, every member of staff must be involved. My hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) is right in moving the amendment, which will give manual workers a feeling that they have a say in the running of their school.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no snobbery involved; on the contrary, the discussion in Committee revealed that there was some common ground. The difficulties arise in terms of the practicality of achieving our purpose.

The amendment is not entirely satisfactory. The term "support staff" does not get us much further than the definition in the Bill, with which I freely acknowledge I am not 100 per cent. satisfied. I said in Committee that I would consider it. I must confess that we have failed to come up with an alternative. Perhaps unusually, I ask the Opposition to join us in the quest for a suitable term. I am prepared to consider the tabling of an amendment in another place if we can find the right formula.

I would point out to the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) that it is perfectly possible for educational staff to serve on boards and I recognise that they will have an important contribution to make. I should be the last person to argue that the janitor does not have a central role to play—especially when I consider the size of my majority in my constituency. Janitors are extremely important and influential people and we want them to play a part. That can be done under clauses 6(3) and 6(10). I do not see that it is necessary to extend the definition to include all staff. The difficulty does not arise in larger schools, but in small schools the staff as a whole could conceivably outnumber the teachers and there may be only one place for a teacher representative. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) does not seem to have addressed himself to that consideration.

I accept that the definition in the Bill is difficult. As the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth said, in Committee we had a long discussion about janitors and I concluded that the janitor who occasionally coached a football team was involved in education. I cannot accept the amendment because the words "support staff"——

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I accept that in small schools —especially those in the Highlands—there may be only one teacher and many more back-up staff. However, the Minister should acknowledge that some comprehensive schools in thickly populated areas employ more manual workers than some factories. That should be borne in mind.

Mr. Forsyth: It should indeed. The hon. Gentleman makes his point, but such schools will have larger school boards and there will be more opportunity for co-option. My point is that the rural areas—not just the Highlands —have schools at which more support staff would be eligible for election to the single teacher's place than teachers. Therein lies our difficulty.

The term "support staff" seems to me at least as vague and possibly more so than the phrase "anxiliaries involved in education" and there would probably be as many problems with interpretation. Therefore, I would ask the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth to withdraw the amendment. If he has any further thoughts—indeed, if any hon. Member or anyone outside has further thoughts —we shall be delighted to consider the matter further.

Mr. Norman Hogg: I have often listened to Ministers thanking hon. Members for their comments and saying, "I shall write to the hon. Gentleman." On this occasion, the reverse applies. I shall think about the matter further and write to the Minister. In the meantime, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 3

TERMS OF OFFICE ETC.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I beg to move amendment No. 44, in page 3, line 43, after 'held', insert

', subject to subsection (6A) below,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 45.

Mr. Forsyth: The amendments arise from discussions in Committee in which I allowed my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) to persuade me that casual vacancies should be filled within three months. The hon. Member for Cumbernald and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) will recall that I agreed in principle that it was anomalous that under the Bill as drafted the board could, in theory, lose its parental majority for nearly two years. We accepted that the arguments of tidiness that had led to the original requirement for casual vacancies to be filled at the time of the biennial elections were not strong enough to withstand the argument of principle. Unfortunately, my generosity had unforeseen consequences.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The Minister is repenting.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman does me a disservice. I am not repenting. I am merely having to propose the amendments to undo the difficulty that was created. People elected at by-elections serve out the term of office of the member whom they replaced. As the Bill stands, it is possible for a person to be elected at a by-election only to face a term election in a matter of days. If it was simply a case of trading one anomaly for a lesser anomaly, it might not be so bad. The difficulty is that the prospect of only a short period of service before a term election might dissuade candidates from standing. If a vacancy was for a parental seat, that might trigger the sequence of events that leads to the disestablishment of the board under clause 20.

We therefore tabled the amendments, which together provide that someone elected at a by-election will be sure of serving at least three months and possibly six. The spirit of the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside is secure, but the difficulties are circumvented.

8.45 pm

Mr. Norman Hogg: I am in a difficult position. The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) presented himself in Committee as something of an unofficial Opposition. In his absence, and on his behalf, we accept the amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 45, in page 3, line 44, at end insert—

'(6A) Where a vacancy for a parent or staff member arises because of the resignation or removal from office of a member whose term of office is to expire within 6 months from the date of such resignation or removal from office no by-election need be held under subsection (6) above.'.—*[Mr. Michael Forsyth]*

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 3, line 47, at end insert

'provided that their remaining term of office is less than two years.'

I shall not detain the House unduly, but some concern has been expressed on this matter. Under the Bill as drafted, a member of the board, whether elected or co-opted, can serve for four years. The amendment seeks to limit the term that he can serve after he has ceased to be eligible to two years. It is a compromise. It allows continuity but acknowledges a difficulty. In certain circumstances a member could be co-opted to the board when he had a legitimate interest—for example, he might have a child at the school. After that eligibility had been removed, however, he could continue to have substantial influence, especially on a small school board, for a significant number of years.

The Minister may say that when people elect a person to the board they should be aware of the likely change in that person's eligibility or that they should elect the person because they feel that he has something to contribute over and above the fact that he has a child at the school. However, the Minister should accept that the period of a parent's direct involvement and interest in a school is very much confined to the period for which he has a child at that school. Suppose that somebody begins to serve on a school board in his child's last term at school. Four years later, he may still be voting on issues affecting the school even though he has long ceased to have any direct concern about the outcome. The Minister should recognise that parents fear that on small boards that could give someone with no real responsibility to accept the consequences of the board's decisions a substantial degree of influence for a substantial period after he has ceased to have a direct interest.

The amendment is self-explantatory. I hope that the Minister will accept the legitimate concern about the provisions as drafted. I hope that he will accept the amendment and, if he does not, I hope that he will address himself to the problem. Four years is a long term to serve when one no longer has children at the school and people could certainly serve for four years under the Bill as drafted.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am convinced by the hon. Gentleman's eloquence and I am happy to accept the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4

QUALIFICATION AND DISQUALIFICATION OF MEMBERS

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I beg to move amendment No. 46, in page 4, line 15, leave out

'A minor may be a'

and insert

'A young person may be a co-opted'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 17, in page 4, line 15, leave out 'A minor' and insert 'a pupil of the school aged at least 16 years'.

Government amendment No. 47.

Mr. Forsyth: I recall the Committee discussion on this matter. The question revolved around whether it was appropriate for young people below the age of 16 to be co-opted on to school boards. In an effort to be as flexible as possible and to allow for as much local democracy as possible, the Bill as originally drafted would allow for minors to be co-opted.

The effect of Government amendment No. 46 is to substitute the words "young person" for "minor". In the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 a young person is defined as somebody between the ages of 16 and 18. The amendment would make it plain that these pupil members of a board, if any, would be co-opted. I think that the amendment meets the views of the Standing Committee and I hope that it will be accepted.

Mr. Norman Hogg: I am pleased that the Government have tabled these amendments. We shall not press amendment No. 17, as the objective which we set ourselves in that amendment has clearly been met.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 47, in page 4, line 15, leave out 'but other' and insert—

'(2A) Subject to subsection (2) above,'.—*[Mr. Michael Forsyth.]*

Clause 5

EDUCATION AUTHORITY OBSERVERS AND HEADTEACHER

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I beg to move amendment No. 48, in page 4, leave out lines 20 to 22 and insert—

'(1) The Director of Education or an officer of his education authority nominated by him for the purpose shall be entitled to attend and to speak at any meeting of a School Board in the authority's area, but shall not be a member of the Board.

(1A) The regional councillor for the electoral division in which a school is situated shall be entitled to attend and to speak at any meeting of any School Board for the time being established for that school, but he shall not be a member of the Board.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 65, in page 4, line 20, leave out 'may' and insert 'shall'.

No. 1, in page 4, line 38, at end insert—

'(6) A School Board may invite the regional councillor for the School's catchment area to attend the Board and advise on issues that affect the local community.'.

Government amendments Nos. 50 and 53.

Mr. Forsyth: We had a lengthy discussion in Committee about the rights of education authorities and local regional

[Mr. Forsyth]

councillors. There was wide support for the principle that a local councillor should have the right of attendance. I undertook to look at the question.

Having given considerable thought to the matter, I commend to the House Government amendment No. 48. It will provide for a regional councillor in whose district the school is situated to have the right to attend meetings of the school board. That would be in addition to the right of the education authority to be represented by one of its officials. Our amendment makes it clear that for the parties concerned the right of attendance includes the right to speak at meetings. I think that that is what the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) was trying to achieve, albeit that his amendment would have given to boards a right that is already available to them under the Bill—to invite anybody whom they choose to attend and speak at meetings.

The Opposition want the education authority to have the right to nominate either an elected member or an official. We included in the Bill a right of representation for education authorities because it is proper that they should have general oversight of a boards' activities. That would normally be a matter for officials who would report to an authority's elected members, as they do on all its other business. However, we recognise the value of enabling elected members of a local authority to scrutinise the work of the boards. Our amendment would allow that to be done by the local councillor for the area in which the school is located. He or she will be best placed to determine how closely the work of the board corresponds with the wishes of the local electorate. In my view, this removes any need to provide for a separate right for the authority to nominate an elected member to attend.

Mr. Dewar: This is very much a guest appearance. I was not a member of the Committee. I have not therefore been involved in the detailed arguments on this legislation. However, I am glad to have this opportunity to say a few words about the amendment. It gives me an opportunity to thank my colleagues who served on the Committee. They seem to have stuck to their arguments very effectively and with considerable ability. I single out nobody in particular. It seems to have been an extremely good all-round performance. Whether that is the reason I cannot say, but I understand that the Minister has been in a slightly more flexible mood than on other occasions.

I cannot welcome the amendment uncritically. There is evidence of movement, but from our point of view it is a question of giving with one hand and taking with the other. The amendment would allow the local regional councillor in whose electoral district the school is situated to attend and speak at board meetings, although not to vote at them. I understand that that was granted under pressure from both sides of the Committee. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and to the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) as well as to the SLD Members who pressed the same point. That is an improvement, and we welcome it. However, it is balanced by the restriction that is now imposed on education authority representation.

Under clause 5 of the Bill, the education authority has an untrammelled right of representation. Representation could be by an elected member or by an official. According to the amendment, the position of the local councillor has been greatly improved but education authority representation must be by an official, not by an elected member. That is unfortunate. I am not entirely sure why the Minister has taken that line.

It is difficult to follow the arguments that lie behind the printed word. However, in Committee the Minister said:

"I accept the point made by my right honourable Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside that there is a difference of approach between elected members and officials. However, that does not justify providing two places on each board for authority representatives . . . I again agree with my right honourable Friend, who said that it is not practical in rural areas for regional councillors to attend every board meeting."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee,* 17 May 1988; c. 353.]

That was the general drift of the argument. It was not specific. However, the Minister recognised the importance of councillors taking part in the discussions. He made it abundantly clear that he did not want there to be a proliferation of observers with the right to speak. The only dispute is whether one of the representatives should always be an education authority official or whether it could be an elected member of an authority. I do not understand the Minister's objection because such a change would not increase the number of bodies, if that is the criterion or test that will apply.

It is not satisfactory to say that the presence of the local councillor buttons up the argument and satisfies all points of view. The local councillor will no doubt do an honourable job. That he has a specific job to do is recognised by the Minister in introducing the amendment. However, the local councillor may not be a member of the education committee and therefore might not be an effective channel of communication. He also may not be a member of the majority group and could find it difficult to represent the education authority's policy on the school board as it should be represented.

While we will, of course, take what we can get and welcome the change in favour of local councillors, it is a distinctly retrograde step to limit the education authority's right in a way that I regard as being pointless. I see no real argument why a councillor should not serve, if the education authority thinks it appropriate. There is a strong argument for saying that as the councillors are the policy-making element, they are particularly appropriate.

9 pm

We are dealing with something that bears on the relationship between the education authority and the individual school, and it has become an increasingly sensitive area as time has passed. I know that my hon. Friends are particularly interested in the recent controversy in the Paisley area. I will say a few words about it and ask the Minister to comment. I appreciate that in clause 15(2)(e) "the function of discontinuing" is not the direct responsibility of a school board but clearly it will be involved in any such argument. Presumably the passage of information will be of particular importance.

In Paisley, as the Minister will know, there has been controversy about the future of the grammar school. Recently, there has been a judgment in respect of Stanely Green high school from Lord Dervaird. I am sure that the Minister will agree that fashion changes and that attitudes to school closures change with it. I am delighted to welcome the Secretary of State for Scotland to our deliberations.

I have before me a speech made by Mr. John MacKay, who was the Under-Secretary's immediate predecessor. He

was speaking at the opening of a primary school at Romanno Bridge on 30 March 1987. At that time he was lamenting that,

"As a result of parental opposition elsewhere the regional council has decided not to proceed with its policy of providing primary education in schools of at least three-teacher size wherever it is practicable to do so."

Apparently, it was a sad matter for comment that parental opposition to the closure of primary schools had forced the regional council to abandon that estimable Conservative principle. Mr. MacKay continued:

"Parents are bound to be concerned whenever the question of the amalgamation or closure of primary schools is raised, but if all parents were as enlightened as those in this area, the job of the regional council would have been much easier. It cannot be denied that the retention of a large number of very small primary schools is both educationally disadvantageous and wasteful of resources."

Those were the views of the Minister for education just months before the last general election. It is interesting to contrast them with some of the spirited rhetoric now emerging from Government sources about the paramount importance of parental opinion, in generally calling down abuse on those who are seen as being unsound on that basic premise.

On 4 April 1985, there was an excellent Adjournment debate raised by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) in which the then Minister for education, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), spoke strongly of the virtues of local democratic control. He stated:

"I believe that it was right that the Education (Scotland) Act 1981 transferred the responsibility for closure to the education authority."

Later, he said:

"I believe that the decision must be made by the local authority. It must take account of all the factors involved, and it is responsible to the electorate of the area."

Finally, there is a sentence which will give a taste of the Minister's views at that time, which are strikingly different from those which are held now. He said:

"Therefore, school closures, which occur in urban as well as in rural areas, should be considered as part of a larger canvas and should not be seen as a discriminating or random measure."—[*Official Report*, 4 April 1985; Vol. 76, c. 1364-67.]

All I can say to the Minister is that the recent change in the law which introduced the 80 per cent. criterion, and for those schools that had a roll above 80 per cent. of capacity passed the ultimate decision to the Secretary of State, might well be seen as arbitrary or, to take the words of the hon. Member for Eastwood, as discriminating and random.

I recognise the problems that exist at the moment, but my anxiety is that much uncertainty will be created, not just for the pupils and parents, but for the staff and the education authority. I recognise and undertstand that there may be an appeal against Lord Dervaird's judgment, in particular, in the case of Stanely Green high school, and so I must be circumspect in what I say. I respect that. However, I think that I am entitled briefly to remind the House of what is in the judgment and of what it did not say, but not to comment on its merits, which would clearly be unpopular.

I make no complaint about press reports because they inevitably have to be telescoped. The court handed down a complex argument on this occasion. Perhaps I can just give the minor flavour of it, but on a key point. On page 12 it says:

"That there is a difference between a duty to have regard to a general principle that children are educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents and a duty to secure that they are so educated is obvious."

I would not disagree with that distinction.

However, there is equally a difference in the present case, which I consider to be critical, between the duty to have regard to the wishes of parents for the education of their children and a duty to have regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents. The latter, but not the former, appears to me to emphasise the importance of parental wishes, and it is the latter which is the duty incumbent on the respondents. Anyone who reads the judgment and concentrates on that fine distinction will recognise that this is not a matter of absence but a matter where a fine argument has been taken in the balance by the learned judge.

One thing is clear and that is that in the interpretation of section 28 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 we cannot draw general conclusions and sweeping certainties. After all, as I am sure my hon. Friends will appreciate, section 28 goes on to say, to put it simply in the words of the judgment,

"That is not of course to say that the general principle"—in that particular section—

"(which is in itself qualified in relation to the compatibility of such education with the provision of suitable instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure) is to be treated as necessarily paramount. Other considerations may justify the education authority in departing from that general principle."

The judgment goes on to say:

"But the critical issue is whether it is enough in the first instance for a party complaining of a breach of section 28(1) to establish the facts as mentioned at least when as in the present case it is also clear that the qualifications stated internally to section 28(1) itself do not arise. After considerable hesitation I have come to the view that by establishing those factors, the petitioners have done enough to give rise to the inference that there has been a failure to fulfil the statutory obligation by the respondents in the absence of adequate explanation from them."

I have detained the House at some length because this is an important point. What emerges clearly is that, whether the judgment stands in its present state or is altered in some further legal process, it does not establish, as has in some cases been suggested, the simple fact that a case is bound to succeed if it establishes parental opposition. There is a great deal more to it than that.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Dewar: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for nodding vigorously at that point.

The impression has been given, and has lodged in some minds, that the only test that has to be established is whether there was a majority parental opposition in the threatened school. If that was the situation, it would have some remarkable consequences. Therefore, it is worth putting on the record that that is not the simple message of the judgment, although I do not disguise that, properly, the learned judge took the view that parental opinion was an important factor. But there are other factors that must be weighed. We cannot simply take that and apply it to other hypothetical situations and think that we have a principle that will stand up.

I recognise that this is a very frustrating time for parents, pupils, teachers and those, both elected members

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[Mr. Dewar]

and officials, who have to wrestle with the intractable problems of a very difficult situation of overcapacity in our schools. There is no doubt that hard decisions had to be taken. That is still common ground, I hope, between the Minister and me.

I understand that frustration can sometimes lead to the argument that if the Secretary of State is to start interfering, if parliamentary orders are to be conjured up on the basis of expediency, it is better to abdicate and leave it all to the Secretary of State. It is tempting, but I believe that it would be wrong and that that temptation should be resisted.

There has been a dash of populism, a little touch of opportunism, about the actions of the Scottish Office in this matter—*[Interruption.]* I am being criticised by some of my colleagues, but I believe that it is sometimes better to understate rather than overstate. I believe that there has been a dash of opportunism and we must continue to argue for what is right and adopt the arguments properly put by the hon. Member for Eastwood in the Adjournment debate to which I referred.

I believe that the general principle of the 1981 legislation that these decisions should properly be taken by the local education authority in consultation with local opinion must point the way forward. We shall certainly continue to watch very carefully what is happening in the troubled and difficult situation that has been produced by recent litigation and by the irresponsible legislation—the order that was so suddenly and unexpectedly sprung upon the House. Our interest is in restoring stability, in getting the right results for the children in Paisley and any other area that is at risk, and in the provision of good education. I fear that these objectives have been rather lost sight of lately and that Ministers must take a good share of the responsibility for that.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I wish to address myself to the specifics of the amendment rather than to the more wide-ranging debate that has been initiated by hon. Members on the Labour Front Bench. I support the Government amendment and am pleased that the Minister has been able to come back with an amendment which I believe has taken on board the spirit of what we discussed in Committee. I readily accept that the second part of his amendment states even more clearly than my own amendment in Committee the role of the regional councillor.

There is a difference of view between me and Labour Members because I believe that the whole basis of school boards and school councils is that it is local decision making and local involvement that matter, and that members of the local council should be involved by having the right to attend. It is exactly because—this is a point that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) used against the amendment—the local member may be of a different political persuasion from the administration that he or she should have the right to attend, because he or she has been elected by that community to represent its interests.

I would not have objected if the Minister's amendment had allowed for the education authority to send a councillor. I can quite see his objective, which is to ensure that the official authority view is properly but not overwhelmingly heard in the context of local decision making. I therefore feel that the Minister has got the balance right, and I want to pay him a tribute because I forced a Division in Committee and was criticised for so doing on the ground that the Minister would not then have an obligation to come back to the House. The Minister has come back to the House and, as far as I am concerned, has answered the debate satisfactorily. I support his amendment and am grateful to him.

Mr. Buchan: I am grateful to the Government for once for putting down this amendment so that we might discuss it. I am not very happy about it; it does not really extend the prime authority of the regional authority to any great extent in relation to the board. Having said that, I must also say that we all seem to have been in business to diminish the involvement of the regional councillor as much as we can, notably in the case that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) mentioned—the judicial judgment made in the last week or so. It would be useful if I said something about the effect that that has had upon Paisley.

In the week that the judgment was made the Secretary of State also decided to intervene directly in the entire organisation of secondary education in Paisley. The regional authority, operating under the constraints of economic measures imposed upon it by the Government reduction in rate support grant, by the threat of clawback and all the other factors which the Government have used to inhibit local authority expenditure, decided, among other things, to close schools to save money. Although the duty had been laid upon it by the Government, when it acted to save money, the Government intervened to prevent it from doing so. A year earlier Mr. MacKay was stressing the importance of closing schools to save money. The Lothian authority is being pressed to close schools and is accused of spending money uneconomically because it is keeping all its schools open. At the same time the Government are acting to prevent judicious economic measures being taken in Paisley.

9.15 pm

The authority had decided that three schools out of six should be kept open. I disagreed with that decision, being in favour of maintaining four schools. The Government have now taken action which has left Paisley with five schools. The Government have intervened to save one school without rhyme or reason, for no educational purpose other than that it was justified in the eyes of the Prime Minister because it was called Paisley grammar school.

We have the greatest pity for the Secretary of State because we know how much he resisted the decision. He was placed in a difficult position in his office because of the conspiracy between the Prime Minister and his Under-Secretary. We have great sympathy for the Secretary of State, but we would have had more regard for him had he rejected the pressure which was put on him. Nevertheless, the Secretary of State has borne himself well, considering the humiliation he has suffered. The only man who has suffered more humiliation over the last 12 months is probably Sir Robert Armstrong. At least, the Secretary of State stayed calm but he tried to curry favour with the Prime Minister and the Under-Secretary by his decision to save yet another school at the same time as the judicial process was going on.

He has asserted that Paisley grammar school was saved because of parental wishes, despite the comments he has made about extending the power of regional councillors. Parental wishes in every school in Paisley would be to save their school. Stanely Green has fought a successful legal action and has been saved by a judgment in Edinburgh. The parents there, too, wished to save the school. What did the Secretary of State say about court action? He said:

"we and the local authorities . . . will have to look very closely at the implications of that."

According to a press report, if the judgment was allowed to stand, Scottish education authorities might find it impossible to close schools when it was necessary. When a school is kept open by judicial action, the Secretary of State says that he must consider it carefully. Indeed, the Government are talking about bringing in legislation to ensure that that judgment is not followed in other areas. They may change the law, as they did a few months ago in regard to Paisley grammar school. In that case they were technically acting illegally under the Education (Scotland) Act 1946, as was shown by the Statutory Instruments Committee.

The Government now say that they will intervene to prevent a judicial judgment being made to keep a school open. On the one hand, there is a direct order from the Prime Minister for a school to remain open, and the Government immediately change the law to keep it open, yet, on the other hand, the Secretary of State is prepared to change the law in respect of a school with an equally good educational record and the support of parents and pupils. It was bad enough when the Secretary of State changed the law for one school, but his action is now made even more disgraceful because, in a similar situation, he is prepared to change the law the other way round. It is monstrous.

The fact that we are apparently merely dealing with two schools in one town in the north is no reason for not recognising that this is one of the most arbitrary interventions of any Government in the past 40 or 50 years. It is massive in its import for the parents involved and for the town. The chutzpah with which I have honoured the Secretary of State in the past has now been used to insult the people of Britain through those two arbitrary actions.

We must now consider what options are open to us. Ninety per cent. of the parents in Paisley, including the two Members of Parliament, wanted four schools left open. We now have the ludicrous situation of five schools being kept open, but not those schools chosen by the parents of Paisley or by the local authorities.

What will the Government do about that? The Secretary of State may say, "We see the error of the judgment, so let's change that judgment." He does not say, "We see the consequence and effect of our arbitrary intervention to save Paisley grammar school." There are various options, but only one solution. One option is that the Government should face up to their arbitrary behaviour and take the power to themselves. That is the suggestion of the chairman of the education authority. He says that the authority can no longer act. He said that it acted in accordance with educational and financial requirements, but the judge on the one hand and the Secretary of State on the other destroyed that action. He says that the authority does not now know how to proceed, unless the Government take over the responsibility. They had shed that responsibility so that local authorities would carry the obligation instead. As soon as it suited the Prime Minister to save one school, the Government acted the other way round.

There is another solution—to pay attention to the needs of the children, parents and local authority in Paisley so that they can plan education in Paisley. The judge was moving towards that position. He talked about the wider area and about the four schools, and he was right. He is more intelligent and perceptive than the Secretary of State about that. We must remember the hardship experienced by parents in the other schools, not just Paisley grammar and Stanely Green, but in Merksworth, for example, which faces closure as a result of the action to save the other schools.

No one knows which schools the kids will attend after the summer. There is unease everywhere. Last Friday the Stanely Green parents rejoiced about the saving of their school but today they see that the Secretary of State is suggesting possible legislation to reverse that principle and an appeal by the regional authority is pending. The authority has a right to appeal, although I am on the side of the parents and hope that the appeal does not succeed.

The solution is to look at the totality of non-denominational education. We know what has been happening. The new yuppie areas around Paisley have fixed upon one school. The parents have exercised parental choice so that that school is more than 50 per cent. occupied by children from outside. As a result, Merksworth high school, the newest and finest building, has been drained and is now threatened.

We must start by taking an educational look at the matter. A schools council should be formed to pull together the six non-denominational schools in Paisley. Each school would be represented by its headmaster, one member of staff and one parent. This council would have a remit to help to develop comprehensive secondary education in Paisley. It would have a remit to make sure that no exercise of parental choice by people who are well outside the area will prevent children from getting to their local school. It would have the duty of ensuring that no school is drained of pupils. It must apply throughout Paisley a curriculum policy by which proper parental choice can be exercised without draining any school or without enhancing one school at the expense of the children in Paisley.

The Secretary of State should take the initiative as a matter of urgency. He should meet the education authority in Strathclyde to discuss the situation. Neither side has come out of this with much credit. Perhaps I have not either because I have been arguing the case apparently with insufficient conviction. There were sectional arguments in Paisley and in Strathclyde and, above all, there was the stupidity of the Secretary of State in obeying the arbitrary order of the Prime Minister.

I hope that the Minister will respond and try to save the situation. I hope that he will look at it afresh to see what can be done to establish a proper structure for four schools in Paisley that will save the best buildings. That would mean merging Paisley grammar school and Merksworth. If he insists he may use Paisley grammar school, but he should insist that children should not be kept out of the new grammar school, Merksworth, by people from the surrounding areas where there are other secondary schools. As soon as the school is functioning the pupils could move into the new building. That would mean a terrible waste for a couple of years of a new building.

[Mr. Buchan]

The Minister should not overcut expenditure on schools. There is plenty of community support for the use of Stanely Green, Camphill and Castlehead. Above all, the Minister should discuss the matter. As I have said, parents do not know which schools children will attend. There will be appeal and counter appeal and the Secretary of State will have to decide whether he should intervene to change the law. All this is happening while the education of thousands of children is being held up. In the name of Heaven, the Minister should talk. He should meet the regional authority and come up with a solution that is in the interests of children and parents instead of the kind of nonsense that we have had from the Prime Minister and the Under-Secretary of State.

I know that the Under-Secretary of State has been having discussions with selected groups of parents in my area in order to encourage opting out. By way of the tension and disruption that he has created he hopes to set the pattern for an opting-out impetus in Scotland. I hope that the Minister does not deny doing that because I know that he has, and I can give him chapter and verse. The situation is serious, and I beg the Minister to respond to it.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I want to speak briefly about school closures without going back over the changes that were made in the Education (Scotland) Act 1981 which I opposed and thought were unfortunate and unnecessary. The merits of the judgment on the schools in Paisley have already been dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), but I want to deal with the implications of that judgment, if it is upheld.

9.30 pm

The judgment refers to section 28 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, which is a long-standing provision. I am not sure when it was originally written into the legislation, but it appeared in the Education (Scotland) Act 1962 and was introduced considerably before then.

Section 28 is a balanced provision. It takes account—rightly—of parental wishes; it also takes account of practical considerations, including the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure. In the case of secondary education courses there is an additional provision that gives the education authority power to prevent a child being entered, at the wishes of its parents, for a course from which it has no reasonable prospect of benefiting. Last week's judgment will be appealed against, but if the balance of this provision were tipped overwhelmingly in favour of parental choice, that would have disastrous consequences for educational planning of school closures, the adjustment of school boundaries in Scotland and so on. We can be fairly sure in all the arguments about school closures that it is rare for one to go ahead with the express approval of the parents concerned. There is nearly always opposition—that is perfectly understandable and, in some cases, legitimate.

There has always been a balance of interests. When the Secretary of State had to give his approval to a school closure the balance of interests was taken into account by reference to him. No school closure went ahead unless it was shown that the education authority had properly taken account of parental views, that there had been proper consultation, and so on. So a balance in assessing school closures is provided by section 28. If that balance is upset, education authorities will find it impossible to deal with pressing problems of overcapacity in schools. That cannot be right.

Whatever the merits of the Stanely Green decision, it would be a great mistake for parents or hon. Members to believe that it would lead to parental opposition to a school closure preventing a school from closing. That could not work and it would not be good for education ultimately, because it would not be good for the parents or children. I hope the Minister will reply at least briefly to this point.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South said, there is a tremendous amount of uncertainty about the legal position and the practical consequences of the decision that has been made.

Mrs. Fyfe: I want to call the House's attention to a letter that some of my hon. Friends who represent constituencies in Glasgow and I have received from the Girl Guides Association. I speak as the only member of my group who was eligible to have been a Girl Guide, but I confess that the Brownies expelled me—Brown Owl said that I would come to a bad end, and how right she was. *[Laughter.]* Seriously, the Girl Guides Association has asked if we could support the bulk of the work done by voluntary organisations by ensuring that power over the letting of schools is retained by the local authorities. I should be glad if the Minister could give that assurance, not only to the Girl Guides but to the Boy Scouts and other organisations with a similar problem. It would be a good thing if they could be assured on that point tonight.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I begin by thanking the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) for his kind remarks in welcoming this group of amendments. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) have used the opportunity of the amendments to discuss school closures in Strathclyde. I very much agree with their strictures about the interpretation of the judgment. It certainly does not mean that schools cannot be closed where there is parental opposition.

As the right hon. Member for Govan pointed out, section 28 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 requires authorities to pay

"regard to the general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of suitable instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents."

The judgment hinges on the fact that, although Strathclyde claimed to have taken section 28 into account, it did not produce any specific material to support that claim. The judge took the view that once it was established that most parents opposed closure, unless there were considerations of suitable instruction and training or avoiding unreasonable public expenditure, the onus should be shifted to the authority to show that other considerations overruled. The judgment is particularly critical of the director of education's report to the education committee, which made no reference to section 28 or to its contents and, in reporting on representations received, made no distinction between the views of parents and those of teachers, politicians and the general public.

Thus, the judgment does not mean that an authority can never close a school. The main message seems to be that directors of education will have to be more

circumspect about how they draw up reports for their education committees. In particular, they will have to draw specific attention to section 28.

I do not wish to comment on the merits of the judgment because I know that Strathclyde has suggested that it will appeal. However, I am grateful to the hon. Member for Garscadden for using the opportunity that presented itself tonight to raise this matter because, clearly, it is a matter of concern. The hon. Gentleman was right to point to some of the reports which have appeared in the press and elsewhere, which may have given a different interpretation.

I should like to deal now with a point raised by the hon. Member for Garscadden in relation to the amendments. He was critical of the change, which I acknowledge that we have made, in requiring the local authority nominee to be an official rather than a councillor. That is to balance our response to representations made in Committee by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) and the hon. Member for Gordon that the local councillor was the appropriate person to have on a local body concerned with local schools. I very much agree with that and we have taken it on board——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): First, will the Minister also take on board the fact that there may be many instances where the local councillor in the location of the school may not be the representative of the majority of parents because of the vagaries of catchment areas and boundaries? Secondly, why does the amendment make no reference to Islands councillors? Is the amendment intended to apply to the Islands councillors, as well as to the regional councillors?

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Gentleman had read the *Hansard* of our Committee proceedings, he would know that those were precisely the arguments that I advanced without success in Committee when I found myself outnumbered on all sides by those who took the view that, while the argument is technically correct, it would be inappropriate for me to succumb to it.

I should like to deal now with a point of some substance raised by the hon. Member for Garscadden. We took the view that if we were to have a majority party nominee as a councillor and an official—and strong representations were made in Committee that officials should be able to attend in their own right—and a local councillor who may or may not be of the same party, small boards in particular would feel overwhelmed by education authority representation. It is important that those boards should be able to meet and deliberate without feeling pressure from the central authority. I acknowledge that that is not an ideal solution, but it is the best shot that I could make to meet the wishes of all Committee Members. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Gordon for acknowledging that we seem to have been successful in pleasing him and my right hon. and hon. Friends in that respect.

Mr. Buchan: In view of the terrible situation imposed on Paisley, will the Minister or the Secretary of State for Scotland agree to consult very quickly with Strathclyde region to find a common solution? The problem has been caused partly by Strathclyde region, partly by the Government, and partly by the legal action. However, if those two responsible bodies, the Scottish Office and Strathclyde region, meet perhaps they can produce a solution before the summer.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman has been at great pains to argue that we should not interfere in these matters.

Mr. Buchan: The Minister already has interfered.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman says that we have. With regard to Paisley grammar and the regulations that we have brought before the House, which I know that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues oppose, a number of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues are now making representations to the Government to use those regulations in connection with some schools. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that.

I listened to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan). If he looks at the *Paisley Daily Express* of Thursday 3 December 1987—*[Interruption]*. That is a most important publication for the hon. Member for Paisley, South. That paper contains an article entitled

"New twist in schools controversy."

The article states:

"Paisley's schools closure controversy has taken a new twist following the leaking of a document setting out Strathclyde Region's education committee's plans for non-denominational schools.

For the document indicates that both the regional review group and the education committee have agreed to shut three Paisley schools . . . although neither bodies have yet met.

The document—embarrassing for the regional council and giving new ammunition to parents opposing the closures—is dated November. The regional review group isn't scheduled to meet until later this month and the education committee won't consider the closure proposals until February."

Mr. Buchan: What has that got to do with me?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman was arguing that proper consultation had not taken place. A document had been prepared setting out the plans for Paisley in November in advance of discussions and decisons which would not be made until February. There are lessons to be learned. I do not see any merit in proceeding along the lines that he suggests. I commend the amendment to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: I beg to move amendment No. 67, in page 4, line 33, leave out from 'shall' to end of line 38 and insert

'ensure that head teachers and staff are awarded extended time off from contractual duties if the Board meets within normal school hours, or from planned activity time, and make arrangements for appropriate cover.'.

I draw the attention of right hon. and hon. Members to the implications of clause 5 in which the Government suggest that there should be straightforward recommendations for education authorities to ensure that head teachers and staff of each school in the area are available when necessary for board meetings. It also refers to the role of those people on the school board.

If Conservative Members who have just entered the Chamber would care to listen to me they will learn that the purpose of the amendment is to make it possible for head teachers and staff representatives on school boards to prepare adequately for meetings. Those members of staff will be in the minority and it is vital that they have the time and opportunity to prepare for the meetings. We assume that agendas will be circulated in advance. If the head teacher and staff members are to make an impact on the board's discussions, it is right that they have time to prepare and consider the implications of suggestions on

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

the agenda. *[Interruption.]* I am finding it difficult to talk above the noise of hon. Members who have just come into the Chamber.

9.45 pm

Mr. Speaker: Order. Wherever the noise is coming from, I think that the House should give the hon. Lady a fair hearing.

Mrs. Ewing: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I draw the Minister's attention to what he said in Committee:

"We intend the head teacher to occupy a key role as the board's principal professional adviser. He will have a duty to explain clearly the authority's policies, and to help the board to evaluate its plans in the context of those policies."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee,* 17 May 1988; c. 369.]

Therefore, preparation time will be important.

I also wish to ensure that head teachers and staff members are not under any strain while attending the school board through worrying about the education of the pupils left in the school or the administration of the school during their absence. It is important that we avoid creating a conflict of interests in their minds, so that they can concentrate on the issues before the school board. Surely we regard as part of the past the doubling up of classes, the dismissing of pupils early from school and the cancelling of planned activity time.

One area of importance is the staffing review, to which the Minister referred during the debate on new clause 1. I shall be interested to hear his comments because, in many ways, that will influence my decision on whether to press the amendment to a Division. First, how long has the staffing review been in the Minister's hands? Secondly, when exactly will the announcement be made and can we be reassured that it will be before the Bill is debated in the other place? When discussing the responsibilities of teachers, it is important to know the background, and the staffing review will be a vital factor in that. Thirdly, how will the announcement be made about the conclusions of the staffing review? I hope that there will be an opportunity to debate it in the House and to consult the teachers in our constituencies.

Many representations have already been made to me by head teachers in my area, who are concerned about the implications of the review. They hope that it will improve the situation, and that is why we need to consider it in the context of relieving them and teachers of their duties in school so that they can participate in the school boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for bringing this matter before the House. She raised a number of points of substance, but I do not believe that the amendment is either necessary or desirable. I certainly would be less than enthusiastic about board meetings during the school day. Of course, that would be for board members to decide, but I think that most of them would find it difficult to meet during the day. I recognise that the hon. Lady is concerned that staff should be properly trained for the new board and that proper account should be taken of their contractual duties and obligations.

In the hope that I can persuade the hon. Lady not to press the amendment to a Division, I assure her that when considering the staffing review we shall take account of the impact of school boards. Of course, that matter has come late for consideration. I am sure she recognises that perhaps the delay experienced reflects, in part, our need to take account of that.

We shall be providing proper training for head teachers and we recognise that additional responsibilities will fall upon them. We are working very closely with the National Association of Head Teachers and the Headteachers Association of Scotland to that effect.

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) asked me a number of questions, which I am not in a position to answer, as to the precise form and date of the announcement. However, we shall fulfil the undertaking that I have already given, which is that the staffing review will be published before the end of the school year. I hope that that will satisfy her. I hear her point about the need to do that so that she has an opportunity to make known to the House her views and thoughts on the matter. I urge the hon. Lady to withdraw amendment No. 67, and note once again that we are most concerned with the substance behind her thinking.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: While the Minister has not been able to answer precisely the various questions that I put to him, I accept the exigencies under which he is working and, in the light of the sentiment he expressed, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 15

Delegation of functions to Boards

Mr. Galbraith: I beg to move amendment No. 32, in page 9, line 16, at end insert 'appointing or of'.

The amendment involves the ceiling powers contained in the Bill. The ceiling powers were originally proposed in the consultation document produced by the Minister. As a result of that consultation and the opposition to them, we were told by the Minister that they were to be removed. They have not been removed; they appear in clause 15 under the different name, "delegated functions". Although the name is different, they are still ceiling powers.

The amendment seeks to add to the exemptions from those delegated functions the power to appoint other staff within the school. We would be grateful if the Minister would consider the matter and if he would let us know what special knowledge and benefit the school board will bring to the appointment of other staff within the school.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: If the Opposition seek an assurance that the Bill would not allow the appointment of staff entering into a contract of employment, I can help them. The exclusion from delegation to giving employment includes the staff, but was drafted in that way to ensure that the selection of junior staff could be delegated.

It will be quite in order for an authority to delegate to a board that might meet as a committee with the head teacher as chairman the selection of junior staff for the school. Of course, the candidates would have to be eligible for appointment and the authority would make the formal appointment on the recommendation of the board. Clause 15(2)(b) rules out such delegations in the case of senior staff because the appointment to those posts is covered by schedule 2, which allows the authority to have a say in the selection of those important school managers.

I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the amendment. He is mistaken in his assertion that it is a Trojan horse to bring back the ceiling powers. I seem to recall, although my memory may be deficient, that even the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) agreed with me in that respect.

Mr. McAllion: Withdraw.

Mr. Forsyth: In the interest of the good business of the House, I am happy to withdraw if I am wrong. I can assure the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) that ceiling powers are not coming in through the back door, the window or by any other route—there were various metaphors used in Committee. Therefore, I urge him to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Galbraith: Despite the Minister's explanation, we are not reassured. We do not intend to divide the House, although we shall seek to pursue the matter in another place.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Galbraith: I beg to move amendment No. 29, in page 9, line 29, at end insert—

'(h) the control of the current budget of the school'.

Despite the Minister's reassurances, this is yet another attempt to introduce ceiling powers by the back door. The amendment is about the control of the current budget by the school board. The Minister may like to explain why that is not contained within the exclusions, as we should like. In the past, he has said that if the school board does not wish this power to be delegated, there will be no problem. We wish to ensure that this is not within the school board's power. The job requires considerable expertise. I remind the Minister that these functions will be carried out by parents in their spare time and that it will be difficult for them to carry out this task. The idea is not cost-effective and, most important, as the Minister will note from consultations, parents do not want it.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Direct control over a budget for the recurrent costs of a school was not one of the original ceiling powers. It would be possible for boards to take on similar powers by delegation, but the original ceiling proposal was for boards to be given control over a total current budget, which would be defined in regulations. As the Bill now stands, boards and authorities could agree on the delegation of control over parts of a school's current expenditure. There is no provision for the Secretary of State to determine what the budget should include. We have moved some way, but the door is not yet sufficiently ajar to get the ceiling in.

Mr. Galbraith: The Minister has moved some way, but not enough for the Opposition. Again, we do not wish to divide the House, although we shall pursue the matter in another place.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 18

Financial powers of Boards

Mr. Norman Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 40, in page 11, line 30, after 'borrowing,' insert 'or levying charges'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 49.

Mr. Hogg: As the amendments are linked, I assume that the Government accept amendment No. 40, which is intended to ensure that boards do not start imposing charges for any educational function or charging levies and thus behaving like a private school. If the Government accept our amendment, I should be delighted to hear from the Minister.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am not able to accept amendment No. 40, but I think that I can help the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg).

Amendment No. 49 is designed to meet the anxieties expressed in Committee about charges. It does not make specific provision for the compulsory transfer of property from a school board, which is being disestablished on the amalgamation of a school, to an interim board. In such circumstances, a board may wish to use its resources in a specific way—for example, to preserve the school's name for posterity by endowing a prize for the combined school, and we do not wish that to be prevented. The board will know that the interim board exists and that property not transferred to the interim board and not otherwise provided for will go to the education authority on the board's disestablishment. It will thus be able to exercise choice. We shall issue guidance to boards on the disposal of properties so that they are aware of the options. I urge the hon. Gentleman to withdraw amendment No. 40 and to support the Government amendment.

Sir Hector Monro: As one who raised this matter on Second Reading and in Standing Committee, I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his clarification.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Having heard the Minister's comments and as I now more clearly understand the Government's intention, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 49, in page 11, line 33 at end insert—

'(2) Nothing in subsection (1) above shall entitle a School Board to make any charges or demand any fees in respect of the school education provided by their education authority. —*[Mr. Michael Forsyth]*

Clause 19

Allowances for members of Boards

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 11, line 40 after 'section', insert '45 and'.

The purpose of the amendment is to establish whether the Minister is prepared to agree to a loss of earnings allowance for members of school boards. I hope that he will recognise our concern that attendance at school boards will be a fairly demanding job which could cause people to lose earnings, especially if they are shift workers. An allowance for loss of earnings is already available to people who participate in children's panels—

It being Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the School Boards (Scotland) Bill and the Motion relating to Financial Assistance to Opposition Parties may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

School Boards (Scotland) Bill

As amended, again considered.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I do not wish to detain the House. It is an important matter, and the arguments are self-evident. I would be grateful if the Minister could say whether he is prepared to accept the amendment or consider ensuring that board members will not be deterred from participating if their earnings are at risk.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been generous to the hon. Gentleman, but I have to disappoint him on this occasion. He must recognise the difference between local authority bodies and school boards. It would not be appropriate to extend the opportunity to make claims for support to school board members, which would effectively put them on a par with elected councillors. I ask him to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Bruce: The Minister will not be surprised to hear that I am not entirely satisfied. I am worried that in certain circumstances people will be deterred from serving, especially if the school board's powers are to develop in the future, which could involve longer sittings and sub-committees and so on. Like the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), I do not wish to divide the House. I shall pursue the matter in another place.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 22

INTERPRETATION

Amendment made: No. 50, in page 13, line 20, at end insert—

'"electoral division" means an electoral division of a region, in terms of section 5(1)(a) of the 1973 Act;'—*[Mr. Michael Forsyth.]*

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I beg to move amendment No. 51, in page 13, line 22, at end insert—

'"parent" in relation to a pupil means his natural parent or any other natural person who is his guardian, who has custody of him or who is liable to maintain him;'

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 52.

Mr. Forsyth: I undertook in Committee to consider again the definition of "parent" in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and to see whether it could be improved for the purposes of this Bill. We wanted especially to exclude the possibility of institutions that have custody of a child or the parents of adults taking educational classes at a school being troubled by a spurious vote in a board election. The amendments achieve that purpose and I commend them to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 52, in page 13, line 26, at end insert—

'"pupil" does not include any person over the age of 18 years;'.

No. 53, in page 13, line 26, at end insert—

'"regional councillor" means a councillor elected for an electoral division of a region, in terms of section 5(1) of the 1973 Act;'.—*[Mr. Michael Forsyth.]*

Schedule 1

ELECTORAL PROCEDURE

Mr. Norman Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 23, in page 15, line 7, leave out from 'elections' to end of line 8.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Government amendments Nos. 54, 55 and 56, amendment No. 24, in page 15, line 11, leave out paragraph 3, and Government amendments Nos. 26 and 25.

Mr. Hogg: The intention of the amendments is clear from the Amendment Paper.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: By happy coincidence, the wording of the Opposition and Government amendments was the same and I am happy to accept the Opposition's arguments on this matter. The Government amendments arise out of commitments that I gave in Committee and I hope that they command the support of the House.

Amendment negatived.

Amendments made: No. 54, in page 15, line 7, leave out from 'elections' to end of line 8 and insert

'in accordance with—

(a) this Schedule; and

(b) such guidance as to the form and content of such schemes as the Secretary of State may from time to time issue.'.

No. 55, in page 15, line 10, at end insert—

'2A. Every scheme shall include provision for the appointment by the education authority of a returning officer to ensure the proper conduct of the elections.'.

No. 56, in page 15, leave out lines 11 to 15.

No. 26, in page 15, line 18, leave out from 'post' to end of line 19.—*[Mr. Michael Forsyth.]*

Schedule 2

APPOINTMENT OF HEADTEACHERS, DEPUTIES AND ASSISTANTS

Mr. Norman Hogg: Important matters are raised in amendment No. 30, but in view of the position that we have reached in tonight's business I do not intend to move the amendment. I hope to have it debated in the other place.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I beg to move amendment No. 58, in page 17, line 6, leave out '3' and insert '4'.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 59, 60 and 61.

Mr. Forsyth: The effect of the amendments is to adjust the numbers in consequence of an amendment that the Committee accepted in principle. Therefore, I expect that they will command the support of the whole House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 59, in page 17, line 9, leave out '3' and insert '4'.

No. 60, in page 17, line 27, leave out '2' and insert '3'.

No. 61, in page 17, line 30, leave out '3' and insert '4'. —*[Mr. Michael Forsyth.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Michael Forsyth.]*

10.6 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I do not think that the Bill should be given a formal Third Reading. It is a devious, sneaky piece of legislation. It purports to be a Bill to decentralise educational power. It takes power away from education authorities and gives more power to teachers and parents. The Government have not thought through the consequences of the Bill. If they have thought them through, their intentions in introducing the Bill are evil and will have a detrimental effect on children's educational opportunities.

I believe firmly in the decentralisation of power, including educational power, but the way in which the Bill pretends to do it is very unsatisfactory. It fails to strike a balance between the powers that may be decentralised to one particular school and the powers that should be vested in the wider area of which that school forms a part.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) has dwelt at considerable length and in some detail on the effect of Government intervention, right up to Downing street level, on the educational opportunities for children in his area. What takes place in Paisley today may take place in many other areas of Scotland next week, next month or next year.

Ever since comprehensive education became a reality in Scotland we have recognised that it is not good enough to look at just one school and its needs in isolation from the rest of the community. That would lead to a growing disparity in children's educational opportunities between one school and another in the same community.

For this Minister to expect the House to give a formal Third Reading to the Bill is a piece of cheek and brass neck. For a Minister with responsibility for education in Scotland who has no mandate whatsoever from the people of Scotland to start preaching to us about the need for decentralisation and accountability is an affront to all the traditions of democratic education in Scotland. He only scraped home by the skin of his teeth in his own constituency and then found himself catapulted into the Scottish Office as Minister for Health, Minister for Education, Minister for Sport, Minister for Art and Minister for this, that and the next thing. In a very devious way, he even went cap in hand to Downing street, behind the back of his own Secretary of State, to persuade the Prime Minister to intervene in Scottish education, about which she knows next to nothing.

There are dangerous tendencies in the Bill. It is a paving Bill for what is politely called down here "opting out", and which could eventually lead not just to schools opting out of local education authority control but to the privatisation of certain schools and a return to selection, fee paying and to everything that is anathema to traditions of democratic education within Scotland.

The late Willie Ross would turn in his grave if he could see his successor as Minister with responsibility for Scottish education. Willie Ross came in for a great deal of criticism during his tenure of office as Secretary of State for Scotland, including some from myself. However, no one can take back from him what he did in the late 1960s—almost a quarter of a century ago—when he brought forward an education revolution, trying to extend educational opportunity for generations of children. There are many hon. Members in all quarters of the House now representing Scottish constituencies, and a few Conservative Members representing perhaps even constituencies south of the border, who gained a great deal from the Scottish education revolution of the late 1960s.

In this devious legislation, we are witnessing a first attempt by the Government to bring about a counter-revolution that will be detrimental to children's educational opportunities in Scotland rather than be an extension of them. That is why we should vote against the Bill.

10.12 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Some excellent schools in my constituency have been closed and it is a pity that parents have been compelled to resort to the courts. I hope that the Minister will examine means of allowing parents to make representations to the relevant Ministers when closures are to take place. As the Minister well knows, it is a difficult and expensive process for parents to go to court, and I hope that he will bear that point in mind.

10.13 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Once again the Government have accepted few amendments, and none of major importance. The Bill is fundamentally flawed in that it ignores Scottish traditions and attitudes and clearly intends to introduce alien ideas and practices. The Government would have been better employed building upon the foundations of existing parent-teacher organisations, using existing practices and expertise, and giving greater powers to individuals and organisations within the existing and established Scottish system. Instead, we are presented with an ideologically based Bill, producing an educational Trojan horse which will eventually destroy the harmony and unity of our national education system. Time will tell, but we shall oppose the Bill on Third Reading. We would have preferred legislation designed to defend and advance our nation's education in ways more suited to the Scottish system and Scottish attitudes.

10.14 pm

Mr. Buchan: The Minister's conduct tonight has amply illustrated the Bill's real purpose. Events over the past eight days have underlined its purpose. It is not to extend democracy towards parents in Scottish schools, but to pave the way for the next Bill which will allow opting out.

It is noticeable that the Minister did not reply to my challenge that he had been having meetings with parents in the town of Paisley, which he has so disrupted, in order to develop the concept of them opting out so that Ministers would have a model for the rest of Scotland. We have seen Ministers taking action directly to save one school at the command of the Prime Minister—Paisley grammar—and we have seen them succeeding. A legal action prevented the closure of another school which people wanted to be kept open. We want an answer to some of those questions.

Above all, the Minister can use the two or three minutes remaining to him tonight to tell us whether he will now meet Strathclyde region to try to settle the education crisis in Paisley before we hit the summer holidays. None of the children in the schools in Paisley know where they are

[Mr. Buchan]

going in a month's time, and nor do their parents. Will the Minister answer that? Will he meet the region and try to understand the mess into which he and the Prime Minister have put my town?

10.15 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: As is so often the case with the Government, the Bill represents a basically popular idea that has been corrupted because the Government have failed to take into account the views of the overwhelming majority of people who made representations to them.

No hon. Member would deny the case for giving parents more involvement in the running of a school. The Government are trying to pretend that that is what the Bill is about, despite the fact that they are insisting on a parental majority rather than a partnership. They have rejected the concept of a partnership that parents and teachers have actively sought. That is the fundamental flaw in the Bill. No Conservative Member, even those who have sought to modify the Bill, can escape the fact that it does not represent what Scotttish education is looking for. Indeed, it is a diversion from other more important and higher priorities.

The Conservative party, in its election manifesto, pledged to reform and give extra powers to school councils. There would have been widespread cross-party support if it had done that, but the Bill goes much further and does not seek to create the spirit of partnership which has a long-established tradition within Scottish education.

The final point that is particularly offensive to Opposition Members is that we cannot accept that a Government with only 10 Scottish Members have the right to take the devolved power that we have in the Scottish Office, corrupt it and disrupt our entire education system with ideologies that the Scottish people have convincingly and comprehensively rejected. That is why, although the Bill contains some proposals that could usefully have been implemented to reform schools councils, it represents something that Scottish education did not want, did not ask for and will reject. We shall vote against it.

10.17 pm

Mr. Norman Hogg: The Bill had its genesis on an August morning last year when the Minister made a far-reaching announcement on what he proposed to do with regard to the management of our schools in Scotland. His proposals were rejected because the Scottish people have a deep affection for their system of education and they were not prepared to have it radically altered by a Government that had little authority to govern in Scotland.

The Bill which we are discussing tonight is much changed from that which we debated in Committee. I am pleased that that is the case, but I regret to say that there remains much in the Bill that we find unacceptable. We find it unacceptable that parents are to have a controlling rather than an advisory role on the school board and that there is to be no partnership with the teachers in the sense of their having equal powers.

The Bill gives too much power to the school board over the school budget, over the head teachers' spending plans, and, therefore, over matters of curriculum. It downgrades the professional expertise of teachers and is a diversion from the real problems of education over which the Minister presides.

The Bill is a paving measure for opting out, and if the Minister thought that he had a bad time last August when he announced his proposals for school boards, it is nothing like the response that he will get when he brings forward a Bill for opting out later this year.

My right hon. and hon. Friends will, therefore, without doubt and without hesitation, vote against this Bill tonight.

10.20 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Bill brings to parents in Scotland the same opportunities and rights as parents enjoy elsewhere in the United Kingdom and in almost every other country in Europe. It is a sad reflection on the Opposition that they have opposed it not in principle but by the back door and on every occasion. Once again it is the Conservative party that is extending people's rights in Scotland, and this will be recognised on the doorsteps in the years ahead.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 269, Noes 213.

Division No. 372] [10.10 pm

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'Y'x)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas

Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Herdern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Wavenev)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*

Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Dennis Canavan.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Financial Assistance to Opposition Parties

Mr. Speaker: I have selected amendments (d) and (e), in the name of the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), and amendment (h), in the name of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). I suggest to the House that we proceed with the debate and I shall call upon the hon. Members to move their amendments at the end.

10.33 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move,

That, in the opinion of this House, as from 11th June 1987, the provisions of this Resolution should have effect, instead of those of the Resolution of 20th March 1975 (as amended), in relation to the giving of financial assistance to any Opposition party in this House, to assist that party in carrying out its Parliamentary business:—

1.—(1) Financial assistance shall be available under this paragraph to a party at any time if at that time one of the *following conditions is satisfied with respect to the* party, that is to say—

(a) there are at that time at least two Members of this House who are members of the party and who were elected at the previous General Election after contesting it as candidates for the party; or

(b) there is at that time one such Member who was so elected and the aggregate of the votes cast in favour of all the party's candidates at that Election was at least 150,000.

(2) The maximum amount of financial assistance which may be given under this paragraph to any party in respect of the expenses incurred by it in any year shall be the aggregate of—

(a) £2,550 for each seat won by its candidates at that Election; and

(b) £5.10 for every 200 votes cast for its candidates at that Election.

(3) No financial assistance is available under this paragraph in respect of—

(a) expenses incurred on or after 1st January 1988 by the Liberal Alliance or the SDP Alliance; or

(b) expenses incurred by the SLD or the SDP at any time before the next General Election after the passing of this Resolution.

(4) In this Resolution—

"the SLD" means the Social and Liberal Democrats;

"the SDP" means the party known as the SDP at the date on which this Resolution is passed;

"the Liberal Alliance" means the party which contested the 1987 General Election as the "Liberal/Alliance"; and

"the SDP Alliance" means the party which contested that Election as the "SDP/Alliance".

2.—(1) Financial assistance shall be available under this paragraph to the SLD

and the SDP in respect of expenses incurred by them on or after 1st January 1988 and before the next General Election after that date.

(2) The maximum amount of financial assistance which may be given under this paragraph to the SLD in respect of expenses incurred in any year shall be the aggregate of—

(a) an amount calculated in accordance with paragraph 1(2) above by reference

to the seats won by and votes cast for the Liberal Alliance's candidates at the 1987 General Election; and

(b) two-fifths of an amount so calculated by reference to the seats won by and votes cast for the SDP Alliance's candidates at that Election.

(3) The maximum amount of financial assistance which may be given under this paragraph to the SDP in respect of expenses incurred in any year shall be three-fifths of the amount calculated as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2)(b) above.

(4) The maximum amount of financial assistance available to the SLD apart from this sub-paragraph in respect of expenses incurred in the year beginning 1st January 1988 shall be reduced by the amount of the financial assistance given to the Liberal Alliance before the passing of this Resolution in respect of expenses so incurred.

(5) Financial assistance for the SDP shall be determined as if at all times on and after 1st January 1988 and before the passing of this Resolution its representation in this House had consisted of those Members who are members of that party at the date on which this Resolution is passed.

3.—(1) Any claims for financial assistance under this Resolution are to be made to the Accounting Officer of the House; and a party claiming such assistance shall—

(a) furnish that Officer with a statement of the facts on which the claim is based;

(b) certify to that Officer that the expenses in respect of which the assistance is claimed have been incurred exclusively in relation to the party's Parliamentary business; and

(c) as soon as practicable after each 31st December following the passing of this Resolution, furnish that Officer with the certificate of an independent professional auditor to the effect that all expenses in respect of which the party claimed financial assistance during the twelve months ending with that date were incurred as mentioned in paragraph (b) above

(2) Sub-paragraph (1)(c) above shall not apply in relation to financial assistance given on or after 1st January 1988 in respect of expenses incurred before that date by the Liberal Alliance or the SDP Alliance.

[Mr. John Wakeham]

4.—(1) In the case of any year in which there is a General Election—
(a) the period ending immediately before the day of the Election, and
(b) the period beginning with that day,
shall be treated for the purposes of this Resolution as separate years, but the maximum amount of financial assistance available to any party in respect of any period so treated shall be reduced correspondingly.
(2) In this Resolution "year" means a year beginning with 1st January.
5. The cost of providing financial assistance shall be borne on the House of Commons: members' salaries etc. Vote.

The House will know from what I said last week that, for some time, I have regarded the passage of this motion as a task involving some difficulties. Certainly, bringing proposals on this matter before the House has, in the past, been a thankless task for my predecessors. Not only that, but it has been an issue arousing very varied opposition. It is hard to think of many subjects which would unite my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) and the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) all in the same Lobby, as this scheme for financial assistance did on its introduction in 1975. I hope that it will be helpful to the House if I deal briefly with the scheme's history before turning to my conclusions of the review of the arrangements and the motion before us.

The scheme was put forward by the then Leader of the House, Mr. Edward Short, now Lord Glenamara. It is after him that it takes the name by which it is usually known. It was originally intended to form part of a larger programme designed to strengthen parliamentary institutions. This particular element was to provide financial assistance to Opposition parties in carrying out their essential parliamentary duties at Westminster. The assistance was not intended to cover all expenses incurred by the Opposition in performing their parliamentary duties, but to be a contribution to them.

The formula determining the maximum amount that each party would be eligible to claim annually was based on the results of the preceding general election. Originally, this provided for £500 for each seat won by the party concerned, and £1 for every 200 votes cast for it. The minimum qualification for an Opposition party was that it should have either two Members elected at the preceding general election, or one such Member and at least 150,000 votes in total at that election. Originally, there was also a maximum entitlement on the basis that, in Lord Glenamara's words,

"the responsibilities of a principal Opposition party are not necessarily greater because it has, say, 250 rather than 200 Members."—[*Official Report*, 20 March 1975; Vol. 888, c. 1871.]

Since the scheme was set up, the amounts in the formula and the maximum have been increased four times, most recently in 1985. At the beginning of this Parliament they stood at three times their 1975 level—£1,500 for each seat won at the preceding general election and £3 for every 200 votes gained. The maximum to which the principal Opposition party was entitled stood at £450,000. Throughout, the increases in amounts payable seem to have been determined in something of an ad hoc way, and have not been justified on the basis of any precise linkage to, say, the retail price index. Like so much else at Westminster, it seems to have been more of an art than a science. I began my overall review of the scheme after last year's general election.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. Friend is going into the details of the measure. Could he say a little bit about the principles before he goes on with the detail? My right hon. Friend, I am sure like everybody else in the House, is in favour of a strong, effective and able Opposition. Could my right hon. Friend tell the House whether the Opposition that this House had before the Short money was introduced were more effective and stronger and better than the Opposition that we have today?

Mr. Wakeham: The Opposition immediately before the Short money was introduced were led by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I am a little surprised by my hon. Friend's question about whether that Opposition was better than the present one. It is not necessarily a great condemnation of the present Opposition to say that they are infinitely less superior than the Opposition at that time. The object of this financial assistance is to improve the workings of the Opposition. Perhaps my hon. Friend and I can agree that there is room for improvement.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): My right hon. Friend said that this money is to give the Opposition a chance to perform better their essential parliamentary duties. Can the provision of a Mafia for the Leader of the Opposition's office to prevent Back Benchers getting to him be looked upon as being essential parliamentary duties?

Mr. Wakeham: The motion before the House is to provide the money. Within certain limits it is up to the Opposition to decide how best to spend it to improve their performance in Parliament. I cannot go too far in that direction, but I shall tell the House how I intend to tighten the accountability for that money and the way in which it should be spent. The judgment about spending will essentially be for the Opposition parties to make.

As I was saying, I began my overall review of the scheme after the general election last year. But while that was continuing, the House agreed one change to the arrangements—the removal of the maximum payable to any one Opposition party. The formula as applied to the 1987 general election would have entitled the Labour party to claim about £494,000 annually, while the maximum restricted it to £450,000. When the House had last approved the arrangements, it had set the maximum just above the total amount to which the formula would then entitle the main Opposition party. My motion sought to maintain that position, which enabled all Opposition parties to claim the full amount available to them under the formula, and that was what the House approved in November last year.

The review has gone wider than a simple uprating of the formula, and has included the position of Opposition parties in the House of Lords, the provision of certain staff and office equipment to the main Opposition party, and

arrangements for accountability. And, as the hon. Member for Bolsover pointed out last summer, we have had to consider in particular the arrangements for Members who stood for the alliance parties at the last general election. The main conclusions of my review were set out in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 24 May, but I will remind the House of them briefly now. I reached them only after consultation with as many Opposition parties as possible.

I do not recommend altering the current arrangement for the employment of four officially paid staff in the official Opposition Whips' Office. It seems to me in the interests of the House as a whole that the main Opposition party should have the organisation to be able to respond flexibly to changes which the Government may make in the business of the House. The arrangement whereby certain office equipment, postal facilities and stationery are provided for the official Opposition from departmental Votes would, however, be brought to an end. This predated the Short money scheme and it seems to me that it should properly be turned into a cash benefit and included within it. Certain changes to the accounting procedures have also been proposed: I draw the House's attention to paragraph 3 of the motion. The House will wish to note that in future an independently certified statement should be made annually on behalf of each entitled party that the amounts claimed have been expended in accordance with the resolution of the House.

This tightening-up of accountability seems to me particularly desirable because of the considerable increases which I am proposing in the amounts in the formula determining the maximum each party may claim. As the House will see from the motion, they would entitle an opposition party to £2,550 for each seat won at the preceding general election, and £5·10 for every 200 votes gained. The new, higher formula will be retrospective to the beginning of this Parliament, and the Opposition will be able to make further claims for this period, provided that they certify that their claims are for expenses incurred on parliamentary duties at Westminster, as the terms of the resolution allow. It is not my intention to hold a further review in this Parliament.

In cash terms, the proposed increases represent a rise of 70 per cent. But it is not as straightforward as that. In determining the amount of the increase we have had regard not only to the increase in costs, particularly staff costs, since the last increase in the amounts available, and the prospective increase in costs for the remainder of this Parliament. We have taken account also of two further elements. The first I have referred to—the ending of the provision of office equipment and certain other facilities to the official Opposition, and its incorporation, as a cash benefit, into the scheme. That enables the minor parties to benefit also in this regard, on a pro rata basis.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): If my hon. Friend intends not to make any further adjustment during the life of this Parliament, how will he take into account further permutations of the Liberals, the Democrats, the SDP and whatever they may call themselves during the next three or four years?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall come to that in the course of my speech, but perhaps I can give my hon. Friend a foretaste of what I intend to do: absolutely nothing.

Secondly, we have had regard to the Top Salaries Review Body report No. 24 on parliamentary allowances which makes recommendations about the introduction of a scheme for financal assistance to Opposition parties in the other place. While we have not followed its suggestion of a separate "Short money" scheme, but have instead included it within the existing arrangements, in setting the new amounts we have allowed a substantial element to be allocated for the work in the other place. The exact amount so allocated will, of course, be a matter for each party. I believe that this flexible approach will allow the best use to be made of the money.

The very complexity of paragraph 2 of the motion dealing with the arrangements for the erstwhile alliance parties is itself an indication of the difficulty that there has been in seeking an equitable conclusion. Under the strict terms of the 1975 resolution, the SLD is not entitled to any financial assistance, since it is not a party which stood as such at the preceding general election. There is sufficient doubt about the position of their former alliance colleagues, led by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), for financial assistance not to have been available to them since the beginning of this year. In the past, hon. Members' changes of party affiliations have not affected the amounts of Short money available to each Opposition party to claim, and the motion would provide for this to be so in the future, which is the answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes. However, I believe that it would be inequitable not to make an exception in this case and for this Parliament only —[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] If my hon. Friends will allow me, that is what I am hoping to justify. I will do my best.

The motion provides, essentially, for the SLD to be eligible for the amount to which the Liberal-alliance party would have been entitled under the new formula together with two fifths of the amount to which the SDP-alliance would have been entitled. The remaining three fifths of the SDP-alliance entitlement under the formula goes to the right hon. Member for Devonport and his two colleagues. I hope that the whole House will agree—even if the two parties most closely concerned may not—that what I have proposed is a reasonable compromise.

I shall return to the amendments which you, Mr. Speaker, have selected when the House has had the benefit of hearing from my hon. Friends the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). But, however persuasive their arguments, I do not believe that I shall be advising the House to accept the amendments. Those in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire would reduce substantially the increase in financial assistance which I have proposed. Given the factors which I have indicated that I had taken into account in determining the increase—including the position of the Opposition parties in another place and the ending of certain benefits in kind —I do not believe that the smaller increase which my hon. Friend is proposing would be appropriate.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend because I was frightened that he was going to sit down. Before he sits down, will my right hon. Friend tell the House precisely how much, for example, the Labour party will get under these proposals and how much it would have got before the proposals?

Mr. Wakeham: Yes. I came prepared for that question. Under the existing arrangements the Labour party is entitled to £493,900 and under the proposals in the motion it is entitled to £839,700. As I have stated, the basis is not strictly comparable—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wakeham: I am not sure, Mr. Speaker, whether my hon. Friends think that I have given the Labour party too much or too little.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield would subject the arrangements for financial assistance to annual renewal. I think, however, that it is only reasonable that Opposition parties should be able to plan on the basis of more than one year ahead. *[Interruption.]* I should have thought that many years ahead would be more sensible. Furthermore, I believe that such a change would only make it more likely that further increases in financial assistance would come to be expected on an annual basis as the resolution was renewed, whereas I hope and intend that the proposals that I have brought before the House will last for the duration of this Parliament.

As I suggested a few minutes ago, the Leader of the House rarely finds his proposals on Short money greeted with widespread enthusiasm, and I appreciate that the same will probably be true tonight. Nevertheless, I believe that it is a fair settlement which reflects the significance which I, as Leader of the House, attach to helping Opposition parties at Westminster with the facilities to carry out efficiently their proper parliamentary work. Though it will not, and cannot, do the job of the Opposition, this contribution to their opportunity to perform effectively is an important element of parliamentary life. I commend the motion to the House.

10.50 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): As always, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has done his very best to do justice to this difficult subject. However, his presentation to the House and attempt to justify the grotesque figure put before us tonight lacked any mention or assessment of the value of the contribution made by the Opposition parties to the work of Parliament. In suggesting to the House that that is crucial in our assessment of the figures, I want to refer to the original proposals made by Mr. Edward Short, as he then was, in March 1975, when he said:

"financial assistance should be made available to Opposition parties to assist them in their parliamentary work here at Westminster, and I emphasise that it is here at Westminster only."—[*Official Report*, 20 March 1975; Vol. 888, c. 1869-70.]

That gives the House the clue and important key to how to go about assessing whether the Opposition parties are justified in expecting the sort of money that we have been told about by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House tonight.

It is worth bearing in mind—my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House referred to this briefly—that when the motion was before the House originally not only were three present members of the Cabinet against the resolution—and I will spare their blushes and not name them now—but Opposition Members were also against the resolution. The hon. Members for Preston (Mrs. Wise), for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), for Barking (Ms. Richardson), the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) were all against the resolution in its original form. I will be very interested to see whether they vote against my right hon. Friend's proposals tonight and whether others will join them in reflecting on the honest position that they took when the roles were reversed and the Labour party was in government and the Conservative party was in opposition. However, that remains to be seen. We all wait to see with great interest what happens.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I declare that I am no relation of Edward Short.

Before the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) referred to the voting last time, he referred to the performance of the Opposition. Perhaps we should take into account the performance of all hon. Members in relation to their salaries, given that a large percentage of Conservative Members have other jobs and clearly are not spending time in this House working for their constituents. Should not their salaries take that into account?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Lady anticipates me. I will come to that in a moment. I am sure that the House will want to know something about the contribution that hon. Members make to the workings of the House. Their constituents will want to know that as well. In the motion we are talking about the taxpayer being asked to make a major contribution towards the cost of running the House. In a moment I will refer to how that may be assessed.

We should dispose of one possible way to assess the value of the moneys, and that is by the number of Members in each party. For example, in 1975, when the resolution was first suggested, the Labour party had 319 Members; in 1985, when the resolution was reviewed, the Labour party had 209; and in 1988 it had 299 Members. It is obvious from those figures that we are not necessarily considering the number of Members as the criterion, because it could be said that, if a party succeeds in gaining more seats in an election, that would give it an increase in its financial allocation under the existing formula and there might be no need to review it. The Labour party might be quite happy with that if it was not so greedy and grasping about the money that it asks for tonight.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) raised the question of the participation of members of the Opposition in the workings of the House. I have already said that the original deviser of the scheme, Edward Short, said that Westminster must judge the activities of those who attempt to justify the money.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): When the hon. Gentleman is considering performance in the House, will he take into account the fact that, from the serried ranks of the Tory Members, the Government cannot raise five Members to serve on the Scottish Select Committee?

Mr. Forth: I do not think that I will consider that factor, but I will offer to the House some interesting figures, which are available in the Library, of an analysis of voting by hon. Members in the most recent period available—from January to March—which was carried out by an independent source. It rated Members in descending order depending on the percentage of times that they had voted in Divisions. In the top 10, nine Members were Conservative and one was Labour; in the top 20, 18 were Conservative and two were Labour; in the

top 50, 43 were Conservative and only seven were Labour; and in the top 100, 79 were Conservative and 21 were Labour.

A number of matters are apparent from those independently produced figures. First, the contribution made to the work of the House is disproportionately in favour of the Conservative Members, and it is quite obvious that the Opposition contribute little. What is interesting—and I am sure that my hon. Friends have noticed this already—is that I have not yet mentioned any of the minority parties. It will not surprise anyone that the first Liberal to appear on the list of honour comes in at No. 280—*[Interruption.]* I must concede that a Plaid Cymru Member appears at No. 380. Of the 10 Members who have performed least well, seven come from Northern Ireland and one is a Liberal.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that I would be proud if I were last on the list, because for 15 years I have come to the House every week and asked it to cover Northern Ireland matters as it covers matters relating to other parts of the United Kingdom? The House refuses to cover Northern Ireland properly. When it does, I shall vote and participate fully.

Mr. Forth: I am sure that the House will be honoured —[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer that."] I am sure that the House will be honoured by the appearance of the hon. Gentleman to plead his case for money for his party, on which we are voting tonight.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not giving way.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Forth: You protest too much, Mr. Speaker.

We have now put our finger on a very sensitive point, because we have known for a long time—the figures I have given confirm it—that the Opposition parties do not make a contribution to the working of the House. How my right hon. Friend will——

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East) *rose*——

Mr. Forth: No, I shall not give way.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members may have an opportunity to make their contributions in a moment.

Mr. John D. Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There may be a point of disagreement, but not I think a point of order.

Mr. Beggs: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The information being given to the House by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) about Northern Ireland Members is incorrect. When Northern Ireland Members were here all through the night, their votes were not recorded.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is definitely a point of argument.

Mr. Forth: All that I can say is that that was a genuinely Irish point of order—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] In case—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] In case hon. Members may think—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] Now settle down, settle down.

In case hon. Members think that this is all too theoretical, I shall give a specific example from last Thursday night, when the Opposition chose to keep the House up until a late hour. Not only was that a frivolous waste of taxpayers' money, but even worse, when it came to the vote at 2 o'clock on Friday morning, 114 Conservative Members did their duty, but fewer than 20 Labour Members did theirs.

If my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House thinks that that is a reasonable basis on which to shower money upon the Opposition parties, I regret that he will not have my support—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman said a moment ago that hon. Members should settle down, and I agree with him.

Mr. Forth: I shall make only one more point because many of my hon. Friends wish to make different points. It is obvious that the basis on which the claim before the House has been founded is erroneous. I have tried to show that if we assess the contribution made by the Opposition parties, there is no basis for increasing the amount given to them.

My amendments seek to take the figure that was set in 1985 and, very generously, index it by the full retail prices index improvement of 16 per cent. since then. That is the basis of the figures offered in my amendments, and which I hope the House will consider and vote in favour of. The public will be quite unable to understand the extent of the increase that we are being asked to approve in the light of what I have told the House about the true performance and commitment of members of the Opposition parties in the work of the House.

I hope that all my colleagues will think most carefully before they are seduced by the arguments of my right hon. Friend, who tried to put them as fairly as only he could do, but who was really batting on a quite impossible wicket in suggesting that the Opposition parties deserve the enormous increase set out in the motion. I hope that my hon. Friends will accept that even on the basis of recent performance, or of performance over a sustained period, we cannot justify anything more than the generous increase offered in my amendments. I hope that, on that basis, hon. Members will follow me into the Lobby and vote in favour of my amendments.

11.4 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I think that the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) has more than a little cheek. *[Interruption.]* I am told that he used to be in the Common Market where there were barrowloads of money and he used to be the barrow boy who was wheeling it. *[Interruption.]* I think that he has some cheek to tell us about parliamentary performance.

The hon. Gentleman talked about 20 of us keeping 140 Conservative Members up all night. Why were there 140? There were 140 because the Government need at least 100 to close a debate. On Thursday night, when I do not think the hon. Gentleman quite made it to the post, we had another what is loosely called filibuster, but it was all straight and above board. He did not turn up for work.

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

The hon. Gentleman could have been on a bisque—a French word for playing truant—which the Tories use regularly. If you, Mr. Speaker, went out of the main entrance to the Chamber—I know you do not because you have to stick to your own little spot—on occasions you would find a notice on the door of the Tory Whips' Office saying, "No bisque today". When the hon. Gentleman does turn up, he has obviously seen the notice.

There will be other occasions when 20 Opposition Members will keep more than 100 Conservative Members here—just as there were such occasions when the Conservative party was in opposition before 1979. There is the question of using personnel in a sensible way, so there are occasions like the other night.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) has a point. That night, about 30 of us tried to get in 52 Divisions. We were helping the hon. Members from Northern Ireland. The Deputy Speaker—it was not you, Mr. Speaker—stopped us working properly. He introduced Standing Order No. 39 and had us jumping up and down every two minutes.

Voting is not a very good way of measuring things here. I think that it ought to be the best measurement. After 18 years it would be easy for me to say that, but there are other ways of measuring parliamentary performance. I say that from a position of strength. There are hon. Members who work on Standing Committees and that is not measured in the *Sunday Times*. There are other contributions to a parliamentary performance, there are other ways in which we are prevented from carrying out our parliamentary duties.

As is well known, one in eight Tory Back Benchers is connected with the Lloyd's insurance market. I am sure that that will prevent them from turning up for work occasionally, unless there is a notice on the door, "No bisque today". Seventy Tory Back Benchers have connections with firms that make money in the dark alleyways of South Africa. I am not going to read them out, but I am sure that when they have directorships in company boardrooms they will run to the Tory Chief Whip—when he is not engaged in blackmailing tactics against the Opposition—to get some time off.

There are other things that we should measure when discussing Short money. I speak as one who, at the time, gave evidence against it. The Government have other forms of money. For instance, the Prime Minister is spending more than £5 million of taxpayers' money to staff her office and provide other facilities at No. 10 Downing street. When the previous Prime Minister left in 1979 he spent £1·25 million per annum. Notwithstanding the fact that the Prime Minister is very concerned about spending taxpayers' money—she is always telling us that the Government have no money; it all belongs to the taxpayer—the moment she moved into No. 10 she increased that sum to £2 million, then £3 million, then £4 million and in the last count for which we have figures it is now more than £5 million. If the National Health Service had been given extra cash, based on the same proportionate increase, we would have £28 billion for the NHS and there would not be a waiting list. That is what the Government do with taxpayers' money. The Government have chauffeur-driven cars. All Governments have chauffeur-driven cars; I am not making a party political point. That is part of the Government's way of doing things, but it does not apply to most Opposition Members.

By and large, bearing in mind the benefits that Tory Members gain—*[Interruption.]* The barrow boy is going to see whether there is a bisque tomorrow. Bearing in mind that the Tories took advantage of this scheme, which was introduced by Lord Glenamara—then Ted Short—they have a cheek to argue as they have done when attacking the Labour Front Bench for receiving the money.

We are debating this matter today rather than in the immediate aftermath of the last general election, not because of the official Opposition but because of the Liberals and the Social Democrats. It has nothing to do with the Labour party, as is well known. The Leader of the House has faced a dilemma. He did not tell the Liberals and the SDP to merge, but the moment they started talking, he knew that he had a problem.

In case the Leader of the House had not thought about it, I reminded him in the middle of August. I asked, "Are you aware that mergers are taking place?" There was a group, the provos, led by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), that said that it would not merge. It struck me immediately that the Leader of the House would have a problem with the Short money. How would he decide? In the last general election on 11 June 1987, there was not a vote for the SLD—the salads. In all the election addresses there was no reference to the fact that, when they were elected, they would form a new party and split away.

The Leader of the House did not know how to divide the money. He wanted to be fair not only to his Back Benchers but to the Liberals and the Social Democrats, but he did not know how. He has been puzzling ever since. He has come up with a solution but, frankly, he could have done with Pythagoras. It is not the brightest solution of all time. The right hon. Gentleman is asking us to pass retrospective legislation. He wants us to say that we do not know that the Liberals and the SDP have merged. He wants us to put a blindfold on and say that there are not two parties—one down one end of the Bench and one at the other end. He wants us to admit that the right hon. Member for Devonport, who has gone for a personality transplant—where is he?—does not exist and has never been leader or joint leader. The Leader of the House wants us to wipe all that out of our memory, but I cannot. It is ultra vires. If this matter went before a local authority—except Westminster—councillors would be surcharged if they passed it.

We now have to refer to the Liberal alliance and the SDP alliance—for money, not for anything else. There is one point that has caused a problem: the group must be called the SLD. But some of the Liberals do not like that. Some of them say, "I am a Liberal" and put it on ballot papers in local government elections; some people say, "I am a Social Democrat" and put that on the ballot papers. I did a count in the last local government elections in May and found that there were seven different varieties. It will soon be called the Heinz party! The Tory Government have named them, so when they stand in the next election—I hope that they are listening—they will have to take this title, or they will be in trouble.

We have a dog's dinner here. The Leader of the House has tried to make a seven-course dinner out of a pan of boiling water and he has failed.

11.15 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Amendment (h) deals with the establishment of an annual review of this resolution. Oddly enough, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) endorsed my reasons for thinking that we should have an annual review. Such a review is essential because it is appropriate for the House to have a stocktaking of the political parties and what they stand for each and every year so that the outside world —and, above all, hon. Members—know exactly who stands for what and what is who. As things stand at the moment, it is a great problem for us all.

The main Opposition party, the Labour party, is no more or less than a brand name. It is a loose mishmash of warring factions, struggling with leadership bids and seeking to define its policies. No one realy knows what it stands for. It is as silly to say that the Labour party stands for Labour views as it is to say that British-American Tobacco simply stands for tobacco. The Labour party is a pot-pourri of policies that no one can really understand. It is split in its leadership and its policies.

We would best serve the House by debating the resolution each year, the better to understand the political views represented in the House. At the moment they are certainly not clear. We have a number of political beasts on the Opposition Benches, and they need to be defined. If we are passing such sums over to Her Majesty's Opposition, we need to know what the Opposition stand for. An annual stocktaking would polarise attitudes on the Opposition Benches, redefine to the electorate exactly what the Opposition stand for and produce, out of muddle and confusion, a degree of clarity. If the Opposition cannot provide that clarity, they will not get the money; it is as simple as that.

In addition to the official Opposition we have a plethora of other political parties. The motion lists the various names—something for which I am most grateful as a glossary of terms is long overdue. In considering these middle-of-the-road outfits, we cannot be absolutely sure that the definitions in the resolution will hold good indefinitely—or at least until we come to debate the resolution again. Suppose that we have another change and the SLD is in the middle of a leadership election. Suppose that the new management wants to rename the party "The Ashdown Bombers" or "The Democratic Chapter". If we debate such resolutions annually, we can examine and approve the names of parties and recognise them as official parties each year, instead of the reclothing of old ideas in new brand names occurring constantly throughout our parliamentary life.

The tiniest party of all is still known as the SDP, but its members are generally referred to as the "Owenites". Nowhere in the motion does the term "Owenites" appear. That is a shame because it warrants public emphasis and representation. That is what the party is all about. It is led by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and undoubtedly it will continue to be led by him.

An annual review would go a long towards establishing whether that party has turned up its toes politically and faded away from the scene or whether it still exists. If we hand over the money, there is no guarantee that that political party will not pack up and go home the next day, clutching the purse to its heart. One third of it is not here, so an annual review would help to overcome that problem. Such a review would help to establish whether a political party that we have named today is still alive in 12 months' time. It would afford this House an opportunity to tell the outside world that that political party is still alive and kicking and in business.

An annual review would enable the House to determine, among other things, the validity of political parties. They need some financial assistance. I do not agree with the main thrust of the motion, but to give them a blank cheque indefinitely, without it being renewed on an annual basis, would be against the public interest.

I listened with interest to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) who commented on the Opposition's work rate. In my view, there is one person and one person alone who should receive most of the Opposition funding, the hon. Member for Bolsover. He should have the right to disburse it according to the performance, in his eyes, of many of his colleagues on his side of the House. I believe that he would end up a very rich man—or his constituents would end up rich.

The review that I have proposed would create the sort of discipline that we need. It would create a sensible approach to the debates that we must have. We disburse taxpayers' money, and they are entitled to know that it is spent wisely.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House put forward one major argument against my amendment, which I had not fully appreciated when I tabled it. He said that if we have annual reviews there will be annual increases because the Opposition parties will argue that the subvention that they receive should be increased. That is an extremely valid argument.

My argument has equal merit. We should debate the matter every year. However, my right hon. Friend has persuaded me that it may prove to be disadvantageous for the House to carry out such an exercise. I do not therefore intend to press my amendment to a Division. However, I believe that in the short term it would have been of benefit to have an annual review so that the House would know what are the policies of the Opposition parties, who is leading them and whether those political parties are still alive.

11.22 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): This seems to be an occasion for Opposition party bashing, but the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has demolished the biased arguments that have been advanced. All the Opposition parties in this House have received financial assistance. The arguments are hypocritical because the day will come when the Conservative party will be in opposition and when it will be looking for this money.

I can speak with a degree of sincerity about this matter because I am the only hon. Member who does not receive, and who has never received, a penny of the Short money. Not since it was established 13 years ago have I received a penny of it, and I shall not receive a penny of it after the motion has been approved. Therefore, I have every reason to complain, if any hon. Member has, about the scheme.

The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), in his speech, attacked seven Unionists for their poor attendance in Divisions. I hope that he will confirm that I am not included among them and that my record is extremely good.

Mr. Forth: Search the bottom of the list as I might for the hon. Gentleman's name, I could not find it there.

Mr. Kilfedder: If the hon. Gentleman looks higher up the list he will not find it there, either. My name is well up in that list.

Is it right that I should be excluded from the scheme? Only one other hon. Gentleman is excluded, and he is the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Mr. Adams), who does not take his seat in the House. I am the only qualifying hon. Member of all 650 who is excluded. Is that fair and equitable? The Leader of the House said that the scheme was equitable, but it cannot be so if it deliberately excludes even one hon. Member.

Several hon. Members have pointed out that the purpose of the scheme is to assist Opposition Members in their work and parliamentary performance. If so, no Opposition Member should be excluded from its benefits. Opening the debate, the Leader of the House quoted with approval the words of Lord Glenamara, when he said that the onus on a party with just two Members was as great as the onus on a party with 200 Members. That sentiment should include myself, as the representative of my party in this Chamber.

One complaint made against the scheme is that the taxpayer, whether he likes it or not, must contribute through his taxes to the Opposition parties. Not only must my constituents in North Down contribute against their will to Opposition parties in this Parliament, but their representative is also shamefully denied the right to participate in the scheme. I am sure that hon. Members in all quarters of the House recognise that an injustice is being done to the people of my constituency, to my party, and to myself.

I am totally dedicated to the parliamentary system. I am here throughout the week, every week, as hon. Members in all quarters of the House know. I have demonstrated my commitment time after time, yet many distinguished and well-known hon. Members are not often here. They benefit from a scheme instituted to help their performance in Parliament, the benefit of which is denied me.

It is necessary that Opposition parties should receive financial assistance towards their work. The Government party has the full might of the Whitehall machinery behind it, and something must be done to provide a proper balance. The money itself cannot provide a full balance but it can go some way towards doing so. I believe in the principle of that money being paid, because a strong Opposition is essential to any democracy. It is left to me, as I am excluded from the scheme, to abstain—because I cannot support a scheme that is patently inequitable. Therefore, my name will not be on the Division record—but I hope it will not be said that I was absent tonight.

11.28 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I agree with the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) that Opposition parties need some financial support. Some harsh words have been said today, but mine will not be harsh. They will be in support of the Social Democrats. No one else seems to be speaking for them, so I felt that I should do so.

The Leader of the House is a kindly and solicitous man, but the burden he has had to carry in sorting out this dispute between the two centre parties must have been very wearisome indeed. After all, it seems that when it comes to giving money to their erstwhile friends, the spirit of the members of the new model Liberal party is in inverse proportion to the spirit of togetherness which they proclaim to be the apogee of what nationhood is all about. How mean they have been. I should have thought that the fair, sensible, liberal, middle, statesmanlike way would have been for the House to decide that the loot should be split between the Social and Liberal Democrats and the SDP—split down the middle; the judgment of Solomon.

After all, this time last year the SDP was in existence; it had a constitution, a leader and aims and principles. One year later that party is still in existence. It has the same constitution, the majority of its Members of Parliament are the same and its leader is the same. *[Interruption.]* I do not agree with those who say it does not have aims and principles. That is why I am speaking on its behalf.

But what of the new Social and Liberal Democrats—the successors of those sour-faced types of the last century, many of whom supported Gladstone's party, who proclaimed their Christian principles inside the Church and, as soon as it came to spending their own money outside, were mean?

I should be interested to know whether there is anything in the rumour circulating in the corridors of the House that the Social and Liberal Democrats want to grab no less than nineteen twenty-seconds of this Short money—the overwhelming majority of it. In other words, they want to base what they get solely on the number of seats, despite the fact that over the years they have benefited so much from this money being allocated in terms not just of seats but of votes cast.

Why should the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) alone be deprived of the £5·10 for every 200 votes being given to every other Opposition party? What perfidy has he committed that the Leader of the House should deny him the money that he is due? Has he changed his party? Has he produced a dead parrot manifesto? Has he stormed out of merger negotiations in tears? No. He stands like a rock againt hypocrisy and cant. Yet he alone is deprived of what he is due. Is he to be punished just because, like Banquo clanking his chains, he is the spectre of the new centre party? The fair and honourable course would have been to have split the money—half for the Social and Liberal Democrats and half for the SDP.

11.37 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I have been advised that perhaps I should not be my usual affable self and that I should certainly be careful not to upset the Government too much lest they vote the motion down. Indeed, I wondered whether I should do what we read in Oliver Twist:

> "A council was held: lots were cast who should walk up to the master after supper that evening, and ask for more; and it fell to Oliver Twist."

Tonight it falls to me to ask for more, and I have some support from the Top Salaries Review Body.

An alternative approach would be to say:

> "Although the House has enjoyed this debate, I have been rather depressed by it because it has been characterised by a degree of hypocrisy and humbug which I cannot remember having been equalled.—[*Official Report*, 13 February 1978; Vol. 944, c. 198.]

That was said by Mr. Francis Pym, then Shadow Leader of the House, when we were debating the Opposition

parties' financial assistance. But that sentiment on his part would not be true tonight, in view of the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who shot hypocrisy out of the water.

In 1975, the then Labour Government put to the House a motion to provide funds for the parliamentary work of Opposition parties. That provided £150,000 a year for the Tory party and a lot less for the other parties. The proposal was carried by 142 votes to 47, and the Tory party took the money every subsequent year it was in opposition.

Tonight we are asked to support a Government motion to increase the maximum sum for this Parliament to £839,000. Naturally we support the increase, which follows the recommendation last year of the Top Salaries Review Body that money for Opposition parties should be reviewed in the light of the substantial increases in secretarial allowances for individual Members and what the review body referred to as the relatively modest increase in Short money since its inception.

Even when the new maximum is approved, it will represent only a fivefold increase in the Short money sum of £150,000 set in 1975. That compares unfavourably with the increase in the Members' maximum secretarial allowance over the same period which has been increased sevenfold from £2,910 in 1975 to £21,302 in 1987-88. Over the same period the total sum paid out to Members for secretarial allowances by the Fees Office has increased eightfold from £1,636,000 in 1975 to £13,780,000 in 1987-88. If the Short money had been increased proportionately, the proposal before us would be for £1,263,000, not £839,000. So the Short money actually falls short of the increase in Members' secretarial spending by £424,000. I do not know whether any Tory Members have failed to take up the increase in secretarial allowances.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Is it not the case that one of the reasons Opposition parties required the extra money was that secretarial allowances were so pitifully low that it was necessary for the Opposition to employ additional research assistants? Now that we have a sensible allowance for secretarial expenses, surely we should be reducing the Short money, not increasing it.

Mr. Dobson: If that is the quality of logic which is being employed on the Tory side tonight, it must compare with the speeches on the propriety of the matter in 1980 when the House was graced by speeches from the Tory side by Mr. Keith Best and the then hon. Member for Basildon, Mr. Harvey Proctor, who told the House that it was improper for the Opposition to get the money. The propriety which they showed that night is reflected in the logic shown by the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce).

If we look for another comparison, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has rightly mentioned the Prime Minister's Office. I try to be fair to the Prime Minister. My hon. Friend talked only about the increase in expenditure in the Prime Minister's Office since she came to power. To be fair, we should consider the increase which has taken place since 1975. However, we cannot go back to 1975 because the figures do not exist; we can only go back as far as 1976 when the spending on the Prime Minister's Office was £934,000. The figure for this year is £4,774,000, a ninefold increase. If we had a ninefold increase in the Short money, it would be £1,393,000. I should make it clear to my hon. Friends that I have played no part in negotiating the sum we are discussing tonight.

Some people have been opposed in principle to public funds being allocated to Opposition parties. I do not share that view, but at least it is tolerable. Tonight, and in one or two recent debates, we have seen that a new breed of Tories has decided in its wisdom that it will judge whether the Opposition deserve the money. It is said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder and that the spectator sees most of the game, but it has never been claimed that Government supporters are best placed to judge the Opposition and we reject that proposition tonight.

For one thing, most people would find it hard to regard Government supporters as neutral. If they were neutral, the Tory Chief Whip would want to know why. For another thing, it is rather peculiar to work out how they would judge the effectiveness. The duty of the Opposition is to oppose, but being opposed is not an enjoyable process and the more vigorous the opposition, the less pleasant the process, yet we are asked to believe that effective opposition is warmly appreciated by the Government.

Let us envisage the scene at the Department of Health and Social Security after health and social services questions. Does anyone really believe that the Secretary of State arrives back at his Private Office and says, "Oh, Robin Cook ran us ragged today. I really think that the Opposition deserve that money". Last week, did the Tory Chief Whip go back to No. 12 Downing street and say, "By Jove, Labour kept us up all night. I think we ought to pay them the Short money immediately". That is a preposterous concept and we entirely reject it.

I shall deal briefly with the red herring thrown in by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). He suggested that Government Members voted more heavily than Opposition Members in this Parliament. If he had not just looked at the figures in the *Sunday Times*, he would have discovered that there is a whole series that runs back for decades. In every Parliament, Government Members vote more often than Opposition Members for the very reason given by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover, that we would be as daft as brushes if we stopped up all night in the same numbers as Government Members when we can keep the Government up by just having 20 hon. Members here.

Opposition Members welcome the motion tonight, not just because of the money, but because, at long last, the Leader of the House has discharged his obligation to put the motion before the House, to speak in favour of it and to vote in favour of it. We hope, therefore, that this is the last that we shall hear of any suggestion from Conservative Members on the Front or Back Benches that they will decide on the effectiveness of the Opposition. We can never have a situation where the money for the Opposition depends upon the grace and favour of the Government. The proposition was never put forward by Lord Glenamara, Harold Wilson, Jim Callaghan or anyone else and it should not be put forward by any Government, either now or in the future.

11.43 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): I urge my hon. Friends not to vote to cut off or cut down the funding for the Labour party in this House because to many of us, in so far as it keeps the Labour party's antiques road show in

[Mr. David Martin]

being, it is a great help. We have been in office for nine years on the strength of it and less than £1 million a year appears to me to be money well spent, far more so in promoting, as it unfailingly does, the merits of a Conservative Government year after year. The expenditure is far more worthwhile than all the glossy literature from the Department of Trade and Industry and all that produced by Conservative Central Office at its most inspiring.

With our majority, we must not be unfair to the Opposition. We must take serious note of their many problems because the shadow Leader of the House has very little freedom of action when the leader of the Labour party is in the process, as he is, of bartering the party's policies, in defence of which many Labour Members are bravely prepared to die at yet another general election. The party's former leader, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot)—the biographer of Byron—could tell Opposition Members a thing or two from his research. He could tell them about the problems of the shadow Leader of the House because his hero, Bryon, wrote, in "The Isle of Greece"—this is very germane:

"Trust not for freedom to the Franks—
They have a king who buys and sells;
In native swords and native ranks
The only hope of courage dwells".

We must be charitable and make sure that at this delicate time they get their money. The Leader of the Opposition and his deputy are being pursued for their places at the top. We must not oppose the motion but must raise our sights to the wider benefits of giving them their money.

11.45 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): In view of the no doubt helpfully intended comments of the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), I had better make absolutely clear the attitude of the SDP to the settlement before the House. The Leader of the House clearly had an extremely difficult task in trying to resolve what to do about the money to which the two former alliance parties were entitled. If anybody doubts that, he should look at the motion. Three quarters of it is devoted to that issue and that makes it clear that that was the most difficult task to sort out.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on one point. I would argue that the motion clearly recognises that the merger has taken place. Unfortunately for those who wanted there to be only one party after the merger, there are two and they are not exactly the same as the two that were there before the merger. I must say to the hon. Member for Bolsover that I have no idea what my former colleagues in the SLD think about being described in the motion as the Social and Liberal Democrats. I have absolutely no problems about being described as a member of the SDP. I have been an SDP Member of Parliament since 1981, and that is what I shall stay.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman says that he has been an SDP Member of Parliament since 1981. Can he tell us how often in his long career he has been elected on the exclusive ticket of the SDP?

Mr. Cartwright: I was elected as an SDP Member of Parliament in two general elections in 1983 and 1987. I am always described in my local papers as SDP and there is no argument about that.

The Leader of the House is logical in going for the distribution of the money in accordance with the division of the former SDP Members of Parliament. He is dividing the resources that would have gone to the SDP in the proportion of three to two. That has always seemed to us to be a fair and reasonable solution to the problem. Since the whole purpose of the money is to support Members of Parliament, it seems entirely logical that the money should be divided on the basis of the way in which Members of Parliament divided. We could hardly resile from that approach since it is one that we put forward on many occasions in negotiations with our former colleagues, in discussions with the House authorities and in many other places. It seems to be a fair, reasonable and logical solution to the problem, and we support it.

11.48 pm

Mr. Wakeham: I sense that the House wishes to decide on this matter. I said earlier that I would have something to say about the amendments moved by my hon. Friends. I am lost for words to try to persuade my hon. Friends not to support the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). My hon. Friend seemed to make his judgment on what he perceived the Opposition to be worth and his argument was overwhelming. My judgment was not made on that basis but on what I think the Opposition need to help them to carry out their parliamentary duties.

My proposals are for maxima, but if the Opposition have listened to the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire and do not think that they are worth the money, perhaps he will shame them into not drawing all of it. That is a matter for the Opposition and not for me.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) supported the general thrust of my argument and that he will not press his amendment. My worry about his amendment was mainly that I do not think that I could stand the tension of a debate such as this every year. The highlight of the evening was the speech by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I shall tell my wife about that speech when I get home—which I hope will be fairly soon. I urge the House to accept the motion.

Amendment proposed: (d), in line 17, leave out '£2,550' and insert '£1,740'.—*[Mr. Forth.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 11, Noes 284.

Division No. 373] **[11.49 pm**

AYES

Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bright, Graham
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Conway, Derek
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Watts, John

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Forth and
Mr. Edward Leigh.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Freeman, Roger
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grist, Ian
Grocott, Bruce
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hanley, Jeremy
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamond, James
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martlew, Eric
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mullin, Chris
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parry, Robert
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pike, Peter L.
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Trippier, David
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, in the opinion of this House, as from 11th June 1987, the provisions of this Resolution should have effect, instead of those of the Resolution of 20th March 1975 (as amended), in relation to the giving of financial assistance to any Opposition party in this House, to assist that party in carrying out its Parliamentary business:—

1.—(1) Financial assistance shall be available under this paragraph to a party at any time if at that time one of the following conditions is satisfied with respect to the party, that is to say—

(a) there are at that time at least two Members of this House who are members of the party and who were elected at the previous General Election after contesting it as candidates for the party; or

(b) there is at that time one such Member who was so elected and the aggregate of the votes cast in favour of all the party's candidates at that Election was at least 150,000.

(2) The maximum amount of financial assistance which may be given under this paragraph to any party in respect of the expenses incurred by it in any year shall be the aggregate of—

(a) £2,550 for each seat won by its candidates at the Election; and

(b) £5·10 for every 200 votes cast for its candidates at that Election.

(3) No financial assistance is available under this paragraph in respect of—

(a) expenses incurred on or after 1st January 1988 by the Liberal Alliance or the SDP Alliance; or

(b) expenses incurred by the SLD or the SDP at any time before the next General Election after the passing of this Resolution.

(4) In this Resolution—

"the SLD" means the Social and Liberal Democrats;

"the SDP" means the part known as the SDP at the date on which this Resolution is passed;

"the Liberal Alliance" means the party which contested the 1987 General Election as the "Liberal/Alliance"; and

"the SDP Alliance" means the party which contested that Election as the "SDP/Alliance".

2.—(1) Financial assistance shall be available under this paragraph to the SLD and the SDP in respect of expenses incurred by them on or after 1st January 1988 and before the next General Election after that date.

(2) The maximum amount of financial assistance which may be given under this paragraph to the SLD in respect of expenses incurred in any year shall be the aggregate of—

(a) an amount calculated in accordance with paragraph 1(2) above by reference to the seats won by and votes cast for the Liberal Alliance's candidates at the 1987 General Election; and

(b) two-fifths of an amount so calculated by reference to the seats won by the and votes cast for the SDP Alliance's candidates at that Election.

(3) The maximum amount of financial assistance which may be given under this paragraph to the SDP in respect of expenses incurred in any year shall be three-fifths of the amount calculated as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2)(b) above.

(4) The maximum amount of financial assistance available to the SLD from this sub-paragraph in respect of expenses incurred in the year beginning 1st January 1988 shall be reduced by the amount of the financial assistance given to the Liberal Alliance before the passing of this Resolution in respect of expenses so incurred.

(5) Financial assistance for the SDP shall be determined as if at all times on and after 1st January 1988 and before the passing of this Resolution its representation in this House had consisted of those Members who are members of that party at the date on which this Resolution is passed.

3.—(1) Any claims for financial assistance under this Resolution are to be made to the Accounting Officer of the House; and a party claiming such assistance shall—

(a) furnish that Officer with a statement of the facts on which the claim is based;

(b) certify to that Officer that the expenses in respect of which the assistance is claimed have been incurred exclusively in relation to the party's Parliamentary business; and

(c) as soon as practicable after each 31st December following the passing of this Resolution, furnish that Officer with the certificate of an independent professional auditor to the effect that all expenses in respect of which the party claimed financial assistance during the twelve months ending with that date were incurred as mentioned in paragraph (b) above.

(2) Sub-paragraph (1)(c) above shall not apply in relation to financial assistance given on or after 1st January 1988 in respect of expenses incurred before that date by the Liberal Alliance or the SDP Alliance.

4.—(1) In the case of any year in which there is a General Election—

(a) the period ending immediately before the date of the Election, and

(b) the period beginning with that day,

shall be treated for the purposes of this Resolution as separate years, but the maximum amount of financial assistance available to any party in respect of any period so treated shall be reduced correspondingly.

(2) In this Resolution "year" means a year beginning with 1st January.

5. The cost of providing financial assistance shall be borne on the House of Commons: members' salaries etc. Vote.

Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Garel Jones.]*

12.1 am

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): During the course of this Adjournment debate I hope to outline to those hon. Members who are still in the Chamber a dilemma facing my constituents, patients, consultants, the Sheffield health authority, the hospital staff, the readers of *The Star*—the local newspaper which has informed everyone of the situation—and not least myself. The dilemma is that the Royal Hallamshire hospital, Sheffield has closed 109 of its beds, made reductions in the service of the ophthalmic department and cut back the funding of research work carried out by Dr. Kanis which has resulted in his obtaining a personal overdraft and seeking subscriptions from his colleagues and others to continue his work. Everyone must admit that that is no way to run a hospital.

Having first-hand knowledge of the Royal Hallamshire hospital as a patient and visitor and having served as a one-time county and city councillor and a member of the community health council, no one is better placed than I to appreciate the gravity of the situation.

The Hallamshire is in my constituency, as are the Trent district health authority headquarters, the Sheffield health authority headquarters, the family practitioner headquarters, the university and the polytechnic. Many of the staff and students live in Hallam and the faculty of medicine and dentistry is also in the area. As a lifelong citizen of Sheffield who has passed the hospital at least twice a day, I can claim more than a passing knowledge of it—and I do not intend any pun there.

The exemplary efforts are on record to show that every effort has been made by the hospital and its staff to reduce unnecessary costs and for that I pay tribute to the staff, the administrators, and Sheffield health authority who all deserve tribute for their work. Supplying a first-class service while making economies remain the priorities of the Hallamshire.

Designed in 1965 and opened in 1978, the Royal Hallamshire hospital cost only £32 million. If only such figures were possible now. It was built to replace the Sheffield royal infirmary and the Royal hospital, Sheffield. The Hallamshire has 730 beds and a staff of 3,200, or 2,500 whole-time equivalents. It inherited the traditional funding and staffing from the two small units that it replaced. From that point it was destined to be a financial loser as the appropriate funding never ensued. Everyone acknowledges—and it is statistically proven—that the Hallamshire has higher general overheads than the average provincial hospital. For example, the Hallamshire's energy bills and what it pays to Sheffield city council in lieu of rates will further my point.

Correction of the unfortunate original design, which caused excessive costs, has led to a 15 per cent. reduction in energy costs during the past three years. For this year alone, the electricity bill is £920,000 and the gas bill is £985,000. Its huge monolithic structure, with large amounts of glass, means that on hot days the sun heats the buildings. The situation is reversed on cold days. While on hot days energy is used for cooling, on cold days it is used for heating. That is far from ideal, if not daft. Is it any wonder that the comparability indicators for the use of energy for all regional health authorities show the Hallamshire as one of the highest users, if not the highest?

The hospital's rate payments to the city of Sheffield are also a cause for concern. In 1987-88, it paid some £1·5 million, and in 1988-89 some £1·6 million, in lieu of rates. According to my calculations, that equates to 3p in the pound of Sheffield city council's total rate income per year. When Sheffield city council was rate capped, the Hallamshire and the Sheffield health authority had an unexpected windfall and could use the cash saved for patient care, which was their original intention.

All those matters lie beyond the control of the hospital and the health authority—thanks to Sheffield's high rates policy. It is more obvious when compared with the national average. On 10 May, my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he would list the available information for the 10 authorities with the highest combined rates. Sheffield came second with a poundage rate of £347·50. Therefore, hospital funding provided for health care goes, instead, to a spendthrift authority.

Let us compare the Hallamshire's rates expenditure with the Sheffield Northern general hospital, whose payment in lieu of rates is only £920,000. While the Hallamshire is a high-rise building on a small site, the Northern general is on a large site with open fields and many buildings. If the building scheme scheduled for the northern general hospital is commenced, I am sure that in the long term it will relieve some of the pressure on Sheffield's Hallamshire hospital.

The revenue budget for Sheffield district for 1988-89 stands at £175 million, up from £162 million in 1987, which is a significant increase on the 1979 figure of just over £72 million. A further positive result is that Sheffield now has a thorough increase in funding, together with more nurses, midwives, doctors and dentists, than in 1979.

Some £120 million is allocated for new buildings and major facilities in Sheffield in the 1984-94 planning period. Despite that—and despite even an analysis of recent patterns of Government funding for the Sheffield health authority commissioned by the health care strategy group, a non-elected Sheffield city council panel—a report prepared for the city council by Colin Thunhurst of the Nuffield Institute for Health Service Studies at Leeds university grudgingly acknowledges that the Government have provided Sheffield health authority with more money for health care. We are all extremely grateful for that.

The Hallamshire's share of the health authority's cake was a budget of £33 million in 1987-88 and £34·5 million for this financial year. The northern general hospital has a revenue budget of £35 million for 1988-89. I am not suggesting that robbing Peter to pay Paul is the way forward.

The Hallamshire is short of cash and the actions outlined in my introduction are now in operation. That has resulted in ophthalmic care patients contacting me regarding treatment delay. A consultant, who is also a constituent, said in a letter to me:

"We have had 12 beds closed since the end of October last year—almost a third of our beds."

He then said something quite interesting:

"Only if patients do not arrive for operation"—

I hope that the Minister will take this on board—

"or are found to be unfit are any other patients being sent for and these at short notice."

[Mr. Irvine Patnick]

He states that anyone listed for cataract operations on his routine list may have to wait seven years. Before the bed closures, that waiting time was down to five months.

The case of Dr. Kanis has received extensive media coverage and representations from grateful patients have been impressive. Jeremy Watson, medical correspondent of *The Star*, has highlighted the plight of Dr. Kanis, who, after his five-bed metabolic unit was closed as part of the savings at the Hallamshire, decided to raise the funds to service the unit—£100,000 for the year.

An abstract from the health authority review of the 1988-89 financial plan shows what amounts to a temporary closure of 14 orthopaedic beds, 15 ear, nose and throat beds and up to 72 beds and associated operating theatre sessions in other specialties. I cannot understand why that has happened. The Hallamshire has a 94 per cent. bed occupancy rate and its cost efficiency is all right. Is it that the hospital's financial problems really arise because of the volume and complexity of the work being carried out there? Can it really be that that, together, the rapidly rising cost of high technology and medicine—which are more heavily concentrated in the Hallamshire—are substantially outstripping the budget and the ability of the health authority to fund them? Or do the special costs of acute services in teaching hospitals in large cities, such as the Hallamshire, pose additional funding problems?

The teaching hospitals rightly make the case for additional funding to support centres of excellance and the added responsibilities that they carry. It has been estimated that 1 per cent. of the £175 million is the cost of that work at the Hallamshire. I understand that the Trent region accepts the principle that additional funding is needed, but has failed to provide a commitment for those funds. The Hallamshire is faced with an annual overspend of £500,000, arising from the additional costs for blood products, primarily for haemophilia patients treated under the region's specialised arrangements. Again, extra funding to meet that inevitable expenditure has not been provided by the region.

The Hallamshire's total deficit amounts to £1·1 million, plus a consequent £1 million shortfall. Both of those sums are less than the annual payment that it makes to Sheffield city council's coffers in lieu of rates. If the £500,000 for haemophilia patients could be funded, that would be very welcome. Some £300,000 needs to be spent urgently to redesign the air handling plant and about £500,000 is also needed for essential alterations to the windows. The resulting long-term energy savings will create further economies. The sum of £60,000 is all that is needed from, say, the waiting list money to restore the ophthalmic unit.

Many hon. Members may justifiably make similar pleas for special funding, but not for such important reasons as those that I have outlined. I am extremely grateful for all the funding that the Royal Hallamshire hospital has received. It is rather ironic that the shadow Leader of the House made reference to Oliver Twist in the previous debate. However, like Oliver Twist, on behalf of everyone who uses or may use the Hallamshire hospital I ask my hon. Friend the Minister, please may we have a little more?

When my hon. Friend replies, will she explain to my constituents in particular and to the area in general what is seen as the way out of the dilemma that they face? I submit that, through no fault of its own, the Royal Hallamshire hospital appears to have been penalised for its own excellence and its obvious success. Can the Minister assist, please?

12.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick on winning the ballot. I am sure that he has noticed, as I have, that he is the only Sheffield Member here tonight. I think that that is a pity and a reflection on some of those who have been elected to represent Sheffield.

My hon. Friend has shown a keen interest in health matters on behalf of his constituents. When he and I get on the Master Cutler on a Monday morning we often discuss these issues, and again even later when I sometimes give him a lift to the House, so I am well versed in some of the issues that he has raised.

I do not know whether he realises that he has written some 70 letters to my Department since the election last year, tabled seven questions and has now initiated this debate. I commend him to his constituents as being one of the most assiduous Members of the House, and certainly of the new intake. He has put his case very well indeed.

Before discussing some of the detailed points that my hon. Friend has made, I should like to put the issues into a general context. As I am sure he knows, spending on the Health Service in the United Kingdom has increased from £7·7 billion in 1978-79—the year in which the Royal Hallamshire hospital was opened—to £22·7 billion this year. In cash terms, every family now contributes more than £1,600 a year to the National Health Service, whereas it contributed only £500 a year under Labour.

That increased investment has resulted directly in treating more patients more effectively in more modern hospitals than ever before. The national figures show that about 1·25 million more in-patient cases were treated last year than 10 years ago, plus 500,000 extra day cases, and 4·5 million extra out-patient visits were paid each year.

That is reflected in the increased number of staff that we have taken on. The national figures are represented in what are known as whole-time equivalents, or whole-time funded posts. We have more than 6,000 more doctors and dentists in NHS hospitals, more than 8,000 more doctors and dentists in general practice and almost 65,000 more nurses and midwives. Of course they are all better paid than ever before. The Government are meeting the £749 million bill for the nurses' pay award which was announced recently, and the most fundamental review ever carried out of nurses' future training needs is under way in Project 2000, which has also been announced.

My hon. Friend mentioned the building of the Royal Hallamshire and the developments in his constituency and asked about other developments in Sheffield. When we came to power in 1979, we were faced with virtually a complete shutdown of the hospital building programme. The Royal Hallamshire—my hon. Friend has described its physical problems so aptly and eloquently—was built and completed during that time. We were trying to deliver 20th century health care in 19th century hospitals, so we started the most intensive and extensive hospital building programme ever. Since 1979, 286 schemes costing more than £1 billion have been started and completed in the

NHS. More than 500 schemes, with a total value of £3·8 billion, are at various stages of planning, design and construction.

The Sheffield area is covered by Trent regional health authority, which also covers the Southern Derbyshire health authority, which, as my hon. Friend knows, encompasses my constituency. Spending in Trent has risen from £369 million in 1978-79 to £989 million in 1987-88, an increase of about 31 per cent. in real terms. For this year, 1988-89, Trent's initial cash allocation is increased by another 6·3 per cent.—well above inflation—to more than £1,050 million. That increase is above the national average increase of cash to the National Health Service. That means that Trent has been growing faster than the national average and is getting closer to its RAWP target.

That also reflects the general recognition of Trent's poor funding compared with others in the past. Whatever Opposition Members might say if they were here, during the 1970s areas such as my hon. Friend's constituency and mine were in a very bad way and had long been neglected in the Health Service. Only in the past decade or so, and particularly in the past few years, has funding been able to catch up to the level demanded by the needs of the local population. I see my hon. Friend nodding in agreement with that.

Trent's record on patient care is impressive. Between 1978 and 1987 the number of in-patient cases treated rose from 461,000 to 624,000, a huge increase of 35 per cent. Those are not just statistics. They represent hundreds of thousands more people every year being treated in the Trent hospitals. Last year, 1987-88, the number of people on waiting lists fell steadily. The number of people waiting for more than 12 months has fallen dramatically by more than 3,000—a drop of more than 20 per cent. There have been 27 major capital developments since 1979 in the region, with 14 others under construction and 23 approved to start.

The Sheffield district health authority, which I know very well, having been there on a number of occasions, covers a population of about 530,000. As my hon. Friend said, it is a major centre for teaching and health care and it is Trent region's oldest teaching authority—the Trent region has three, including Nottingham and Leicester.

Sheffield's current and expected temporary difficulties need to be seen in the context of substantial recent and future growth in Trent region and Sheffield. Allocation of funds to the district health authority is Trent's responsibility. Between 1982-83 and 1987-88, Sheffield's revenue spending increased from £122 million to £166 million, an increase of 36 per cent. in cash terms—one of the largest increases in the country. The initial allocation for 1988-89 is £175 million, including nearly £500,000 development funds. That is an enormous sum. Taking on board what my hon. Friend the Member for Hallam said about £30 million being a substantial sum 10 years ago, £175 million now makes Sheffield one of the biggest health authorities. It has had an enormous funding increase in recent years.

Patient care has also increased significantly. Between 1982-83 and 1987-88, the number of in-patient cases increased by 41 per cent. That means that the Sheffield hospitals are coping with more than 2,000 in-patients every week and 12,500 out-patient visits every week, or rather more than 2,000 per working day. We are content that the money is well spent. The number of front-line staff in Sheffield has increased in terms of whole-time equivalents from under 8,000 in 1982 to nearly 8,500 in 1986, the last year for which I have full details. Most of the increase of nearly 500 posts was due to extra nurses being taken on.

There is also a major building programme in the Sheffield district. The most recent examples are a new out-patient and ward block at Northern general hospital which was formally opened in September by their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York. That block cost £10 million. I visited the new £6 million acute geriatric unit at the same hospital which will open this year. Currently under construction is a £9 million extension to the children's hospital. With such programmes we can look forward in Sheffield to being able at last to offer health care in modern facilities that accurately reflect the staff's skills.

Sheffield is a major centre for high technology medicine with some of the leading clinicians in their field. For example, the stereotactic surgery unit, which is funded by the Department and is in its second year, is the only one in the country and one of only three in the world. If my hon. Friend the Member for Hallam has not had a chance to meet some of the people involved, I recommend that he does. The district is also the regional centre for all the regional specialties, including plastic and burns surgery, neurology and spinal injuries. Much specialist work has gone into child health care, particularly child leukaemia and the reduction of infant mortality.

Sheffield is also doing excellent work in health promotion. Its "Health City 2,000" was launched a year ago and is geared to making Sheffield one of the healthiest cities in Britain. I am sure that my hon. Friend would join me in agreeing that there is room for a lot of progress, as coronary heart disease and lung cancer—among others—are among the worst in Britain. I ask my hon. Friend to check whether Sheffield city council, which has taken this matter seriously, has sorted out the issue of smoking on its buses. Last time I was there, I was impressed by signs on the side of the buses saying, "Smoking kills" but not impressed to see people on the top decks puffing away merrily. My hon. Friend may like to pursue that matter.

I attended a seminar on nutrition and healthy eating at the Royal Hallamshire in November last year. It was a thoroughly stimulating and encouraging afternoon and the seminar was typical of the work in the district. There is a great deal that is first class in Sheffield and it is right that attention should be drawn to it. The NHS is giving excellent service to local people, and that is to the credit of all concerned, especially the staff.

As my hon. Friend has described it, the Royal Hallamshire is a modern tower block hospital of 728 beds which was opened in 1978. I hope that we have learnt a lot from the Socialist building patterns of those days which have landed us with so many problems these days. The current financing problems need to be considered in relation to the rest of the district as well as to the particular circumstances of the hospital. Sheffield has 10 management units, including the Royal Hallamshire and the Northern general, which is another teaching hospital of a further 1,000 beds and has a budget of about £35 million. Some health authorities have budgets of that order for their entire district, but these are budgets for single hospitals.

Last year, the Royal Hallamshire had an underlying deficit of £1·7 million—by far the largest deficit of any unit, including the Northern general hospital. Nearly all the other units kept more or less to their budgets. I feel

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

bound to mention that the performance indicators for Sheffield and its hospitals are not too brilliant, although its hospitals are much cheaper than the equivalent teaching hospitals in London. As my hon. Friend said, average occupancy has reached 94 per cent., but that is not necessarily a good thing. It is too high a percentage and leaves no room for flexibility—for emergencies, for example. As a consequence, I understand that some patients were moved seven times during a stay of seven days, which is clearly unsatisfactory. I am not being critical. I recognise that there is pressure for more and more health care and that doctors, nurses and managers try to respond to it.

We also recognise that centres of excellence such as the Royal Hallamshire face additional pressures simply because of the nature of their work and the need to support medical teaching. I understand that Trent regional health authority is committed to giving its teaching authorities additional support in the longer term to help them to cope with that.

There have been some temporary closures, and I stress the word "temporary". Some of the decisions were made in consultation and agreement with the clinicians concerned who have established a peer group at the Royal Hallamshire to review medical practices and ensure that they are economical. That is a very sensible approach, and one that we should applaud, particularly in the light of the Government's increasing interest in medical audit. Whatever money we spend, we need our clinicians to check on the outcome: do we get a better outcome from one procedure than from another; can we get a more effective outcome; do we get better health?

My hon. Friend asked about the building scheme at Northern general hospital. I am delighted to announce approval in principle of a £24 million development at the Northern general hospital. The scheme will provide six new adult wards, two children's wards and four new operating theatres. It will also provide new out-patient facilities, including a colposcopy and laser clinic. The scheme is part of the modernisation of the Northern general hospital.

I am delighted to convey to the House this stop-press information, which highlights my previous comments about a continued improvement in health services, now and for the future, for the people of Sheffield. Building work is expected to start in about May 1989 and is to be completed in 1992.

The theme of my speech is that, although there may be a temporary problem at the Royal Hallamshire, it would be wrong to get it out of proportion or consider it out of context. Many routine aspects of health in Trent and Sheffield should be emphasised; they greatly outweigh the negative aspects.

My hon. Friend raised one or two specific points to which I should like to respond. I share his concern about rates in Sheffield. He may not be aware that the total amount paid in rates, or in lieu of rates, by the Trent regional health authority in 1986-87 was just under £21 million. That is the largest bill by a long way of any regional health authority in England. Sheffield's rates have increased substantially in the recent past. However, in two of the past four years, Sheffield has been rate-capped under the Government's legislation and hence has faced lower bills, which is more than can be said of neighbouring Derbyshire. The politicians of Sheffield should know that an estimated £4,250,000 of NHS money is to go into rates payments this year in Sheffield, and of that sum £1·3 million is for the Royal Hallamshire hospital alone.

We have discussed energy problems pretty thoroughly, and I hope that the designs of our new buildings will take into account the problems outlined by my hon. Friend —problems that are all too common in buildings that were erected in the rather less tightly controlled 1970s. Money has been lent to Sheffield by Trent regional health authority for energy saving schemes, and I know that the DHA is doing its best to minimise payments. If we simply allocated extra money, there would be a lack of incentive to get normal energy costs under control, and that is an important matter. In the end, it is for the district health authority to manage its financial affairs on rates and energy as it sees fit.

Let me finish with a comment about Dr. Kanis. We recognise the importance of his work, particularly in osteoporosis. He will be one of the speakers at the conference on women's health that I shall be chairing tomorrow. I understand that the health authority has not accepted his offer personally to fund his unit.

However, the NHS is continuing to provide Dr. Kanis with in-patient facilities so that he may continue to treat his patients. His work with day and out-patients, where the majority of people are seen, will also continue to be substantially unaffected.

Dr. Kanis is discussing with the district and regional health authorities how best to secure the long-term funding of his own in-patient unit as part of his research work for which, as my hon. Friend knows, he already receives a substantial grant of £700,000 from the Medical Research Council, a figure that ought to be set alongside some of the other funding values that we have been discussing. There is also no reason why other agencies and bodies should not bear at least a proportion of the cost over the short or long term, and I understand that Dr. Kanis is exploring this possibility. I look forward to meeting him again tomorrow.

I hope that what I have said reveals our awareness and concern and our support for health care in Sheffield. I commend my hon. Friend's efforts on behalf of his constituents. They are very fortunate to have him as their representative.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 22 June 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NEW WRIT

For Kensington, in the room of Sir Brandon Meredith Rhys Williams, Baronet, deceased.—*[Mr. Waddington.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Development (South-East)

1. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new steps he is taking to control over-development in the south-east.

2. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a new planning circular to give clearer guidance to local planning authorities about applications affecting scale and density in existing residential areas and other associated matters.

10. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will examine possible reinforcements to the existing planned legislation to reflect over-development of land and buildings in the south-east.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I issued new planning policy guidance in draft on 15 June, for consultation. It urges authorities to extend the coverage of local plans, particularly in the pressure areas, and gives advice on the use of phasing and density policies for residential development.

Realistic local plans can introduce much greater certainty into development control. The new guidance stresses that where there is an up-to-date plan, both I and my inspectors will be guided by it in dealing with planning appeals.

Mr. McCrindle: As no more than token development around most of the towns and cities of the south-east can be tolerated, may I ask whether my right hon. Friend has considered the possibility of revising the idea, prevalent in the 1930s, of developing garden cities, thereby concentrating development in specific areas of the south-east? In conjunction with the encouragement of further development in areas away from the south-east, would that not, at least in some small way, help to prevent the onset of the concrete jungle?

Mr. Ridley: I hope soon to agree with SERPLAN future housing need in the south-east. SERPLAN accepts that some extra housing will be needed to house the population of the south-east. My hon. Friend may know that, in response to an appeal about a new town, I made it clear that I saw no objection to new settlements in any part of the country, provided, of course, that they were not in the green belt and were suitable and in accordance with structure plans and other guidance, so I have some sympathy with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Chapman: I appreciate my right hon. Friend's reply, but does he appreciate that there is a feeling, not confined to local planning authorities, that since circular 22/80 was issued there is a need for clearer guidance, particularly about out-of-scale developments in existing residential areas? Does he further appreciate that if he were to issue a new circular, with clearer guidance, his Department would benefit, because fewer applications would come to him on appeal?

Mr. Ridley: As I said on 15 June, I have issued a new circular which includes, where appropriate, policy guidance on residential densities in rural villages and suburban areas. I think that that is the answer that my hon. Friend wanted to hear.

Mr. Simon Hughes: In an effort to reduce overdevelopment in the south-east, will the Secretary of State consider a separate use class for second homes? Does he agree that one of the pressures in London, rural areas and towns is for second homes, which leads to excessive development and therefore the problems of which he is well aware? Moreover, does he further agree that it reduces the number of affordable homes for rent and sale available to local people.

Mr. Ridley: I agree that there is a growing number of second homes, but many of them are well away from the south-east and in the more attractive holiday regions. I do not think that it would be possible to make a rigid distinction between what is and what is not a second home, because sometimes it involves two homes for a couple who may have split. It would be very difficult to make such a definition, but, as usual, I shall consider the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

Mr. Blunkett: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, in the light of the considerable pressure which understandably now exists to protect living standards and the quality of life for people who live in the desirable areas of the south-east, it would be sensible to revise his policies towards investing in, and allowing municipal enterprise to react to, the needs of people in the north of England, so that people are encouraged to move to the north to take advantage of lower-cost housing and increased employment there, including that in the public services?

Mr. Ridley: It is important to put the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question into perspective. In 1981, 12·6 per cent. of the south-east of England outside Greater London was built up. Even if our projections for future needs are fulfilled by the year 2001, that figure will have risen to only 13·7 per cent., which is a very small percentage of the land area.

As for the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I am sure that he will welcome the establishment of an urban development corporation in Sheffield, which will do just what he seeks. He might like to know that the current rate of investment in the north, in derelict areas and inner cities, is about £3 billion a year.

Mr. Wiggin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that this storm is blowing not just in the south-east but around

many of our big cities and that the complaints arise as much from the rate of development and the lack of infrastructure as from sheer housing numbers? Will he consult his colleagues, particularly those in the Department of Transport, to see whether anything can be done to maintain the quality of life, which is what the argument is really about?

Mr. Ridley: I agree that there is anxiety about how to find the land needed for the houses which the social changes we are going through require us to find throughout the country, particularly in rural areas in the north and the south. The population has to come to terms with the fact that this is an expansion, not of population, but of the requirements for homes of any set number of people. I also agree that there is anxiety about the infrastructure and road system necessary to support a fast-growing economy which is going through a period of great success. As always, I am happy to talk to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, who, I am sure, shares my view and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin).

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What guidelines will the Secretary of State be giving to planning authorities in regard to land adjacent to cemeteries owned by Westminster city council, sold for £1 and now worth between £5 million and £10 million? Is that affair not the scandal of the decade? Will the right hon. Gentleman give me an assurance that no deals on planning permission will be done with the current owners of the land that will allow Westminster city council off the hook, when it has clearly been negligent?

Mr. Ridley: The main point of the hon. Gentleman's question does not arise on this matter, but he knows perfectly well that Westminster city council has carried out an internal review and that the police and fraud squad are involved. It would be quite wrong for me to comment. No planning application in relation to this matter has come anywhere near me.

Sir Peter Blaker: Does not the shortage of housing in the south of England and the high prices that we are seeing as a result make the problem of controlling inflation, which is relevant to the whole country, more difficult?

Mr. Ridley: I differ from my right hon. Friend, because I think that the way to control inflation is to keep control of the monetary aggregates. If one price goes up—the price of houses in the south of England is most certainly going up—that does not mean that there is inflation across a whole range of goods and services.

Mr. Soley: The Secretary of State may like to know that we welcome his willingness to beat a strategic retreat on this matter, but, before he simply caves in to those Conservative Members who are worried about the impact on their boundaries, will he consider the question implied in the comments of his hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), that the real problem in the south-east is the lack of low-cost housing for rent or purchase by local people? What will happen to those local people? When will the Secretary of State come to the House with proposals that will increase the supply of good quality low-cost housing for rent or purchase by people who want to stay in the areas in which they were born and brought up?

Mr. Ridley: I do not know what the hon. Gentleman means by beating a retreat, but I shall be bringing forward proposals of the sort that he requests before we rise for the summer recess. I shall refer to that at 3.30 pm, or whenever I happen to catch Mr. Speaker's eye in the debate this afternoon.

Mr. Squire: Regardless of any incentives that may be offered for more investment in the north, is it not a fact that there is a need now for planning for a greater number of households in the south-east? Will my right hon. Friend avoid being stampeded by colleagues who refuse to recognise that self-evident fact?

Mr. Ridley: I have not changed the basic policy, that in the south-east, as in every other region, we should make provision for as many homes as the best forecasts and estimates that we can obtain suggest will be needed. If those forecasts are wrong, we can adjust as we go along. My hon. Friend is right to say that those forecasts suggest that there will be a need for more house building, including a great deal in London and on the eastern outskirts of London, and some in each of the home counties.

Council House Sales

3. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to assist council tenants who cannot afford to buy their property under the present discount system to do so.

Mr. Ridley: I have no such plans at present, but I am always interested in ways of encouraging the spread of home-ownership.

Mr. Haynes: I shall help the Secretary of State. If he sells all the council houses that are left, where will future generations find houses at prices that they can afford? Why does he not bring forward proposals to help first-time home-buyers to buy their own homes, instead of playing Bingo with people's homes?

Mr. Ridley: I found the thrusts of that question working almost in opposite directions, but I should tell the hon. Gentleman that there are still 4·5 million council and half a million housing association homes to rent. The more of those that are bought by their owners, the happier I shall be. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that we have major plans for expanding the housing association movement and providing a new social rented class of house for the very people whom he has in mind.

Mr. Heddle: Instead of playing Housey-Housey with the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), does my right hon. Friend agree that, beneath the skin of every ardent Marxist, there is someone who would rather own his own home than be a serf of the local authority? Will he therefore continue to pursue his policies to expand home ownership and so enrich the lives and environment of those 1 million council house tenants who have already bought under the right to buy?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend. He will know that the Housing Bill includes proposals to limit the effect of the cost floor rule on tenants' discount entitlements, measures to enable tenants to counteract delays by landlords and to speed up sales, and amendments to clarify local authorities' powers to assist tenants to move out of

their council houses and to buy homes elsewhere. In addition, the £35,000 cash limit on discount is being reviewed.

Mr. Madden: Is the Secretary of State aware of the difficulties in Bradford and elsewhere involved in buying or selling Dennis-Wild type houses? Will he intensify his efforts to persuade building societies to give mortgages on this type of property, and will he urgently revise the home improvement grant rules so that money is made available to local authorities and others to carry out the necessary repairs on these homes?

Mr. Ridley: I prefer to write to the hon. Gentleman about the first matter, about which I cannot be expected to know, not having had notice of it.

On the second matter, however, I can inform the hon. Gentleman that we intend to reform the home improvement grants legislation in a Bill to be introduced at the first possible opportunity—I hope next Session. It has already been announced that extra money will be made available and that it will be targeted on those who need it most.

Undeveloped Land (Northern Region)

4. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of undeveloped land are registered as being publicly owned by local authorities in the northern region.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): Some 7,450 acres are currently registered.

Mr. Fallon: There is no point in councils in the north-east sitting on this land and not developing it. Equally, there is no point in my hon. Friend sitting on powers that were taken in 1980 to order councils to dispose of land. How many acres have been disposed of by order of my hon. Friend, and why have not more been disposed of in this way?

Mr. Trippier: The answer to the latter question is that 2,470 acres have been removed from the register. In Darlington, as a result of action that we have taken using section 99 notices, the local authority has been minded to respond positively, by selling land that would otherwise not come into the private market. The first notice to be served in the whole of the country was served in Darlington, so clearly the system works. I am prepared to accept that we have not gone far enough, and that is why, on 7 March, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced new initiatives in this regard under the "Action for Cities" banner.

Mr. Frank Cook: Is not part of the answer to the question that the Department will not allow local authorities to make use of moneys that have resulted from the sales of council houses and other properties? Is not any condemnation by Conservative Members simply a move to mislead the electorate on this point?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman is not correct, because local authorities are allowed to spend up to 20 per cent. of their assets on a cumulative basis. My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) was referring to the problem of local authorities which are becoming known as land hoarders. We are determined to stop that practice.

Mr. Holt: Would my hon. Friend care to support the campaign for the building of a motorway to the north from the south on the eastern side of the country, to enable sites to be opened? For example, he has announced that one such site, in my constituency, Hemlington Hall farm, is to be disposed of after being held by Middlesbrough council for many years.

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend will understand if I do not join him in a campaign that obviously concerns the responsibilities of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. The notice to which my hon. Friend has referred, which I signed and sent to him, has proved that the system works. However, because there are development problems with some of the land that is under-used or unused, the Teesside development corporation, which operates near to his constituency, will bring back into use a tremendous amount of land that had been under-used.

Ms. Mowlam: The Minister's statement that local authorities are land hoarders could be substantiated if he would tell the House how many appeals against local authority planning refusals he has received. Will he do so?

Mr. Trippier: We are talking about ownership of land, not planning. It is a proven fact that local authorities, public bodies and, in certain cases, Government Departments, have been holding on to under-used land. We are talking about bringing that land back into use. Planning is a different matter.

Graffiti

5. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans Her Majesty's Government have to combat the incidence of graffiti; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Under the urban programme, over £500,000 will be spent this year on anti-graffiti and anti-vandalism projects. A further £18 million will be spent on cleaning up buildings in town centres and improving council estates, including graffiti removal. The estate action programme is also helping to combat graffiti on run-down council estates. UK 2000 will be launching a number of anti-graffiti initiatives this year.

Mr. Favell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend's Department for the work that it is doing to combat a scourge that is sweeping the country. With graffiti on London's tubes and buses costing £2·5 million per annum on Birmingham's buses £2 million per annum, and at an estimated cost to the country of £1·5 billion, which is £23 for every man, woman and child, is it not time that the criminal law took the gloves off to deal with those who spread graffiti? What about banning the sale of aerosol sprays to anyone under the age of 16 years?

Mr. Trippier: I share my hon. Friend's disgust at those who perpetrate such uncivilised behaviour. I shall draw his suggestion to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. It is essential that I should remind the

House that under the Criminal Damage Act 1971 penalties for vandalism include up to 10 years' imprisonment, or an unlimited fine, on conviction on indictment.

Mr. Ashton: Is the Minister aware that there used to be a rule that, when people bought weed killer, the chemist had to take their names and addresses, and that that drastically reduced the number of poisoners? Will he introduce a similar rule that when people buy a can of spray paint they must give their names and addresses to the auto-parts shop, for example, from which they buy it, so that the police can swiftly chase those in the neighbourhood who have used it for unlawful purposes?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not my responsibility, but I shall happily draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to what he has said.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend take more seriously the views that have been expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House during this short exchange? Does he agree that it is unacceptable that retail outlets are not asked to accept any responsibility for the sale of aerosol sprays? My hon. Friend's Department, with other Government Departments, must seek to obtain the co-operation of the retail sector. Names of purchasers of aerosol sprays should be taken. If any are found guilty of acts of vandalism we should impose a bit of hard labour and get them to remove what they have done to desecrate the community.

Mr. Trippier: I assure my hon. Friend that the matter is being taken seriously. It is clear from my substantive answer to the question that the Department is doing a great deal. The issues that have been rasied in supplementary questions must be directed to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I know that there is concern that legislation should act as a deterrent. In my answer to the supplementary question of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) I referred to the legislative provisions that are to be found on the statute book. I cannot interfere with sentencing, and I would not wish to do so, but there are legislative provisions that could act as a deterrent.

Mr. Rees: Despite the amount of money that is spent on eradicating graffiti, the fact is that graffiti is still with us. Will the Minister undertake to go with one of his civil servants to the underpasses at the Elephant and Castle to inspect the graffiti there and then ask himself whether the money that is being spent on the eradication of graffiti could be used in a better way? The underpasses at the Elephant and Castle are indescribable. They are smothered in graffiti, yet nothing is done.

Mr. Trippier: I have every sympathy with the right hon. Gentleman's argument. It is clear that we must tackle the problem on a number of fronts. I have dealt at some length with one of the cures. We must tackle more carefully the task of carrying the local community with us. A number of the programmes for which we are responsible actively involve local residents in anti-graffiti campaigns. That may be appropriate in this particular instance.

Central Berkshire Structure Plan

6. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received relating to his proposed modifications to the central Berkshire structure plan.

Mr. Trippier: I assume that my hon. Friend intends to refer to the countywide replacement structure plan for Berkshire. My right hon. Friend has received approximately 2,500 representations to his proposed modifications to that plan, together with petitions totalling about 30,000 signatures.

Mr. MacKay: Has my hon. Friend noted in those representations that every Member representing a Berkshire constituency, every local authority, every parish council and, I suspect, virtually every member of the public, is opposed to the proposed modifications to the structure plan? This is not because they are against any further development in the area, but because they have already experienced the building of many extra houses. Equally, they are not suffering from the NIMBY factor. They wish to protect their environment and to encourage development in the hard-pressed regions.

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend has made those representations before. I assure him that his views and those of all parties will be considered before a final decision is made. It is important that I should emphasise that Berkshire county council's proposals for 41,000 dwellings are not that far removed from the figure of 43,500 dwellings suggested by my right hon. Friend in his proposed modifications.

Mr. Rooker: Given the fact that the Minister is answering for the Secretary of State for the Environment, I wonder whether he realises that the extra few thousand houses over and above the number already agreed by the county and district councils will be at the bottom of someone else's garden? As the Minister is replying on behalf of the Secretary of State, will he reaffirm that it is still his right hon. Friend's view, as expressed by him at the Dispatch Box, that people should be able to live where they want?

Mr. Trippier: The House will forgive me if I take some offence, as my right hon. Friend probably takes offence, at the implication of that question, which was less than worthy of the hon. Gentleman. We are aware of the point that he makes.

Lead-free Petrol

7. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to ensure that motorists are getting enough information about the use of lead-free petrol.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): The Department has produced an information pack listing cars that can run on unleaded petrol and the location of petrol stations selling it. I am sending copies to all hon. Members to enable them to respond to inquiries from their constituents. We have grant-aided CLEAR, the Campaign for Lead-Free Air, to increase public awareness and provide a public

information service. Many other organisations have a vital role to play, and their work is co-ordinated at regular meetings of the unleaded petrol group, which I chair.

Mr. Sackville: While welcoming my hon. Friend's statement, may I ask whether he agrees that, given what we now know about the harmful effects of leaded petrol on children's health in particular, the extent to which motorists in the United Kingdom have fallen behind those in other countries in switching to unleaded fuel is as shocking as it is shameful? Much of the blame must also be laid at the door of the oil companies for failing in their responsibilities to the community.

Mr. Moynihan: My hon. Friend will be aware that, since the price differential announced as a result of the Budget, a major step forward has been taken in terms of consumption. He will be pleased to know that we expect that there will be about 2,000 petrol stations—an additional 900—stocking unleaded petrol by the end of this year. I endorse my hon. Friend's point about the importance of oil companies playing a major part in promoting the use of unleaded petrol. I congratulate in particular Shell and Esso on advertising on television, and all the other companies on taking a very active lead both in the national press and locally.

Mrs. Ray Michie: Does the Minister agree that there is a classic chicken and egg situation in regard to the sale of unleaded petrol, because petrol companies face increased distribution costs for low sales returns, which are not offset by the lower rate of duty? The Minister has welcomed the action that Shell and other companies have taken, but does he agree that the Government should take an exciting new initiative by mounting a joint campaign with the petrol companies to highlight the benefits of unleaded petrol?

Mr. Moynihan: As a result of our involvement in CLEAR, we are participating in the information campaign, and I have been travelling around the country promoting the use of unleaded petrol, which I believe is significant in environmental terms. As to consumption patterns, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) is right to draw attention to the importance of making people aware of the price differential. Of equal importance is referring to one's dealer, to ensure that one's car can either run on leaded petrol without modification or can do so with a minor modification, or whether it is a model that cannot run on unleaded petrol.

Mr. Ashby: Does my hon. Friend agree that those petrol companies which are making vast profits from having motorway franchises should be made to install more than one unleaded pump at each of their stations —not next month or next year, but tomorrow? They could afford to take that action, and they should be made to do so.

Mr. Moynihan: There is no doubt that oil companies have an important role to play in ensuring that unleaded petrol is widely available. My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that from 1990 all new cars must be manufactured to run on unleaded petrol. That, in turn, will have a major impact on the oil companies' attitudes.

Ms. Walley: Does the Minister accept that if the Labour party had won the last election we would have had a Ministry for Environmental Protection, which would have meant a comprehensive approach to the problem? Why cannot the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders ensure that car manufacturers make cars that run on lead-free petrol? Why is it not possible to buy a British made and assembled estate car that runs on lead-free petrol? Does the Minister agree that a full programme is needed, that 1,200 outlets are not sufficient, and that more needs to be done by way of public education and information and by manufacturing cars that are environmentally sensitive?

Mr. Moynihan: A lot more is being done by the Government than was done by any Labour Administration when it comes to the problems associated with vehicle emissions and unleaded petrol, and we shall continue to work energetically towards ensuring that cars can run on unleaded petrol and that every hon. Member can promote the use of unleaded petrol in his constituency. However, I regret that too few are promoting unleaded petrol through their constituency organisations and the local press. I hope that the letter that I have written to every hon. Member will assist in that direction.

Mr. John Browne: Does my hon. Friend accept that, in addition to advertising the availability of unleaded petrol, his Department could contribute a great deal by emphasising to people, particularly through television, the ease and cheapness of converting some 7 million of the 18 million cars on the road to unleaded petrol?

Mr. Moynihan: I agree that we should continue with the active promotion of that sort of information, in which we are already fully engaged.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The only acceptable thing that the Minister has said is that he has been going up and down the country. That is true. But the Government's response to the problem is woefully inadequate. The Government are responsible for the fact that unleaded petrol is not readily available in Britain, unlike in other Western European countries. Is the Minister aware that the Motor Agents Association accurately estimates that any motorist converting his car to take lead free petrol at a low cost of £20 would take over 18 months to recoup that with the 5p a gallon concession that was introduced in the Budget? Is the Minister further aware that there would be no need to design new engines or adjust existing ones if the oil industry were to provide unleaded petrol of the quality needed by most cars—four star, premium grade, 97 octane? That has been available in the United States for years, but not a drop has been sold in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: It is clear that the hon. Gentleman has not been going up and down the country, because many garages are offering free conversion to motorists. The cost of converting many vehicles is well under £20 and, in some cases, is free.

Mr. Rowe: Since my part of the country is rapidly becoming a rally circuit for lorries, can my hon. Friend give us any encouragement about pollution from diesel lorries?

Mr. Moynihan: Pollutants from diesels are already low. Nevertheless, it is important for further work to be done on diesel particulate traps as well as looking at advanced diesel engine design. I hope that my hon. Friend will share

with me the belief that there are many exciting new possibilities in this technology which will lower the incidence of pollutants from diesel engines.

Freeholds

8. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to facilitate the purchase by leaseholders of flats of the freehold of their property.

Mr. Ridley: The Government have no plans to give leaseholders of flats a right individually to buy the freehold. The Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 gives most leaseholders of flats rights of collective purchase in certain circumstances.

Mr. Pike: Since the Labour Government gave householders the right to buy their freeholds many years ago, is it not now time that the right was extended to people who live in flats to buy the freeholds of their properties in exactly the same way?

Mr. Ridley: The Labour Government at that time did not give the right to leaseholders to buy flats, partly, I think, because they did not think it was desirable, but, secondly, because the freehold of the individual flat is not a satisfactory form of tenure under English property law as it now stands. The Law Commission has produced a report on commonhold, which proposes a statutory framework within which it would be satisfactory to own individual flats freehold. The report made no recommendation about compulsory conversion, but the Lord Chancellor has asked the Law Commission to prepare legislation to bring in a system of commonhold.

Sir George Young: What information has my right hon. Friend about the rights that were given to leaseholders under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 to buy their property when it changed hands? Are those rights being used?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is of course right to say that the 1987 Act gives leaseholders the right to collective rather than individual purchase in certain circumstances. I have no information on the extent to which it is being used so soon after the passage of the Act.

Water Pollution

9. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to review existing arrangements for the monitoring of water pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Arrangements for the monitoring of water pollution will be improved through the Water Privatisation Bill, which will allow for the establishment of a National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Evans: In the light of recent studies suggesting a link between Alzheimer's disease and aluminium in drinking water, is the Minister not concerned that nine of the North West water authority regions are still supplying drinking water with limits in excess of those prescribed by the EC, when three years ago his predecessor informed the House that action was being taken to reduce the aluminium content? Why has nothing changed?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that we are taking seriously the specific study that has recently been published, and that we shall evaluate it in full when the report is available, probably later this year. I hope that I can allay the hon. Gentleman's concern about aluminium by pointing out that over 90 per cent. of the daily intake of aluminium comes from food, even when the water contains the maximum concentration allowed by the EC water directive.

Mr. Jack: In drawing up his future legislative thoughts, will my hon. Friend take into accout the delays in the implementation of the EC directive on bathing water quality, and the considerable scepticism felt by my constituents in the Ribble area about the North West water authority's proposals to reduce pollution levels in the Ribble estuary?

Mr. Moynihan: The majority of bathing waters in the United Kingdom already meet the requirements of the European Community directive on bathing waters, and some £70 million a year is being spent on improving the rest. I assure my hon. Friend that we are assessing the implications of bringing all the remaining waters up to standard by 1995, and we have written to all the water authorities requesting detailed plans for each and every bathing water area.

Mr. Hardy: Is the Minister assuring the House that after privatisation and the establishment of the National Rivers Authority adequate priority will be given, not merely to the monitoring of river and other water pollution, but to action by means of investment to ensure that those of our industrial area rivers that are open sewers will be improved, and that the rapidly deteriorating rivers of rural Britain, poisoned as they are by farms, will be brought back to health?

Mr. Moynihan: Yes, Sir.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is it not a fact that the standard of water in this country is among the highest in the world? Will my hon. Friend and his colleagues make it clear that some of the hysteria put out by various groups merely to worry hypochondriacs is sheer nonsense and should be countered?

Mr. Moynihan: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Ninety per cent. of the rivers and estuaries in England and Wales are of good to fair quality, compared with 75 per cent. of the rivers and 85 per cent. of the estuaries in the European Community as a whole. There are now more than 100 species of fish in the Thames, which is the cleanest metropolitan estuary in the world.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the Minister aware that the minutes of the meeting held by the Water Authorities Association on 18 May record growing concern over the link between aluminium in water and Alzheimer's disease? Does he not share our view that something should be done now, in accordance with the wishes of the association, to reduce the amount of aluminium in water? Will he take action and make available to the House as soon as is practicable the report from the University of Southampton, which is dealing with this issue? We ask for immediate action, not delay until the privatisation of water.

Mr. Moynihan: I have made it clear to the House that when the full report on the study is available it will be assessed by medical experts. In the meantime, we have consulted our medical advisers, who consider that too

much weight should not be placed on the results of any single study. One should bear in mind that the European water directive, setting the maximum permissible concentration of aluminium at 200 microgrammes per litre, was based on the appearance of water, not on health grounds.

National Rivers Authority

11. **Mr. Wolfson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further progress has been made in setting up a National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Ridley: I welcome the appointment of my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Crickhowell as chairman of the National Rivers Authority advisory committee. This committee will advise on the outline schemes of organisation that have now been submitted by all water authorities for the restructuring needed to form a separate NRA unit in their areas.

Mr. Wolfson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the argument between the water authorities and the Government over the establishment of a national authority centres on river basin management? How does he plan to overcome that difficulty?

Mr. Ridley: I had not realised that that discussion was continuing, although there was such a concern when I first announced the establishment of the NRA as part of the Government's plans. It is clear that the NRA will be able to control the flow and management of the River basin, and it will be given sufficient powers and money to do that work.

Mr. Janner: Will the right hon. Gentleman refer to the committee the constant complaints that are made about the state of the River Soar, which passes through my constituency and which gets clogged up with weeds? Complaints emanate from fishermen and rowers. I am the vice-president of the Leicester rowing club,. Will the Secretary of State ensure that action is now taken?

Mr. Ridley: As vice-president of the Leicester rowing club, the hon. and learned Gentleman obviously has a sore point here. When the National Rivers Authority is in being, following the passing of the relevant Act, I shall make sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks are drawn immediately to the attention of the chairman, who, I am sure, will wish to make it a top priority to clean up his river.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Although good progress has been made with cleaning up our rivers, will my right hon. Friend commend to the NRA the important need to improve the Rivers Cole and Blythe in the Severn Trent region?

Mr. Ridley: Three rivers that need improvement have now been mentioned to me. I agree with hon. Members who have expressed the view that we should be doing more to improve the quality of our rivers. The new NRA, which will be responsible for the water environment and will have the necessary powers and resources to carry out those duties, will lead to an improvement.

Mr. Boyes: Why is the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Water in the other place, writing on behalf of the Department of the Environment to the water industry trade unions, refusing to meet those unions at a time when the Government are making expensive appointments and arrangements for the NRA? How can the Secretary of State justify that offhand treatment of trade unions? Would it not be eminently more sensible for future good working relationships to keep the trade unions informed and consulted at all stages?

Mr. Ridley: I shall make sure that the unions are consulted, when it is appropriate, on matters that are appropriate to consult them about. I imagine that the instance to which the hon. Gentleman refers may not be in that category.

Green Belt (Planning Appeals)

12. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the criteria applied in appeals for planning consent for building in green belt areas.

Mr. Ridley: Planning policy on development in green belts is set out in planning policy guidance note No. 2, copies of which are in the Library. Inside a green belt planning permission should not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the construction of new buildings or for the change of use of existing building other than for agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds, and other uses appropriate to a rural area.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Secretary of State assure the House that he will apply those criteria to the area around his own house? Will he also apply them to land owned by such bodies as area health authorities, which frequently own the land around hospitals for the mentally handicapped? Will he use those criteria to make sure that hospitals, such as Westwood hospital in my constituency, are retained for the benefit of the people who live there in rolling acres, so that the land is not sold off for profitable development, but is retained for people who need as much help as they can get?

Mr. Ridley: I have anticipated the hon. Gentleman, because a circular issued deals precisely with the point of redundant National Health Service hospitals in the green belt and more or less follows the same advice as the main circular. Of course, I cannot comment on any specific planning application as the hon. Gentleman suggested I should.

Mr. Steen: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the draft circular confirms that the green belt should not be eaten into? Will he also confirm that it is a draft circular and that green fields should not be built on if there is vacant derelict land in public ownership that could be built on first? Once the housing allocation in the local plan has been used up for the five-year period, will he confirm that planning inspectors will be told to refuse applications if the number of houses proposed is greater than the number scheduled in the local plan?

Mr. Ridley: The circular about which I spoke in response to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) deals with the green belt. It is not a draft circular and has not been changed for many decades. My hon. Friend asks about the draft circular on local plans. As I said earlier, I confirm that where a local plan is up to date and formal my inspectors and I would be very likely to

adhere to what is in that plan on appeal, even if the plan had no further room for development because all space had been used up.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Secretary of State notice how the interchange of green belt and green fields comes from his hon. Friends? Not every green field is green belt, and that point must be continually reinforced. If we had never built on a green field, no one would ever have had a home.

Mr. Ridley: I strongly agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is imperative for people to understand the difference between any green field and land that is in the statutory green belt. It is the latter that causes people great concern, and I have solidly adhered to the view that it should never be built on except for the reasons that I gave in answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, South.

Disabled People (Sport)

13. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to conclude his review of sport for the disabled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: My review of sport for people with disabilities was launched in February and should be completed early in 1989. We shall be looking at how best to enhance the opportunities for those with disabilities to participate in sport from local to international level. With the paralympics taking place in Seoul in the autumn, it is time that newspapers began to report the achievements of our disabled athletes on the sports pages, not the news pages.

Mrs. Bottomley: I welcome my hon. Friend's answer. Is he aware that there is great respect for his commitment to promoting sports for the disabled? We have many disabled sportsmen and sportswomen of great distinction and their interests are best served by focusing on their sporting ability rather than on their physical disability.

Mr. Moynihan: I entirely endorse my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: In the light of the Minister's justified recognition of the value to disabled sportsmen of international competition, may we take it that in any proposals to hold international competition for the disabled in the United Kingdom the Minister will do his best to ensure that adequate funds are available?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. and learned Member knows well that the Sports Council decides on its priorities, irrespective of Government comment. He will also know that the intention of this review is to highlight the importance of such international events. I hope that that will encourage the Sports Council to look more favourably upon providing adequate financial support for these very important international meetings about which the hon. and learned Gentleman speaks.

Mr. Colvin: Is the Minister aware that one sport in which this country excels is rifle shooting? Will he have words with our right hon. Friend the Home Secretary about the retention of the self-loading rifle with integral magazine——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about disabled people.

Mr. Colvin: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The self-loading rifle with integral magazine for five rounds is the rifle most frequently used by disabled people.

Mr. Moynihan: My hon. Friend has asked me to refer the matter to the Home Secretary and I shall, of course, do so.

Mr. Denis Howell: The Minister made a statement yesterday to the Central Council of Physical Recreation that he intends to privatise the management services of local authority sports centres and swimming baths, but he quite rightly expects provision to be made for the disabled and unemployed. How does he expect local authorities to do that when most of them are already rate capped or cash limited and he intends to impose upon them responsibility for meeting all the loan charges, maintenance costs and central services for sports facilities which they no longer control and which are being run by private enterprise for profit?

Mr. Moynihan: I have made this point four or five times in the right hon. Gentleman's presence. The Government did not announce yesterday that they intend to privatise management services. I made it very clear that the Government are considering whether to put out to competitive tendering the management contracts for local authority sports and recreation facilities.

Mr. Bowis: Will my hon. Friend discuss with local education authorities how the welcome practice of making facilities in schools—especially swimming pools—available to the public can be extended to provide access for the disabled so that they, too may benefit from that increasing dual use?

Mr. Moynihan: I shall, and that issue has already been given full consideration by the review group.

Homelessness

14. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for homelessness in England and Wales.

17. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take to reduce the level of homelessness.

Mr. Ridley: In the first quarter of 1988 local authorities in England secured accommodation for 31,070 households accepted as homeless under part III of the Housing Act 1985.

The primary responsibility for accommodating the homeless rests with local authorities. Our first concern is to encourage them to make the best use of their existing stock by getting the large number of empty council properties back into use to reduce the social and financial burden of bed-and-breakfast accommodation. To that end we have allocated over £74 million additional resources since last December, targeted on authorities with the greatest homelessness pressures. The measures in the current Housing Bill should also widen the choice and supply of accommodation for those with lower incomes, by providing a more flexible social rented sector.

I am not responsible for Wales.

Mr. Cohen: Is not the allocation that the Minister has announced a pathetic pittance when set against the extent

of homelessness, which the Housing Bill will make worse? Does not that allocation come from the £141 million underspend of local authorities last year? What is the Minister doing with the rest of that underspend? Is he giving it to the rich to help them with their mansions, or to the Prime Minister to leave her property in Dulwich empty?

Mr. Ridley: I am surprised to hear that the hon. Gentleman thinks that £74 million is a pathetic pittance. I think that he has got his adjectives wrong. He may like to know that the London borough of Waltham Forest at the moment has 83 houses available for letting and 308 houses empty and being repaired, while the number of homeless households is only 235. The number of available houses is almost double the number of homeless households. That is the problem; it is not to do with more money.

Mr. Roy Hughes: I remind the Secretary of State that 1987 was the United Nations international year of shelter for the homeless. Does he realise that the Government's contribution was in inverse proportion to that effort to the extent that homelessness in this country has simply rocketed, not least in my constituency of Newport, East? Even at this late stage, will the Secretary of State give top priority to this great social evil, by releasing the moneys that are held after the sale of council houses?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, the hon. Gentleman is right. Last year was the international year of shelter for the homeless. However, figures relating to his own town might interest him. I understand that in his town of Newport 130 houses are available for letting but are empty, and that the number of households accepted as homeless is 68—so there is no problem.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that absolutely nothing is done for the homeless or for the Housing Bill, which he mentioned a moment ago, if the deplorable practice of gazumping continues? Will he please call in the builders' leaders forthwith and tell them that it must stop?

Mr. Ridley: All hon. Members dislike gazumping, wherever it takes place. However, no schemes have found widespread support as methods of bringing gazumping to an end.

KP Foods

3.30 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the refusal by KP Foods to sell its Halifax factory as a going concern to the only buyer, leading to the loss of 1,000 jobs."

The matter is urgent and specific because yesterday KP Foods, the owner of the Halifax factory, which is to close with the loss of 950 jobs, refused to sell the factory to the only buyer who has made an offer that can save the jobs. The buyer is a man of great experience in biscuit making and has more than enough capital to purchase the factory. His proposals for production on the site are for different markets from the products of United Biscuits (Holdings) plc. KP Foods has refused to sell on the basis that it, and only it, understands the biscuit industry. Although the factory is profitable, KP Foods claims that it is not profitable enough for its purposes. It further claims that nothing other than closure is practical. The truth is that KP Foods does not want to face any competition.

I ask the Government why, in their enterprise culture, only some entrepreneurs are allowed to take risks. If a genuine business man, who has the backing of the unions and the work force, is prepared to take risks, why will KP Foods not sell and allow the factory to be saved? Is the truth that Sir Hector Laing is afraid of competition, and that he does not really give a damn about the job losses and the hardship that his commercial decision will cause to thousands of my constituents? The factory is in an area of high unemployment and some deprivation.

Last year Sir Hector Laing was instrumental in using his position as a leading supporter of the Government and in donating £100,000 to the Tory party. I suggest that he should make not only that money, but a great proportion of the £36 million profit that he made last year available to the work force, from whom he has removed the last shred of hope. I repeat my earlier call for his resignation as chairman of Business in the Community. Halifax expects and deserves a more honourable person to head that project. I urge that this issue be debated.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that she believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the refusal by KP Foods to sell its Halifax factory as a going concern to the only buyer, leading to the loss of 1,000 jobs."

I have listened with concern to what the hon. Lady has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that she has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit her application to the House. However, I hope that she will find other ways of raising the matter in the Chamber.

Questions to Ministers

3.33 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point arises from the admissibility of questions. Today there are on the Order Paper questions to the Secretary of State for the Environment about empty properties in the private sector. In the past there have been questions about the empty properties of housing associations and local authorities. To my certain knowledge, two questions about the number of Government-owned empty properties—the Government have a far greater percentage of empty properties than has any other sector, including local authorities, which have the lowest percentage—were transferred to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. There must be a way of getting the Secretary of State for the Environment to answer questions about those empty properties, particularly when the Government are responsible for a far higher percentage of them than anybody else.

Mr. Speaker: I have no knowledge of that. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am not responsible for the transfer of questions, but I am sure that what he has said has been noted by the Government Front Bench.

VAT (European Court Decision)

3.34 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that yesterday the Minister made a statement on the European court decision on VAT, during which he said that several hon. Members, including myself, had voted in favour of the sixth VAT directive when it was brought before the House in 1976. Under Standing Order No. 127 the Select Committee on European Legislation has a duty to report to the House on matters which, in its opinion, need to be debated. It did so on that occasion and, as is usual in the House, a "take note" motion was tabled. That was not, and has never been, regarded as a motion in favour of any issue before the House. It was a motion.

During that debate several hon. Members, including the then Select Committee Chairman, Sir John Eden, called for further debate because the House was considering a draft directive and many changes were to be made at the appropriate Council of Ministers' meeting. Subsequently, there were calls for further debates because of the massive changes, but the matter was never subsequently debated in the House. Therefore, no Minister can possibly claim that hon. Members voted at any time in favour of that draft directive.

Mr. Speaker: We cannot continue this debate, which arises from questions yesterday. I have listened to what the hon. Gentleman said, and he has made his point.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No. The matter does not arise today. We dealt with it yesterday.

Mr. Spearing: Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Is it a point of order for me?

Mr. Spearing: Yes, Sir. I give you notice that, arising from the Minister's statement yesterday on the decision of the House on the sixth VAT directive, I am looking into the records relating to the decision—when it took place and during which debate. Later I may be able to raise on a point of order the definitive decision of the House.

Mr. Speaker: I note what the hon. Member said.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We dealt with this matter yesterday and the hon. Member must not seek to continue what went on then. These matters are not for me.

Citizens' Compensation Rights

3.37 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to enable all citizens harmed by the actions and products of others to be entitled to fair and prompt compensation at reasonable cost.

The Bill will revolutionise compensation for personal injury and will help to prevent discrimination against injured individuals. It will provide fair and reasonable guidelines, ensure speedier settlements and guarantee equitable and realistic payments. As an added bonus, it will reduce legal wrangling and cut lawyers' bills.

The natural parent of the Bill is the Opren saga. Any change in the law cannot now help people damaged by Opren, but the least the House can do is to avert similar legal disasters occurring—even if it cannot prevent medical disasters.

In August 1982 Opren was withdrawn from the British market. It had been on sale in Britain for just over two years, and there had been a record 3,963 adverse reaction reports, including 83 deaths. The manufacturers, Eli Lilly, stubbornly rejected calls for a reasonable compensation scheme for those who were severely injured by their defective product. It took a five-year legal battle and a rescue operation by Mr. Geoffrey Bradman before a settlement was announced.

It was a miserly settlement, which was widely resented and accepted only under duress of fear of the consequences of refusal. The settlement gave less to 1,350 British Opren sufferers together than the company paid to one American victim. Elderly British men and women who had become refugees from sunlight and prisoners in their own homes after taking Opren were offered an average of just £2,000, compared with a jury award of $6 million to one American.

The imposed settlement made no sense compared with the American outcome. In our country, as an award for crippling injury, it compared grotesquely with libel awards of hundreds of thousands for injured reputations. The settlement shamed the wealthy, multinational company, but it also discredited the British legal system, which lent itself readily to exploitation.

Some people believe that these derisory awards resulted from a legal miscalculation. It is worth noting that a second legal opinion recommended far higher awards. Others believe that the reason for the small settlement was the British habit of relying on precedent. When a case is decided on the basis of an earlier unjust one, it perpetuates gross injustice. Whatever the cause, Parliament should take remedial action. If it does, never again will a foreign company be able to exploit British law so avidly, denying our people even a fraction of the huge payments it gave so readily to its own people.

A major failing of our compensation system is the legal under-estimation of pain, suffering and a restricted life. The Opren offers were derisory, partly because they were for elderly retired people who did not require large payments for loss of earnings. With most Opren damage, no large payments were necessary for additional costs, such as nursing care. But that did not mean that there was no suffering. A serious omission was that there was no fair

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payment, as there should have been, for the loss of freedom to walk and sit in the sun or for the loss of comfort and freedom from pain.

My Bill would establish a compensation advisory board which would propose a new basis for personal injury compensation. The Bill is an important part of the Citizens Action Campaign, presided over by Lord Scarman. It seeks to overcome all the unjustified obstacles facing an unfortunate victim suffering from personal injury. The members of the compensation board would be appointed by the Lord Chancellor and would include people with a wide range of specified experience. It would have two years to prepare recommendations for compensation levels appropriate to different kinds of injury and suffering. From time to time it would review its recommendations, and revise them where appropriate. It would make annual reports to the Lord Chancellor. The board would be an advisory one, but it would become an authoritative and influential body and its views would be respected and acted upon. It would replace precedent and the views of a single judge with the views of a balanced and representative body looking carefully at compensation problems. I believe that it would be welcomed by judges and the legal profession generally.

The Bill backs the small guy against the big. It seeks to take account of suffering and to help people when they are most vulnerable. It will bring about a much needed reassessment of our legal values. It is very badly needed.

In conclusion, the triumph of the thalidomide children brought high hopes for justice for the future. That was more than a decade ago. The Pearson commission was appointed, and eventually reported in a blaze of publicity, but successive Governments have been indifferent to its recommendations. The arguments and even the issues highlighted in that report have been neglected. One of the tragic results of that has been the Opren scandal. It is time now for the House to ensure progress towards fairness and justice, and the Bill is a major step in that direction. I commend it to the House.

Citizens' Compensation Rights

Mr. Jack Ashley, supported by Dr. Michael Clark, Mr. Frank Cook, Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Alfred Morris and Mr. Roger Sims, presented a Bill to enable all citizens harmed by the actions and products of others to be entitled to fair and prompt compensation at reasonable cost: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 July, and to be printed. [Bill 181.]

ESTIMATES

Resolved,

That this House agrees with the Report [16th June] of the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Opposition Day

[14TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Housing and Planning Policies

3.47 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the failure of the Government to develop regional economic and planning policies, which would give adequate support to local authorities trying to contain unrestrained development in the South East and to deal with the effects of under-investment in the social and economic infrastructure throughout the country, and which would address the growing crisis of house price inflation and the shortage of low cost housing for rent or sale.

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. I must also tell hon. Members that no fewer than 15 hon. Members have indicated that they wish to take part in the debate. It is only a half-day debate, so I appeal for brevity from both the Front and Back Benches.

Mr. Soley: From time to time Governments get into difficulties in the timetabling of their affairs and with aspects of their policy. It is a long time since a Government have been in such a mess on the timetabling of their Bills and on their policies, particularly as they affect the south-east of Britain. The motion addresses the Government's failure in that respect.

The Government have tabled an amendment to the motion which is complacent and naive, but at least they have suddenly discovered the word, "homelessness", a word that did not appear in the Government's White Paper when it was issued last year. Now they have suddenly realised that it is a problem, and it has been growing at a dramatic rate since the Government took office.

When I was first elected in 1979, in my local authority 4,000 people were on the council waiting list, mainly waiting to move from the private sector, or waiting to change housing within the public sector. I thought that that figure was poor then. There are now 10,000 people on that waiting list, about 700 in bed and breakfast or emergency accommodation. That has been true under successive Conservative and Labour Administrations.

The same is true of local Conservative, Labour and Liberal authorities throughout the country—so much so that when the Minister went to Southend some months ago and told its Conservative-controlled council that it ought to do more to get people out of bed-and-breakfast accommodation, the council told her that it was already doing everything possible. It was using all the initiatives that the Government had brought forward, but still it could not cope with the growing problem of homelessness in its area.

The finger points directly and dramatically at the Government for increasing homelessness, for house price inflation and for the collapse of the supply of low-cost rented accommodation. All that is compounded by the Government's blindness towards economic policies, which are distorting the economy, particularly as between the north and the south, but also within regions. We see it happening in parts of London. In addition, planning policies have been devastated.

We have seen today a headline in the *Evening Standard* which says that the Minister intends to introduce a new planning Bill, and we heard from the Secretary of State during Question Time that he is to review planning. That would be encouraging if we forgot for a moment that the previous Secretary of State for the Environment—the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)—and the present Secretary of State set about devastating the structure of local government and the morale of local authority officers, not least planning officers.

We all remember the phrases which the Government and the Secretary of State used after being returned to office in 1979—there was to be a bonfire of planning controls. They had that bonfire. They now have the ashes in the south-east. That is why so many Conservative Members are angry about what is happening in their areas.

The Government have ignored the close but complicated link between economic development, infrastructure, planning and housing. Any attempt to separate them and to have individual policies which ignore their effect on other sectors is doomed to failure. Perhaps the biggest failure is the Government's failure on the economy. They chose to pull the plug on the industrial base in the north of Britain when we were awash with North sea oil. Instead of using that new-found wealth to create the new industries that we needed in the north, they simply let the old ones die. They pumped North sea oil wealth into the south, where it created a great deal of wealth, and left the north to pick up the pieces.

In those circumstances, there will necessarily be acute overheating in the economy in the south-east and a problem in the north. Despite complacent Government statements from time to time about wealth filtering up to the north, it is still having only a marginal effect. We remember the former Secretary of State for Employment —the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit)— telling people to get "on yer bike." That was a surefire way of saying, "If you cannot find jobs in the north, go south."

We now have what is called the Tebbit express. It is the train that runs from Liverpool to London, bringing people to work in the capital. They have to return home in the evening. Building workers may, with the permission of the developer, stay in Portakabins on the building site. That is increasingly common, and it is the only way in which employees can find temporary accommodation and the employer can find employees. When people look for accommodation, they cannot find any at prices that they can afford. There is an acute problem with low-cost rented accommodation in both the private and the public sector.

Mr. Edward Leith (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Soley: I shall, but I am bearing in mind Mr. Speaker's comments on the need for brevity.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point about the difficulties of unemployed people from the north in coming south and finding jobs because of the cost of housing in the south. Does he accept that one of the best ways to rectify the situation would be to make more rented accommodation available in the south, and that one of the easiest ways of doing that is to free the private rented sector and release future tenancies from rent control?

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman is completely wrong in his last point, with which I intended to deal later. However, I shall pre-empt my remarks by pointing out that, in a Department of the Environment survey, only 2·5 per cent. of landlords with empty properties said that they kept those properties empty because of the Rent Acts. The vast majority of people who own private property keep it empty either because it is not fit for letting or, more commonly, because it is much more financially beneficial to sell it.

If the hon. Gentleman studies the history of this matter, he will see that when the Rent Acts were last relaxed, in 1957, there was a dramatic loss of private rented accommodation. When the Government reduced controls in 1980, there was another dramatic decrease in the supply of private rented accommodation. At present, in London, well over half the properties available for rent in the private sector are already outside the Rent Acts, yet the supply of privately owned rented accommodation is drying up more rapidly than ever before. The hon. Gentleman must ask himself how much longer his party will continue to believe the myth that if one takes away rent controls and security of tenure millions of landlords will come on the scene and offer properties for rent. They will not do that.

One simply needs to work out the economics of the matter. If a house is valued at £100,000, the owner can sell it, put the money in a building society and earn £200 a week in interest without any of the hassle of being a landlord. What sort of rent would that person charge under market rents? One does not need to be too bright to work that one out. The hon. Gentleman must think more carefully before he becomes involved in that rather simplistic argument.

I wish to deal now with the question of infrastructure. Although the Government have allowed the economy in the south-east to overheat, they have also constrained investment in the economic infrastructure, particularly by the public sector, not only in the south-east, but throughout the country. The right hon. Member for Henley, who is going around the country complaining about the new developments, must accept some of the blame, because he approved many of those developments; for example, the 8,000 homes in Berkshire and his own area.

While that building is taking place, rail, road and other facilities are not being put in place to enable the economy of the south-east to respond to the development. The absurd traffic jams on the M25 therefore develop and the British Rail network, which should carry more goods and passengers, is unable to do so because the Government deliberately chose not to invest in the modernisation of British Rail to the degree that they should have done. Similarly, they chose not to invest in London Underground and London Transport, believing that people could get into their little metal boxes on four wheels and drive around the south-east without any environmental consequences whatsoever. Of course, that is simplistic and dangerous nonsense.

In addition, we have the bonfire of controls in development. Successive Secretaries of State have allowed office development along the London-Bristol corridor and have not thought through the consequences both for housing in those areas and for the strain on the economic infrastructure.

The right hon. Member for Henley says that the Government should be doing more to push employment up north by diverting some Government Departments up

[Mr. Soley]

north, but he conveniently forgets that he cancelled one of the last acts of the last Labour Government to move the Property Services Agency to Middlesbrough. It is still down here. Such action damages the economy of the north and, in the long run, undermines the economy of the south because it overheats in the way that I have described.

Perhaps the most damaging act of all is the subtle one of the constant attacks by the Government on local government officers. It is almost as though someone who works as a planner—an honourable and proper profession supported by the Royal Town Planning Institute—is in some way a parasite on the economy. Public officers are regarded as a burden on the economy, instead of being part of the economy, as part of what is necessary to run a modern, effective, efficient and technological economy. If we do not recognise that the public sector has an important role to play and we undermine it, we cannot be anything other than surprised if we find public officers demoralised and on the offensive when the Government let the juggernaut of the free market run over them and everyone else.

At Question Time today we heard the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment say that local authorities should use all the derelict land that they have, but no less than 62 per cent. of derelict land is in the private sector. We do not hear the Government attacking the private sector and undermining its morale in the way that they attack local authorities. We hear only the attacks on the public sector, as though it can be dispensed with because it is not necessary.

In recent months, something interesting has happened. Back-Bench Conservatives have become worried about these nice rural new towns that will be set up around their constituencies. That worry was beautifully exemplified by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) when he wrote a letter, released to the press, which said in effect, "You cannot allow all these new houses here. If you do that Mid-Staffordshire will become a Labour council in perpetuity and my majority might be at risk".

Why is the right hon. Member for Henley worried? It is because if 8,000 new homes are built in his constituency and that figure is multiplied by two because of household membership, the Boundary Commission will suddenly take an interest. Although some of those new developments may benefit the Conservative party, Conservative Members had better bear in mind that some of them, plus some of the things that the Government are doing in the south-east, are threatening the Conservative party. That is why some Conservative Members, led by the hon. and learned Member for Burton——

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Soley: I shall let the hon. Gentleman in in a moment, but he must bear in mind the time. These Conservative Members, led by the hon. and learned Member for Burton, know that there are considerable dangers for the Conservative party in these developments.

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that my constituency is probably under the threat of receiving more new houses than any other. The new estates in my consituency and that of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) have houses that go at a considerable price, and the owners are solidly Conservative. Therefore, such developments will increase my 22,000 majority to 30,000, so our protests have nothing to do with political gain. If I and my hon. and learned Friend were looking merely for political gain, we would say to my right hon. Friend, "Build as many houses as possible, because that will increase our majorities". The hon. Gentleman is way out.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman is forgetting one reason why Conservative Back Benchers are under pressure. He is right to say that houses in these developments will be sold to high-income families, but local people who want places where their sons and daughters can live, and who want to stay in their areas, are being denied that. The long-term implications of that for the Conservative party are far more serious than the hon. Gentleman has suggested. However, I am prepared to wait for that. I have no need to rush the matter. I am prepared to go along with this one and see how it emerges at the end of the day. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall look forward to it, and I suspect that in the long run he will regret it. We shall wait and see who is right.

The worry about the Boundary Commission intervening is clear in the Tory party. There is also a need, and at last the Secretary of State has realised it if reports in the press are right, to give a greater say to local comment in planning applications. I welcome that, but why was it taken away in the first place? The system has to be more flexible and responsive, and there has to be a more positive approach to planning. At the moment we tend to have a negative approach, in that the local people say what they do not want, rather than looking at the matter more positively and saying what they do want.

There will always be times when local interests need to be overridden. However, what has gone wrong is that the Government have ended up overriding decisions whenever they feel that it is appropriate to do so in the interests of the Secretary of State and the Conservative party, and ignoring the regional interests. By abolishing the metropolitan county councils and the GLC, and other tiers of local government, they have made the problem worse.

I can give a classic example of the Secretary of State using such powers. In my constituency of Hammersmith, a major development was planned for Hammersmith broadway. An inquiry was set up, at the end of which everyone accepted, either publicly or privately, that the scheme could not go ahead in its proposed form. In other words, the local community, the council and I were opposed to the scheme. London Regional Transport and the developers accepted that the scheme was not good enough and needed to be changed, and the inspector of the inquiry, which had been set up by the Secretary of State, agreed that it was a bad scheme that needed to be rethought.

The Secretary of State overrode the inspector and said that the scheme would go ahead. We were left with the absurd situation that the developer, the owner, the local authority and the community were all agreed that it was a bad scheme, they were backed up by the inspector, but were overridden by the Secretary of State. I find myself doing a job that I had not expected I would do when I was elected, although I knew that a Member of Parliament's job is varied. I have the job of trying to work out with all the groups involved some way of getting round the blockage imposed by the Secretary of State. I am getting

support from everyone in my efforts, but why do I have to do it? If the inquiry is set up so that the inspector can make recommendations, why does the Secretary of State so readily and easily override such decisions? If the Secretary of State goes on using his powers like a blunderbuss, he will continue to hit half a dozen targets at which he is not aiming.

The other matter in the press today—if the report is right I should welcome such a move—is that developers should have to pay some—in many cases I would suggest all—of the costs of appeals. It is absurd to impose on local people, through the rates or whatever system, the costs of an appeal when the developer is appealing against the decision of a democratically elected body that a scheme is not good. It is absurd to ask the public sector to pick up the bill for the private sector. If the press report is right and the Government are moving on this issue, they will get our support.

The final part of this complicated pattern is the Housing Bill. We have been over this issue a number of times recently and we shall be debating it again next week. The housing component of this pattern is all important because, as the hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) said, the problem in the south-east is that less and less low-cost accommodation is available for rent or purchase. The developments on the edges of villages and other such sites are of houses that often cost about £150,000. I have given the example of a number of places such as Basingstoke and Dorset, where two and three-bedroomed houses can cost as much as £200,000. If houses are selling for that sum, what does the ordinary employee—for example, in Dorset the average manual wage is £90 a week—do about housing? Such people cannot buy.

The Government have now come along with the Housing Bill and said, "Do not worry folks, we will take off all rent controls and let rents find their market level." That touches on the point made by the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). When housing costs so much to buy, the cost of renting will be £100 to £200 a week and the Government are faced with the appalling prospect of either increasing housing benefit so dramatically that it begins to approach the amount of subsidy given to the house purchaser through mortgage income tax relief—about £5 billion—or doing nothing about it. The Government have already cut housing benefit eight times since 1979, although they say that they will increase it.

The other trap that they are in is that no matter how much they increase housing benefit, unless they do something about the tapers in it, they will not target it effectively on those who need it. We have the absurdity of the economy overheating in the south, but not expanding in the north. Planning controls have been devastated and local authorities are not allowed to initiate and develop progressive policies that are designed to help both the local economy and the local community. At the same time, we have a Government who have been smashing up the supply of housing. They claim to be a Government of sensible economics, but they have cut the housing supply so dramatically that the supply of public housing has been reduced from about 90,000 in 1979 to under 30,000 now. Housing associations have more or less stood still, and the private sector has increased its supply by only about 20,000.

One of the first lessons of economics is that if supply is cut drastically, prices will increase. With the present house price inflation, rents will increase for all the reasons that I have outlined. If all controls are removed, there is a crisis. As the number of rented properties available for rent declines, house prices increase at an even faster rate. That will be accompanied by an even faster increase in market rents. If that happens, the Government must dramatically increase public sector finance to act as a subsidy, or they must let the homeless figures rise and allow more and more people to be trapped in bad housing, which means that they are unable to transfer to the sort of properties that they would like. That is the fatal flaw in the Government's housing policy.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that it is the Labour party's policy to continue with tax relief on mortgage interest?

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman will know what I have said before about that. I have said to the Government ever since I took on the job of shadow Minister of Housing and Planning that we shall examine with them—we are on our own at the moment because the Government are not willing to move on the issue—a reform of housing finance that makes the present system fairer both within and between the rented and purchase sectors. We acknowledge that any changes or reforms must be of a sort that do not throw either rent payer or mortgage payer into acute economic distress.

That is why I am saying that mortgage interest relief will not be abolished. However, we shall have to reform it. One quarter of the £5 billion subsidy of mortgage relief goes to those who earn over £20,000 per annum. I am not saying that they do not need a subsidy, but if the Government are prepared to issue a White Paper which states that they will not subsidise the rented sector because subsidy pushes people into dependence, why are they prepared to subsidise those earning £20,000 a year or more without the fear that they will be pushed into dependence?

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Soley: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but it will be the last time that I shall allow an intervention in my speech. I am aware of the time constraint.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the totality of mortgage interest relief is about equal to the housing benefit that is paid? Even now, there is almost equity.

Mr. Soley: No. That is wrong.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: It is true.

Mr. Soley: No, it is wrong. There are gross distortions. It is true that a relatively small number of those who rent receive a large subsidy, but many others who rent receive virtually nothing. Many council tenants, especially those in Conservative-controlled areas, are paying rents that are used, in part, to subsidise the rates. They are paying rents that are then transferred to the rate fund to ensure that the rates are maintained at a low level. That is happening in Merton under a Conservative-controlled council. It is wicked. It is the same as saying that someone who is buying his own house should give money to the taxpayer.

[Mr. Soley]

We would not say that, but that, in effect, is what is being done to council tenants in Conservative-controlled local authorities throughout the country. It is grossly unfair.

How can we expect those who rent to pay between a quarter and a third—sometimes even a half—of their net salary or wage in rent? That, however, is what we are asking of many people. The outcry when the Government cut housing benefit in April was precisely about that. In my constituency, a 65-year-old diabetic lady found that she was losing £10·41 per week in housing benefit, which reduced her income to about £30 a week after she had paid her rent. I do not understand how anyone can be supposed to live on that. The Government seek to justify their position by saying, "We cannot do anything about this. We shall leave it as it is, or reduce housing benefit again." The problem must be tackled if it is not to result in a crisis.

When I responded to the intervention of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), I said that any reform of housing finance must make the system fairer for the two sectors. In some areas the majority of those in bed-and-breakfast accommodation are there because they could not pay their mortgages. They have been placed in that accommodation by local authorities. If there is a 1 per cent. rise in interest rates, many of those who have entered into a new mortgage agreement will not be able to continue to pay their mortgage instalments. They will find themselves going to the local authority and saying, "We are homeless. Please take us in."

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: That is not right.

Mr. Soley: If the hon. Gentleman wants evidence, let him go to Telford, where the majority of those who are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation find themselves in that position because they were unable to pay their mortgages. We all know that the number of those who have foreclosed on their mortgages has increased about 10 times. We know also that the problem will worsen. That will be the pattern until the Government reform housing finance so that the system gives more assistance to first-time buyers and to those who have managed to get their feet on the first rung of the ladder and bought accommodation that is only just large enough for themselves, and find that they want children and wish to trade up. In the south of Britain, and in other areas where there has been house price inflation, it is not possible to trade up to a two or three-bedroom house unless an individual enjoys a salary rise of £10,000 or £15,000. That is because the price of an extra bedroom or two bedrooms is so great.

The Government have made an appalling mess of housing finance, but there are a number of short-term measures that could be introduced that would help to deal with homelessness. For example, capital receipts that are available from council house sales could be used to house the homeless and to repair and renovate. At present, only a percentage of receipts is available for those purposes. If the Government adopted that approach they would instantly release large sums that are currently sitting in the banks doing nothing. At the same time, more people than ever before are sleeping rough and living in cardboard boxes, and more and more families are living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

What are we doing for families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation? Some of them live in it for two years. Their children are supposed to be doing well at school. How can a child do well at school when he or she is in bed-and-breakfast accommodation? How is that achieved? What are local education authorities supposed to do? Some Conservative Members smile. I can only say that they should try living in that accommodation for a while. Let them try living in a cardboard box for a while and then tell me that there is not a housing crisis. We did not have this problem prior to 1979. We did not even have it under the Harold Macmillan Government. We have had it only under the present Government, and that is what makes them such a failure.

There must be a reform of housing finance in the way that I have outlined. An increasing number of people are aware of that. We are aware of the report of the Duke of Edinburgh and that of the Church. I and others have been advancing this argument for a long time, which leads me to ask why the Government cannot acknowledge that their Housing Bill is at best irrelevant, and at worst grossly damaging to the private rented sector as well as the public sector. They must get their act together and come forward with policies that are designed to address the imbalance in the economy, the infrastructure problem, the housing issue and the planning issue. On that basis, I recommend the House to vote for the motion.

4.18 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates the Government on its housing and planning policies which have helped more people than ever before to own their own homes and, while protecting the extending the approved Green Belts, have created the conditions for a return of prosperity across the whole country; welcomes the proposals in the Housing Bill to widen the choice of housing available for rent; notes with satisfaction the planned increases in the Housing Corporation's programme and the additional resources being allocated to local authorities to tackle immediate problems of homelessness, bringing to £74 million the additional resources made available over the last six months; and urges local authorities to use these and other resources to end the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for families as quickly as possible.".

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) started with a strange description of the Government's economic policy. It was new to me and I did not recognise it. He then made some spirited attacks upon my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who I wish were in his place to defend himself. I shall justify many of my right hon. Friend's actions during his period of office, when the relevant points are reached in this debate.

One point I should like to clear up immediately concerns the hon. Gentleman's reference to a report in today's *Evening Standard*, that swingeing penalties will be imposed on those who appeal in the green belt. I do not know the source of that information, but from my reading of the article, my guess is that the report refers to the fact that already costs can be awarded against those who appeal vexatiously or frivolously, especially in the green belt. We have frequently given warnings that we will award costs when we believe that such action is justified in relation to the circular. We have nothing further in mind at the present time.

By linking housing and planning policies in today's motion, the Opposition enable me to make an important point, and it is one with which I hope that the hon.

Member for Hammersmith agrees. Our ability to ensure that everyone has access to a decent home, particularly in distressed parts of the country, depends to a large extent on our willingness to release at least some land for house building through the planning process. That is a factor affecting house prices too. I agree that there is a link between the restrictive planning policies we have been pursuing and homelessness, higher house prices, and the land shortage that causes those increased prices and shortages—affecting in particular local people in rural areas as well as those in the cities.

Many have questioned that link, pointing out—as did the hon. Member for Hammersmith—that new private sector houses are seldom within the reach of the low-income families. However, there is a cascade effect. The more houses we build as people move up the housing ladder, the more houses become available and affordable to households at the bottom of that ladder, whether they be owner-occupiers or tenants. That is the way more housing becomes available.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Housing seems to be one of those areas where the normal laws of supply and demand do not apply. For example, in London there is an excess of units of accommodation over the number of people who need to be accommodated. There are in London 94,000 empty privately owned properties, but the price of property there is going up and up. Will the Secretary of State for the Environment explain why he believes that building more homes will push down house prices?

Mr. Ridley: Many of those properties are confined by the Rent Acts. If a house is in a state of disrepair, I see no point in holding on to it; one can always sell it for someone else to repair, or one can improve it. However, people do not wish to sell or let houses, because they prefer to enjoy their capital appreciation—but they dare not risk the Rent Acts.

Mr. Leigh *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I have a little more to say, and I do not wish to detain the House too long. I will allow my hon. Friend to intervene, but after that I must get on with my speech.

Mr. Leigh: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, after 70 years of political manipulation of the housing market, there is not so much a shortage of housing stock as a shortage of potentially available rented accommodation? Does he agree with the philosophical point that, contrary to the claim of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), if we were to reform the Rent Acts and to deal with the tax laws which give such an advantage to those who buy rather than rent, more privately rented accommodation could be made available?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, I agree with both points. Nominally, there are about 700,000 more houses than there are households in the country as a whole. I agree also that a large number of empty and surplus houses could be released through proper arrangements for encouraging landlords to let, and we are dealing with that aspect in the Housing Bill.

This is a free country, where people are free to settle and live where they can, if they can find a house that they can afford. Many are concerned at the phenomenon of people selling up in London and moving out, so putting pressure on house prices and pricing out local people. The hon. Member for Hammersmith made that point. In a free country, that cannot and should not be prevented; there is no way in which it can be stopped. It would surely make matters worse to bring down the shutters on further development. It would not be the richer, incoming people who would lose as a result, because they could afford to buy more expensive houses.

If we wish to preserve our heritage of mixed communities in towns and villages—having mixed tenures, mixed incomes, and different ways of life—we must allow houses to be provided to meet the expected demand from less well-off, new households. Housing association houses to rent, increasingly in the changing circumstances of today, have much going for them in serving that purpose.

Much land can be found from within the urban areas. It is vital that redundant land in our towns and cities is fully used. We have encouraged house builders to look at opportunities in those areas and, where necessary, we provide funding through city grant and derelict land grant. The urban development corporations, including the London Docklands development corporation, play an important part in bringing back disused or derelict land into use. Those policies have been very successful, and more than half the land developed for housing in London and the south-east is recycled or vacant land in built-up areas.

The rate at which agricultural land is taken for development is now running at less than one third of the level seen in the 1960s and 1970s. Despite all that, some land will be needed on new sites outside existing urban areas. In some cases, as I said during Question Time, that might most appropriately be land around existing settlements. In others, it may be appropriate in a few cases to think of new settlements. Whatever housing is built, and however it is built, it cannot come without planning permission. It is for local councils to decide where development should take place. The extent to which planning is a local function is often overlooked. Ninety-eight per cent. of planning consents are given by local authorities, and only 2 per cent. on appeal.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend will forgive me if I continue, because I wish to make a little more progress.

The area where housing and planning policies arouse the most controversy is in the south-east; that is the price we pay for economic success in that area. As the House knows, in the south-east we work with local authorities through SERPLAN and the London Planning Advisory Committee to forecast future housing requirements in general and to agree figures for each London borough and shire county. I am glad to report that in conjunction with SERPLAN we are expecting a lower rate of new house building in the south-east over previous years in the projections for 1991 to 2001.

Several factors are at work. First, we are providing wider opportunities for renting in the Housing Bill, and we expect to see better use made of the existing stock, as private landlords in particular will once again have an incentive to let their property. That will bring many vacant houses and flats into use and reduce the need for new build.

Secondly, partly as a result of the huge disparity in house prices and costs between the south-east and other

[Mr. Ridley]

regions, but also thanks to the action we are taking in the inner cities, other regions of the country are becoming more attractive as places to which both people and businesses may move. Unemployment is falling rapidly in all regions, and fastest of all in the west midlands, the north-west and the north. House-building levels are rising in most regions outside London. The only area where they are not doing so is the west midlands. Land prices are rising fast.

We have a £3 billion per year programme of improvement to the older industrial areas and cities to attract private investment, and to improve infrastructure and skills in inner cities. We have seven urban development corporations up and running, and four more are in the process of being established.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: No, I will not give way.

Those factors are beginning to take the pressure off the south. Firms are beginning to follow economic logic and to move away from the skills shortages and high prices of the south-east. All that is helping to reverse what has been a net flow of population out of the old industrial areas to the prosperous south. I am glad to tell the House that there is now a small but growing net migration away from the south-east and we expect that to continue and accelerate.

The provision previously agreed with SERPLAN was for 460,000 extra homes in the period 1991-2001, but the household projections released earlier this year suggest that provision might need to rise by a further 150,000 in that period. However, I am glad to repeat that new evidence produced by SERPLAN last week now suggests that a further 30,000 to 50,000 dwellings will become available by 1991. Therefore, the extra provision needed after 1991 will be only 100,000 to 120,000, which means that we shall need between 560,000 and 580,000 new homes altogether in that period rather than 610,000 which we had earlier calculated.

It is now up to SERPLAN and the local authorities concerned to propose where those houses should be built through regional guidance, the county structure plans and the district plans. That development must be well planned and locally planned. We expect, first, that in drawing up those plans local authorities should ensure that there is no unsuitable development in the green belt. I have made it perfectly plain over and over again that the green belt must be preserved.

Mr. Couchman: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way, because I know that he wants to make progress. There is dismay in Kent at his refusal to give permission on the Dartford and Crayford marshes—1,000 acres of derelict land that should never have been scheduled as green belt—because it will put extreme pressure on urban constituencies such as my own, where his Department, through the Property Services Agency, is seeking to build houses on the only green land in the Medway towns.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend intervened at the precise moment when I was saying that we have made it plain that green belt must be preserved. It would have been a complete contradiction of that policy if we had agreed to the development to which my hon. Friend refers. However, if the precise area of the green belt and its location is not thought by the local people to be correct, they can perfectly well propose an alteration of the green belt boundaries and have that approved through the normal processes. That is the way to achieve what my hon. Friend seeks, rather than to ask me to break the very guidelines about the green belt that I have made clear.

I sum up by saying that, in 1981, only 12·6 per cent. of the south-east outside London was built up. If the extra demand that I have described is met by 2001, it is unlikely that that figure will rise beyond 13·7 per cent. That means that 86·3 per cent of the home counties would still not be built up, which is hardly concreting over the whole of the south-east.

The role of district councils here is crucial. I mentioned local plans. Last week we issued a new draft circular on district plans. Only about 10 per cent. of local authorities have fully up-to-date approved local plans covering the whole of their area. They are the vital missing ingredient in the planning system. The lack of them is one reason why planning authorities sometimes find themselves losing an appeal and why, for example, people are unclear where green belt borders are and where local development is likely to occur.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith welcomed the emphasis on local people planning where development should take place, but he asked why that right had been taken away. It was never taken away. The fact of the matter is that 90 per cent. of district councils in the south-east do not have up-to-date local plans and I am urging them to do so. That is the way for them to take control of where developments should take place.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the Secretary of State accept that the other concern of local people and their elected representatives, with which he has not yet dealt, is that the housing that is built needs to be affordable? That is the crucial issue about development in London, the south-east or elsewhere. It is no good building homes if nobody can afford to rent or buy them.

Mr. Ridley: The only way that I could bring down the price of houses in the south-east would be to allow planning restrictions to be stripped away so that the price of land fell dramatically. However, if he will only bear with me, I can tell the hon. Gentleman of some further plans. I should not have given way to him. Everybody tries to intervene just as I am about to answer their question.

Mr. Morgan: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ridley: No.

It is clear to me in the discussions that I have had with local authorities in the south-east that we all realise that a balance has to be struck. High house prices in the south are contributing to the pressures on businesses and people to move away. But there is still tremendous demand for housing in the south-east, even at those high prices, which also causes those high prices.

Demand is rising chiefly due to social factors. There are more single-person households. People are not getting married or are living alone longer before marriage and can often afford to buy at the prices prevailing. More people are getting divorced. Old people are living longer in their own homes. It is those phenomena, not primarily the increase in population, coupled with the difficulty of

finding new sites for housing, which are causing tremendous problems for the people at the bottom of the ladder and increasing the pressures which eventually cause homelessness.

I should just point out that the people described as "homeless" in our statistics, which Opposition Members are always quoting at us, as they did at Question Time today, are those with a priority right to be housed by councils under the homelessness provisions in the Housing Act 1985. Therefore, it is a misleading term, as those "homeless" households listed in the statistics are all found accommodation, many going straight into permanent homes.

I said at the beginning of my speech that the ability to ensure that everyone has access to a decent home depends partly on our willingness to release land for new house building through the planning process. But that is only part of the solution. There will always be people who cannot afford the economic cost of housing, and we accept that the Government must ensure that there are mechanisms to provide subsidised housing for those who need it—social housing. That we are doing in a number of ways.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way.

Mr. Ridley: No, I will not.

First, the Housing Bill will bring a large number of existing empty privately owned properties on to the market. There are about half a million empty private properties, and there will be greater incentives for people to let rooms in their homes and for landlords to build or convert for rent.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith referred to a figure, which I do not confirm, of only 2·5 per cent. being frustrated by the Rent Acts. Even that figure would result in 13,750 extra properties coming on to the rented market. I believe that the figure would be much higher, and so does SERPLAN. That would make a great contribution to ending the housing shortage in the areas concerned.

Secondly, we are providing for local authorities to be able to offer transferable discounts to people in council accommodation in areas of housing shortage who want to move out and buy, thus making available their accommodation for letting to new tenants.

Thirdly, we are considering ways in which the 112,000 empty council houses can be brought into use. It is a scandal that the number of empties in London exceeds the numbers in bed and breakfast. There is clearly a consensus in the House for early action to get empties back into use. We have had to consider statutory measures to achieve this. We will be putting forward proposals for legislation in the next Session to make best use of local authority stock and reduce their dependence on temporary accommodation.

In the meantime, I intend to use existing powers to ask all authorities to give me details of all their empty property. We need up-to-date information. Authorities which manage their stock efficiently will already have such data readily available. I will also be asking authorities in future HIP rounds to include with their submissions statements of their policy to minimise the number of empty dwellings. We will be consulting the local authority associations about these proposals in the near future.

Fourthly, we have made available a further £74 million in allocations in the stress areas over the last six months, much of it to tackle the immediate problem of homelessness.

Mr. Soley: When the Secretary of State brings those new powers to bear on local authorities, will he also ensure that the law is drafted in a way that makes it apply to Government-owned empty properties, because 6·9 per cent. of the Government's housing stock is empty, compared with 2·5 per cent. of local authorities' housing stock, which is the lowest of all? Secondly, why was that not a problem before 1979?

Mr. Ridley: The answer to the second question is that economic recovery has completely changed the demand for housing. Under the policies of frustration and despair employed by the Labour party, the trouble was that half the people could not afford to leave home and buy their own houses.

Fifthly, the Bill will result in more new housing being provided for rent. Deregulation, coupled with the welcome Budget tax changes affecting landlords, will once again make rented housing a worthwhile proposition for the reputable private investor. It will also open the door to genuine private investment in new development by housing associations. That will enable the Housing Corporation's programme of support for housing associations to stretch further, and the grant element of that support, together with the corporation's supervisory effort—backed up with the new tenants' guarantee—will ensure that housing association accommodation remains within the reach of those on low incomes.

The corporation's grant programme is set to grow from £737 million in the current year to £850 million by 1990-91, and to that can be added any money attracted from the private sector. All those measures will bring additional dwellings into use, although I cannot estimate the numbers precisely.

I have resisted the temptation to catalogue the real chaos in housing management in some town halls run by the Labour party: uncollected rents, properties lying empty while families are housed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, bad management, neglect and decay. I would be the first to admit that local authorities cannot be blamed for all of that. *The Economist*—not a paper from which I normally quote—last week described the mess into which misguided policies of rent control and mass provision of council houses had plunged our rented housing policy:

"The obvious solvent for this mess is a flourishing competitive rental market at all levels of housing".

That is what we are trying to create, and what the Labour party seems to be trying to frustrate. I ask the House to reject the motion with disdain.

4.42 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I should like briefly to cover three important aspects of housing policy connected with the motion.

The first aspect is the whole issue of the housing finance system, irrespective of the type of tenure involved. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) asked my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) what would be the Labour party's likely attitude to mortgage tax relief. I cannot answer that question, but I will say one thing that may be of help to the hon. Gentleman and

[Mr. George Howarth]

others. I find it rather strange that at a time when mortgage interest tax relief is going up and up—the current level is £5 billion—the Government seem to have set no upper limit at which in the future it will be capped and stopped. At the same time housing benefit has been clawed back substantially. The move was so unpopular that the Government had to introduce a transitional arrangement, but even that has not bridged the gap and solved the difficulties.

Mr. Gow: The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that the level at which mortgage interest tax relief is paid is demand-led. It will, however, be of some consolation to him to know that, following the reductions in the top income tax rate from 60 to 40 per cent. and in the basic rate from 27 to 25 per cent., the cost of tax relief on mortgage interest has gone down.

Mr. Howarth: That is an inevitable consequence of such changes. I still contend that the basic principles by which mortgage interest tax relief operates means that technically it can continue to rise irrespective of the changes that the tax system may impose in other areas. Mortgage interest tax relief contributes little or nothing to the development of sound housing policies. Most serious studies have concluded that its net effect has simply been to put up house prices. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith is quite right. At some stage either the party in power or a collection of parties must discuss the consequences of a policy which, while it may be superficially popular with the electorate, contributes nothing to housing policy and certainly does nothing to create more acceptable housing.

The Secretary of State, in his closing remarks, talked as though the Housing Bill heralded a new dawn of private rented housing that would act as a yardstick against which all other types of tenure could be judged. He and the Minister of State have yet to demonstrate, despite the Bill's three and a half months in Committee, how that is to happen. The diagnosis of the difficulties suffered by the private rented sector in the past 30 years or so has little to do with the Rent Acts and other landlord-and-tenant legislation; it has everyting to do with the economics of property ownership and what can be obtained by simply selling the property or by hanging on and getting the capital appreciation. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith hammers that point home every time he gets the chance.

It does not matter whether the legislation creates economic rents, or a whole new series of types of tenancies. The truth is that any kind of tenant living in a property whose value is constantly growing—in central London that is happening at an alarming rate—will be an interference with the accumulation of capital which any sensible person would avoid. I do not believe—perhaps the Secretary of State does, but I do not think that many of his colleagues do, certainly not the civil servants—that all those new private tenancies will be created. It simply will not happen.

Mr. Tony Banks: If my hon. Friend visits the east end of London and looks at the London Docklands development corporation area he will see that, although a number of properties are available for rent, the rents range from £300 or £350 a week to about £750. Who would spend that amount on rent when he could get mortgage interest tax relief? People in the east end could not possibly do so.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend is perfectly right. It is obvious that with those rent levels the homeless certainly will not be encouraged to rent; indeed, it will be impossible for them to do so, just as it will be impossible for all those in serious housing need categories to pay such rents. The net effect is that some people will be housed, but not those in the most need. The present housing finance system does not make sense. It does not serve housing policy at all. It simply suits certain populist ideas with which the Government wish to be associated.

The Minister of State and others have said many complimentary things about housing associations. One of my concerns is housing co-operatives. I believe that the Government sincerely want housing co-operatives and associations to continue to provide for people in housing need, using their high levels of housing management expertise.

There is a difficulty about introducing private finance, and although the Minister knows of it we must hammer it home at every opportunity. If one introduces a combination of private finance and housing association grant into the equation, for an investor—in the form of a building society or other financial institution such as a bank—to get the guarantees that he needs on a property, difficulties will arise in many areas in which there are low values and high costs, of which Knowsley is an example. The net effect in my area would be that the cost of building a house would have to be reduced by about £10,000. I accept that the Minister of State supports the continued existence of housing associations and has made supportive statements about co-operatives, but the introduction of private finance into these areas may result in a fall in the standards of housing provided by housing associations and co-operatives. I hope that that will not happen and that steps will be taken in the Department of the Environment's current review to ensure that it will not.

Finally, I mention some of my worries about local authority housing. I, like my hon. Friends—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"]. Conservative Members are making great play of where my hon. Friends are, but perhaps we should stick to the subject—*[Interruption.]* It is interesting that a signal went round the Conservative Benches to create that interruption, and Conservative Members thought they would take the chance to make sedentary interventions. I shall continue with the subject in hand.

Some of the difficulties with council housing have been caused by the Government since 1979. To be honest, some of them relate to the way in which council housing has been managed and maintained at local level. So it is not always a question of what the Government have done. However, the Government have consistently withdrawn the capital investment that is needed for housing stock since 1979, and that is a major factor in the growing problem of disrepair. The Minister should be aware that my borough needs more than £20 millon a year for its housing investment programme to keep its stock at something approaching a reasonable level. At present it receives £4·5 million from central Government. It manages by means of a series of devices—leaseback and other schemes that local authorities have to use—to get that up to £11 million. There will be a gap of about £10 million a

year in the money needed merely to keep the stock in a decent state of repair. Therefore, there will be a continuing problem of disrepair because there is not enough money in the system to deal with it.

Whatever Conservative Members may believe ideologically about council housing, it is becoming worse and more starved of resources. In support of my point, I wish to quote from an article by an objective commentator in last week's *New Statesman—[Interruption.]* The article is by Anne Power, who has been a director of the Government-sponsored priority estates project, which intensively tackles the problems of Britain's worst council estates. Conservative Members may laugh at the publication for which she writes, but they should at least take her seriously because the Government have been footing the bill for her work for the past nine years.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Conservative Members are laughing at the *New Statesman*, but my hon. Friend will recall that the Secretary of State quoted *The Economist* as though it were a lofty, objective, politically neutral publication, whereas it is a Right-wing Tory rag. It is hardly surprising that the right hon. Gentleman quoted it in his own support.

Mr. Howarth: I should imagine that any journal that agreed with the Secretary of State would be almost unpublishable by definition.

Speaking about council housing and Government legislation, Anne Power says:

"But the context of the current changes is entirely negative. Demoralised staff working in the housing departments of local authorities face an uncertain future. There is intense competition for access to housing in areas of shortage; and council housing is becoming increasingly ghettoised."

That is the effect of Government policies on local authority housing, whatever the inherent problems. The Secretary of State spoke as though the problems of council housing were the result of Labour-controlled authorities' policies. The Government have been in power long enough to have done something about the problem if they believe that, yet they have done nothing.

Conservative Members know that the Government's housing policies have failed over the past nine years. The Government are on a fast track to even greater failure in future.

4.57 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I want to refer to two elements in my right hon. Friend's amendment and to two elements in the Opposition motion.

I commend the words in the amendment that commit the Government to ending

"the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for families as quickly as possible."

My right hon. Friend was right to remind the House that 28,000 houses and flats owned by local authorities have been empty for more than 12 months. Part of the tragedy of empty council houses and flats is that the authorities with the largest number of empty houses and flats that have been empty for the longest periods are often precisely those with the greatest number of homeless people.

I warmly welcome the initiative of my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning in allocating extra resources to the local authorities with problems of homelessness and of empty accommodation. It is by no means always the case that the reason for those 28,000 houses and flats being empty for more than 12 months is that the local authorities concerned have not had enough money to put them in order. The overwhelming majority of people who have the misfortune to live in unsatisfactory bed-and-breakfast accommodation would prefer to live in a house or flat, even though it is not ideal.

Secondly, I refer to the part of the amendment that testifies to the truth that since 1979 the Government's housing policies have

"helped more people than ever before to own their own homes".

That dramatic escalation of home ownership in the past nine years—an escalation more rapid than at any time in our history—has not been welcomed with total enthusiasm by the Opposition——

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: I give way, of course, to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Banks: I do not know what that says about the hon. Gentleman or about me, but I shall accept it.

Why, if the Government have such a wonderful record, has homelessness doubled since 1979?

Mr. Gow: Part of the reason for the increase in homelessness is that we have never had as many as 28,000 council-owned houses and flats empty for more than 12 months. Part of the reason for the extra nominally homeless people and genuinely homeless people is the tragedy of empty houses. I shall presently deal with empty houses in the private sector.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Gow: I give way to the solitary representative of the Liberal party.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I am honoured to be that. The hon. Gentleman's analysis is wrong. If he looks at the figures given to me yesterday by the Under-Secretary of State about the percentage of new lets that go to the homeless, he will see that over the last eight years Tory, Labour and Liberal-controlled local authorities have substantially increased the number of properties let to the homeless. In Bromley the increase was 100 per cent. and in Birmingham and Manchester it was over 400 per cent.—as in my borough. The problem is not that properties are empty and not let by local authorities, but that the number of homeless people is greater because there are no homes for them.

Mr. Gow: One cannot escape the truth that if the empty houses and flats owned by local authorities and those owned by the private sector were occupied there would be a complete and immediate solution to the problem of homelessness.

I note that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) did not bring himself to criticise the Government's record of nearly 3 million more properties in owner-occupation in 1988 than in 1979. The hon. Gentleman nods in agreement. I think that by his silent approval—and possibly he speaks for his party—he welcomes that impressive increase in home ownership. There is an important political consequence of the dramatic increase in home ownership. The more that the ownership of homes, of capital, increases, the greater will be the reluctance of the people to support the hon. Member for Newham, North-West and his hon. Friends.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Gow: I give way to the hon. Gentleman who no longer represents Keighley, but who is a Member of the European Parliament.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that I call it the Common Market Assembly, because that more accurately reflects what it is. It has no powers of legislation. The hon. Gentleman is eulogising home ownership. What attempt will he make to convert his Government to giving people in private rented accommodation the right to buy in the way that they have foisted on local authorities legislation to force them to give that opportunity to tenants?

Mr. Gow: There is a great distinction, which is not appreciated either by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), who is the sole occupant of the Opposition Front Bench, or by his hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). The hon. Member for Bradford, South has tempted me into giving him an analogy. It is open to the hon. Gentleman to take his hon. Friends the Members for Bootle and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and give them a sumptuous dinner at Le Gavroche and pay for it out of his own pocket. That is legitimate, but it would be illegitimate for the hon. Member for Bradford, South to take his two hon. Friends to Le Gavroche and pay for the dinner out of public funds. That is the distinction. The Government were entitled to grant the right to buy to public sector tenants because every house and flat owned by local authorities was financed by public money. Therefore, it is open to the Government to lay down the terms for their tenants in the same way as it is open to the private landlord to lay down terms for his tenants.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): The hon. Gentleman is saying that it is legitimate for the Government to force local authorities to give big discounts and to spend public money on giving people the right to buy. That has nothing to do with increasing owner-occupation or with the rights or freedoms of council tenants. It is an attack on the public rented sector. If the Government and Conservative Members really believe in increasing owner-occupation and in freedom of choice for tenants, they would grant the same privileges to the tenants of the private landlord. They are interested only in making profit out of housing.

Mr. Gow: When the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) returns to the Opposition Front Bench and finds out what has happened in his absence, he will not be pleased that he left the Chamber. The hon. Member for Bootle gave the impression to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who has a greater knowledge and experience of these matters than any hon. Member now in the Chamber, that he was opposed, not only to the right to buy, but to the discounts presently offered by the Government. That impression was given not only to my hon. Friend but to many other hon. Members who were listening carefully to the hon. Member for Bootle.

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Gow: I give way to the hon. Gentleman even though his hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith is not beside him to correct him as he speaks.

Mr. Roberts: The whole House knows that nine years ago, when the Conservative Government started the policy of forcing councils to sell houses at large discounts, the Labour party opposed it. We said that the best of the houses would be sold and that the councils would be left with the rest. That has happened. The best of the houses have been sold. One can no longer oppose the sale of what has already been sold. Conservative Members find that amusing, but if the best of the houses have been sold there is no point in opposing the sale. We have never advocated the taking back of any council houses that have been sold. That was a lie put about by Conservative Members on doorsteps during the general election. We can no longer oppose the selling of council houses, because they have been sold.

Mr. Gow: I have exciting news for the hon. Gentleman. The process of giving tenants the right to buy their houses or flats is continuing. There are still hundreds of thousands of actual and prospective tenants who will wish to take advantage of the choice given to them by the Government. We thought that the hon. Gentleman had been converted to supporting that choice, but henceforward there will be great doubt in the House and outside about whether the Opposition are still in favour of choice.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Does my hon. Friend agree that the comments by the Opposition show that they are completely adrift? They say that only the best sell. But because the cost-floor provisions have prevented the sale at massive discounts of brand new houses—the better end, if one likes, of the housing stock—the bulk of the sales have been of pre-war houses and of houses built in the 1950s and early 1960s. That is where maximum discounts have been of the greatest benefit to council tenants.

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. Houses and flats that range from the not-so-good to the very good have been sold as a result of choice. Alas, the percentage of flats has been much lower than the percentage of houses.

Mr. Allan Roberts: What percentage?

Mr. Gow: I have given way many times, and I am mindful of what Mr. Speaker said at the start of the debate.

I should now like to turn to the motion in the names of the hon. Member for Hammersmith and his hon. Friends. The motion speaks about

"the shortage of low cost housing for rent or sale."

The Housing Bill will bring into use some of the empty accommodation presently in the private sector. Following the enactment of the Bill, the owners of those houses will be encouraged to let them. I say that because since 1915 rent legislation designed to assist the prospective tenant has actually injured the real or prospective tenant.

By our Rent Act policy we have injured the very people whom we were trying to help. Twin evils have flowed from that legislation—security of tenure and rent control. As the Opposition will discover, under the Housing Bill, unused or under-used accommodation will be brought into use and we shall attract significant new investment for the conversion of existing property to let and the construction of new property to let—something that we have not been able to do since the war. That is most welcome and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on the Bill.

I now come to my final and most controversial point, which deals with the part of the Opposition motion that refers to the

"growing crisis of house price inflation."

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, the only way in which we shall be able to arrest, and later diminish, the rise in house prices is to build more houses, and to build them in those parts of the country where they are most needed. I agree that sites available in urban areas must be developed, but we must also recognise another long-term feature of the supply of land. In the coming years, land that is used at present for agricultural purposes will no longer be required for those purposes. If agricultural land that is not particularly good is to be put to better use, if the owner of that land wishes to sell, if a builder wishes to buy it, if the builder, having built on the land that the farmer or owner wished to sell can find a purchaser for the house or flat, there is a presumption in favour of granting planning permission. I am not saying that that presumption is not rebuttable.

I say to my hon. Friends who, like me, represent constituencies in the south-east that in the coming years we shall be unable simply to say to the Minister for Housing and Planning, or the district councils, that there must be no more building on green sites in the south of England. It is the duty of those who are responsible for planning to ensure that the available land is put to the best use. If today there is no longer the same need for the agricultural use of land, the best use for some of it is most emphatically for housing. Only in that way will we be able to solve a problem that is familiar to my hon. Friends the Members for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) and for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), both of whom realise that people from the north and the midlands are seeking, and may have found, employment in the south-east, but cannot bring their families here. They will not be able to bring their families here unless we can increase the supply of land in the south-east.

The Opposition motion shows a scant recognition of the truth that, after nine years of Conservative Government, the overwhelming majority of our people are better housed than ever before. I commend to the House the policies of my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning and the terms of the amendment to the motion.

5.13 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The Opposition motion as originally tabled referred to the chaos in the Government's housing and planning policies, but the Table Office said that that infringed the rules in some way, so it had to be changed.

We have an opportunity to reflect on the stage that the Government's housing and planning policies have reached a year into their third term of office, and when for the first time for many years the Department of the Environment has one Minister of State who is responsible for both housing and planning. I reflect too, in passing, that at times those policies seem to have been best symbolised by the recent state of the Department of the Environment. Its telephone system has just been changed. Nobody could get through from the outside to the inside, and it certainly looks as if nobody could get through from the inside to the inside. If the left hand has not seemed to know what the right hand was doing—or if one of the two right hands has not known what the other was doing—perhaps that is the explanation, although when the same Minister is responsible for two areas of departmental policy it is usual to expect him to talk to himself enough to get policy agreed.

Last month we had a debate on a private Member's motion tabled by the hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), which gave the Government an opportunity to comment on their planning policies. They gave estimates of the amount of land needed, the number of houses needed and so on. I made two fairly uncontroversial points. I am not in the habit of quoting or even referring to my own recent contributions, but one of the points I then made was that the Government should bring empty property into use. That is vital, and if the Government did that we could proceed incrementally to deal with the shortage of housing.

The second was that we should assess how much provision was already made for new housing in structure plans and so on, and that if we did that accurately, we would find that there was quite a lot of provision. During that debate, the Government gave specific estimates for housing need in the south-east, after assessing the figures for each county. Yet last Friday the *Financial Times* carried the headline

"South East Homes Need Scaled Down".

We read that the Secretary of State for the Environment had

"scaled down by up to a third the number of extra new houses expected to be needed to cope with demand in London and the South-East."

I was pleased to read that the first two of the three reasons given by the Secretary of State were precisely the points that I made in my speech. The first was:

"Between 30,000 and 50,000 units are likely to become available in the form of empty residences coming onto the market."

The second was:

"More land is available and more houses are under construction or are more likely to be built by 1990 than had been expected."

It seems to me that those in the Department who deal with forecasts of the number of homes needed had not consulted adequately those in charge of monitoring county structure plans, who deal with the land supply and the number of homes that counties think will be needed. The figures did not add up. The fact that the figures have been scaled down is welcome, and I hope that we shall get even more accurate figures in future. However, there appears to have been substantial confusion about the real need and demand for housing, and it is about time that that confusion was sorted out.

There is one other relevant statistic on planning. The London Planning Advisory Committee, a body established by the Government, reported on 23 May. It had surveyed land in London and found enough for between 225,000 and 300,000 new homes in Greater London by the year 2000—enough for London to cope with its own growth. I was therefore interested to read an article by the Secretary of State in today's edition of *The Daily Telegraph*. That gave the old figures, whereas this afternoon he gave us the new figures, which presumably means that he was working on last week's brief in the article and the figures were not corrected. The article said that it was expected that only 150,000 to 200,000 of the 600,000 new homes needed could be supplied in London. However, according to the LPAC figure it now appears that 250,000 will be available in London, and the total

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

figure for the south-east has been scaled down so that it is now as low as 500,000. I am sure that hon. Members who represent the home counties would like to know whether the LPAC assessment is accurate and what the implications are for green field development in the south east.

There is a postscript to what the LPAC said. The Secretary of State ducked this issue completely in his speech. It recommended that 100,000 of the new homes for London should be affordable. The Secretary of State went through his list of measures, but one cannot legislate to deregulate the housing sector and take away rent controls without reducing the chance of providing homes at a cost that people can afford.

I welcome the fact that planning authorities are to be given more power. Of course there should be district plans, and decentralisation is vital. There should be decentralisation to the regions, too, but the Government have not helped that by abolishing the strategic planning powers in Greater London and the metropolitan areas. The sooner we get back to strategic regional planning, the better.

We should also include in the evaluation of development the quality of life. It is vital that planning and development are seen to be qualitatively acceptable. People in villages, towns and cities all over Britain want to live in pleasant environments. It was ironic to wake up this morning to hear, as colleagues must also have done, the Prime Minister speaking from Toronto, saying that what was wonderful about Toronto was the quality of life there and how clean it was—as I understood it, that was even without her picking up the litter.

If the market is the arbiter of planning policy, quality of life considerations are not allowed to determine policy. That is a fundamental flaw. Indeed, it is not even a free and perfect market because it will be distorted by those with the money—the developers—who will be unfairly competing against those with a need for housing and who want most an environmentally acceptable environment. As the argument about the market is flawed, the Government should no longer adhere to it. We must re-evaluate these criteria seriously and urgently.

By contrast, I do not think that there has been any dispute about the Government's objectives for housing policy. They are clear: first, to permit the market for private rented housing to operate freely; secondly, to reduce the amount of housing owned by councils by diversification of rented social housing; and, thirdly, to bring in private money. The Minister for Housing and Planning made clear the Government's primary motivation in the Committee debate on the Housing Bill in February when he stated:

"at this stage the primary purpose is to introduce greater plurality to the near monopoly holders, the municipal sector." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 25 February 1988; c. 1166.]

Tenants' choice is a mechanism—it is not an objective. That is clearly reflected in the fact that the voting system has now been changed and that it is so biased in favour of transfers and not in favour of people having a democratic choice——

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): It is not voting.

Mr. Hughes: No, it is not voting, but the Government would have us believe that it is a system like voting. Also it is principally the landlords' choice, not the tenants'. No doubt we shall debate that issue again next week.

Given the Government's objectives, the chaos in their housing policies has been amazing. First, in the general election campaign the Government were all over the place with their housing policies, just as they were with their education policies. The Prime Minister had to back-track, clarify and modify.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): On that occasion, "all over the place" was also first place.

Mr. Hughes: The Government always argue that one. The Minister knows that since 1979 his party has gone to the country three times and that every time its share of the vote has decreased. One political distortion that people outside the House may never understand is that in our general elections fewer people can vote for the Conservative party, but more Conservative Members may arrive in this place. It is a pretty funny system when seen from outside, let alone from inside. I do not accept the Minister's proposition. The Conservative party may be in first place, but that is under an equally perverted voting system.

The second cause of chaos and confusion was that, having forecast a year of massive legislation for the Department of the Environment, the Department was short of civil servants and had to recruit staff from the private sector. Then it rushed out the Housing Bill, got it wrong, and had to reprint it. Then the Government did not make their housing policy clear until they were in Committee. The Minister had to perform an exercise that looked a little like trying to discern the shape of Dover castle as one crosses the Channel on a cloudy day—as one gets nearer, one sees a bit more, until eventually one can see what shape the castle is—or the legislation. The Government's housing policy was clearly being made, in the now famous phrase, "on the hoof".

Mr. Battle: It is now a fallen monument.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) adds from a sedentary position that the Government's housing policy is now a fallen monument.

The Government then said that there would be a social landlords' charter before Report stage. Not only has one not materialised, but what was pretended to be it was not one. Next, we were promised more support for tenants' co-operatives and a quick and speedy review. However, it has just been announced that that will not be completed until December, when presumably the Housing Bill will be law.

Two Ministers gave answers to my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) and to myself about homelessness legislation saying that the Government had no plans to change the laws——

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest) *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: No, I shall not give way, because I do not have the time——

Mr. Coombs: It is on that specific point.

Mr. Hughes: No, I shall not give way. The Government said that they did not have any plans to change the law on homelessness or the Housing Act 1985, but last week the Secretary of State said that they did.

Lastly, the Secretary of State for Wales then came up with a further idea for giving away council houses. Interestingly, that idea was nearly approved by the Wilson Labour Government and I can produce evidence of that. The idea now appears to be going before the Cabinet.

The Government's housing policy has changed fundamentally during the past year, and even now the Government still do not seem to have caught up with themselves.

We have identified homelessness as an issue. I must advise the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) that he was not right—all local authorities have catered in their properties for many people who are homeless. The reality is that, for various reasons, there are now more homeless people. Housing them should be the Government's first priority.

We must deal with the cost of housing, both for rent and for sale. House price inflation has now been taken out of the retail price index and is thus not reflected in the normal inflation figures. If it were, the inflation figures would be much higher. House price inflation is enhanced by policies for housing which must be reformed. I noticed with interest that the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden)—a Conservative Member—argued in *The Daily Telegraph* of Tuesday 7 June 1988, first that mortgage interest tax relief should be abolished, and secondly:

"mortgage relief conflicts head-on with every tenet of modern Tory philosophy."

He effectively argued that it is inconsistent with the self-help, non-dependency culture. On the same day, the editorial of *The Daily Telegraph* made a similar point, stating:

"The time has surely come when the Government should think again, as Mr. Walden argues, about the sense of subsidising house purchase regardless of the circumstances of the purchaser."

When it comes to the crunch, the Government avoid the issue or do not honour their promises. That has happened in relation to the green belt, and over planning. The Secretary of State voted for the Okehampton Bypass (Confirmation of Orders) Bill and for the Hampshire (Lyndhurst Bypass) Bill, breaching respectively a national park and the New Forest. When it comes to housing policy and price rises in the rented sector——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam) *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: No, I shall not give way.

When it comes to housing policy and price rises in the rented sector and when an opportunity to deal with that is offered by legislating for affordable rents, the Secretary of State rejects it. When it comes to price rises in the private sector of owner-occupation, and when an opportunity to curb that through reducing mortgage interest tax relief is offered to the Secretary of State he rejects it, even when that opportunity is put forward from within his own party.

The Government's policies on housing and planning have been in amazing chaos for the past 12 months. I only hope that the Government now sort themselves out, deal with the real problems and honour the obligations that they, as a Government, have to the British people.

5.28 pm

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): The most pressing problem in my constituency, and elsewhere in the county of Berkshire, is massive development. It has spawned a slightly offensive new phrase—that we are all Nimbys—we are all Not-in-My-Back-Yard followers. We find that offensive, for reasons that I shall outline briefly to the House.

Successive hon. Members of all parties have made it clear that the major problem is high house prices, especially in the south-east. We can take as an example Bracknell district council, which is the authority covering the area where most of the extra houses will be built and where many extra houses have already been built. That district council has been forward-looking in its house building policy. It has a certain amount of land that it has owned for several years, which it has sold to developers at historic land cost price on the clear understanding that that price will be reflected in the house prices to enable first-time buyers to purchase those houses. More to the point, it has insisted that the purchasers be nominated by the district council and that those nominated should be either existing tenants or people on the council house waiting lists.

For those who cannot afford to purchase outright with the help of a mortgage, even at those relatively modest house purchase prices—for the Thames valley—the district council has agreed to retain various chunks of the houses—50 per cent., 40 per cent. or 30 per cent.—with rent to be paid on that percentage. As the owners of those houses prosper, they can purchase the extra sections from the district council. That shows the progressive and imaginative polices of our district council. We are still prepared to build houses—not council houses, which are not in the interests of the community, but low-cost houses for purchase.

In the past 15 years, we have agreed to a large number of houses, but enough is enough. We have some responsibility to future generations to keep some green fields in Berkshire. I readily acknowledge what my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) said: agricultural production will reduce and some agricultural land must be brought under development, but that should be in rural areas, not areas such as central Berkshire. If we build on the remaining few green-field sites, we shall have a long urban sprawl from London, through Slough and Reading, to Bristol, with no decent environment whatever.

It is all very well for developers to build houses, but there is no infrastructure to go with them. We have overcrowded roads and terrific pressure on social services, hospitals and schools which make life extremely difficult. It is in the national interest not to continue developing Berkshire at a fast rate.

Unusually, I fall out with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne when he says that we have many successful companies, particularly high-tech companies, in the south-east, so unemployed men and women in a region of high unemployment should get on their bikes and move to the south-east, and we should build extra houses for them. If we take that to its logical conclusion, we shall have an environmental wasteland in the south-east and an industrial desert in the north. That is not the sort of country where I want to live; nor do I believe it is the sort of country where the great majority of people wish to live.

[Mr. Andrew MacKay]

I believe in market forces and democracy. Locally elected people should decide where they want extra companies or houses to be built. It is more than likely that, in an area of negative unemployment, such as Bracknell and the royal borough of Windsor, the planning authority will not encourage extra development of houses, factories and offices. Conversely, a local councillor in a region of high unemployment will bend over backwards to grant planning permission for housing, factory and office developments.

It must be in the national interest to encourage more firms to move to areas of high unemployment. That does not mean following the old path of bribes and regional grants, which barely worked. It means allowing market forces to work. We in Bracknell do not want any more factories or offices. We have negative unemployment, rising house prices and an overstrained infrastrucure.

Recently a multinational company chairman told me, "The district council will not give us planning permission to build new headquarters. I must warn you, Mr. MacKay, that if you do not pressurise it into giving planning permission, there will be 260 job losses in Bracknell and we shall move elsewhere." I said that we would be delighted for the company to move elsewhere, because we had a large number of companies which found it difficult to recruit staff, so if my constituents were made unemployed they would get a nice redundancy package—it would be like winning the pools—and the following week they would find new jobs in Bracknell and there would be less pressure on our infrastructure. He turned white and said, "This has been a waste of a rather expensive lunch," and it had been.

We must allow market forces to operate. If the Thames valley discourages the building of more offices and factories, and if house prices rise so that employers cannot find skilled workers and managers, companies will increasingly move to other regions which will improve employment opportunities elsewhere. I am glad to say that several companies in my constituency have expanded into other parts where there is high unemployment. That reduces unit labour costs and makes the enterprise more efficient.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Why will it reduce unit labour costs?

Mr. MacKay: I will tell my hon. Friend. Companies are having to bribe people to come to the south-east with extortionately high salaries, which are out of all proportion to the work, and that makes them uneconomic in world markets. It is much wiser to pay the going market rate in another part where there are lower house prices and less pressure on mortgages. That makes evident sense.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Can my hon. Friend explain how he takes his philosophy into the future for young people in the Bracknell area? Does he say that, because there are no houses and no new jobs, they must migrate, or will he forcibly retire their parents to enable them to take their parents' jobs? I find his whole philosophy amazing.

Mr. MacKay: There is a great shortage of people at all levels to work in Bracknell, and any youngster leaving school, college or university can readily find a job on a high salary. We have no shortage of employment——

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend could supply those jobs to my youngsters in the north.

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend surprises me. I thought I had made it abundantly clear that I am encouraging companies to move to the north and employ his constituents. If he does not want his constituents to be employed, it is hardly my fault. Perhaps they should go to Bury instead. With the greatest respect to my hon. Friend, he has missed the point.

Mr. Soley: Let me help the hon. Gentleman, who is getting into difficulties. He is basically right, and he is making the point that I made earlier, but he is trying to pretend that the intervention of local authorities, Members of Parliament or the Government makes for a free market. The whole essence of what we are saying is that the crisis in the south-east is caused by the Government letting loose an unrestrained free-market juggernaut. That is why the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) is worried. He is right to say that this has gone too far and that the Government must intervene and abandon their philosophy.

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Gentleman grossly exaggerates when he says that there is a crisis in the south-east. If we allow local authorities to decide planning permission without intervention by the Secretary of State on appeal, a large number of companies will inevitably move to areas of high unemployment and that will be to the nation's benefit. I believe that in the months ahead that will happen increasingly.

We must take into account a further national factor. The Government, rightly, are a strong supporter of inner-city rejuvenation, and that is applauded by hon. Members on both sides of the House. If developers have a choice between a green-field site in Berkshire and reclaiming land in the inner city, they will inevitably choose a green-field site in Berkshire.

Mr. Patnick: At one stage in my career I was a builder——

Mr. Tony Banks: A jerry-builder.

Mr. Patnick: Far from it, dear boy.

A contractor is drawn to an area by the price of land and communications. From London, it takes one hour 38 minutes to Doncaster, two and a half hours to Sheffield, and how many years to Langbaurgh I do not know. So communications is one of the things which determine where people go. We have beautiful green fields around Sheffield. It is a lovely place to live, but it is difficult to get to Sheffield from here. Sadly, London appears to be the centre of the commercial universe.

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend has made a valid point about communications. I am not so sure that London is any longer the centre of the universe, as he suggests. The congestion on our roads is considerable, and the environment in the south-east is no longer so attractive.

We are told at times by Ministers and by developers that it is essential for the headquarters of many companies to be in the golden triangle formed by London, the M3 and

the M4 motorways and to be within easy distance of Heathrow. We are told that, if companies are not allowed to develop there, they will move not to other parts of the United Kingdom but abroad. I do not believe that is so.

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. MacKay: No, I will not give way; I am answering the valid intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick).

Because of the economic policies of the Government, multinational and indigenous companies decide to invest in and to stay in this country because there is an enterprise culture, a healthy tax regime and good industrial relations. Therefore, if companies cannot develop and expand in the south-east, I do not believe that they will go to Europe instead. They will go to other parts of the United Kingdom, to the obvious benefit of those areas.

Modern high-tech communications are another important factor. No longer is it necessary to have everyone on one site. Therefore, the Government should move more civil servants away from their high cost offices in Whitehall. There is no longer a need to have a large number of civil servants in London. With high technology, it would be possible for civil servants in different parts of the country to communicate with one another. Therefore, there could be more diversification of companies in the private sector too.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: If it is so logical, according to my hon. Friend's argument, for people not to pay £10 per square foot for high technology space in his constituency and not to face the staff shortages which he has described, and if equally it is easy to develop a business with its headquarters in the south but with all the production units in the north where it is more profitable, why did not the business man with whom he was having lunch say, "I am very sorry, but I am going to leave your constituency and go to the more profitable climate in the north"?

Mr. MacKay: Education has to be done. There are two factors. First, time moves on and only now are employers realising just what high unit labour costs they are experiencing and how difficult it is to attract staff. Secondly, they are realising what high rental costs they have to pay. My hon. Friends who represent northern constituencies will confirm that there is also a psychological factor in that too many people who are running major companies in the south-east rarely head north and have a false idea about the enterprise culture in the north and in the regions. There is a job to be done by local authorities, by Ministers and by hon. Members on both sides to persuade the people who can influence commercial moves to look round the regions.

I was speaking about inner-city rejuvenation when my hon. Friend the Member for Hallam intervened. I believe that the Government's inner-city policy, which I wish well, will be only partially successful until we discourage building on green-field sites. Far more can be done in the inner cities. I remind the Minister that we are not Luddite in Berkshire, but we do not want any more development. We are building for first-time buyers because we acknowledge the house cost problem, but for environmental, local and national reasons we believe that excessive development in Berkshire has to stop quickly before further damage is done.

5.44 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): It is essential to root housing policies on a careful assessment of the real needs of the people for decent and appropriate housing at a price they can afford, to buy or to rent. That policy should also take careful consideration of the present condition of the housing stock in both the public and private sectors. All that the Government seem to be offering is a housing marketing and sales programme based on the worship of the idol of the free market. It is surprising that this afternoon devotees of that very idol on the Conservative Benches are at last beginning to challenge the policy.

The policy was given its social face by the Minister. The Minister brought us the idea of the social landlord, but when the Secretary of State spoke it was clear that he was underlining the word "market" in the phrase "the social market" and insisting that market policies be forced upon his Minister. So we never saw the social landlords charter that was promised in Committee.

Local authorities, in co-operation with the Department of the Environment, are drawing up their bids on the basis of the latest available research into the condition of the housing stock and the needs of the people for decent housing. I hope that the Minister will take the local research seriously and not suggest, as the Department, the Secretary of State and he himself have done recently, that the homeless figures are bogus and have not been drawn up properly. That is not the case.

Let us take a simple example of conditions in Leeds, part of which I represent, which has a population of 750,000. The Secretary of State said that in the next Session the Government would bring forward proposals to deal with empty properties in the public sector. I hope that he will bring forward measures to deal with all empty properties. I refer him to the fact that in Leeds there are 20,400 unfit private sector properties and 56,500 private sector properties in need of repair. The cost of repairing those houses is assessed at over £5,000 per house. There are also many houses in multiple occupation, of which 9,000 require works costing approximately £12,000 each to bring them to an acceptable standard.

One problem in the public sector is no longer referred to in Government policy. I am referring to the system-built or non-traditional dwellings that were built through a tied-aid programme after the war. The Government told local authorities that because of the shortage of the basic materials of bricks and timber they could have their housing investment programmes enhanced if they provided system-built housing. Many local authorities of different political persuasions have been left with a legacy of houses that need repair. When will the Government deal with that problem?

In Leeds there are 28,000 non-traditional properties awaiting repair or replacement. Major investment is needed for the repairs. The expenditure on individual properties is beyond the means of individuals, whether owners or tenants. If repairs are needed to owner-occupied houses—for example substantial repairs to the roof, or major improvements—usually this expenditure takes place after the house has been sold. It is carried on the mortgage; it is not paid by the individual at one time.

The need for a proper housing investment programme has been developing since 1979, but the response to that need has been far from adequate to tackle the backlog. Even now we urge the Government to consider restoring

[Mr. John Battle]

the improvement grants for public and private sector housing that they have cut from housing investment allocations. Why not consider allowing renovation programmes, public and private, to get moving? They have been held back by the Government. Why not provide a *realistic housing investment programme settlement* to enable national resources to be channelled through local authorities, which seem to be rediscovered by Conservative Members when we discuss planning issues, and allow them to put resources into public and private housing stock?

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): My hon. Friend has raised a very important matter. I want to reinforce the case that my hon. Friend makes for Leeds, and to add to the catalogue of crisis the plight of the west midlands. The housing forum of the west midlands is not made up of Lefty Labour authorities. It is represented by the county councils of Hereford and Worcester, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and the metropolitan districts of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton. It is unreal to sit in this Chamber listening to speeches about the positiveness of the Government's policy on housing when in a document recently published——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Interventions must be brief, and that is enough.

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend was making the point that everyone seems to accept that there is need for investment in the housing stock to provide for the needs of the people, whether it is the Duke of Edinburgh's report, the "Faith in the City" report or the analyses of local authorities throughout the country.

It is not just a question of numbers. I can refer the House to a particular family who live in a system-built home. They live in a Myton house, which has been classified by the Department of the Environment in its survey as defectively built. It is a council house. They cannot afford to buy it because of their circumstances, because the wage-earners in that family are unemployed.

Mr. Morgan: On a point of law, I think my hon. Friend meant that the houses were defectively designed, not defectively built. There is no compensation for houses such as there are in my constituency, which were not defectively designed, but were defectively built.

Mr. Battle: I shall not delay the House by discussing defective properties, but I meant that the houses were defectively built. Some were defectively designed and some were defectively built.

Mr. Patnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Tony Banks: He built them.

Mr. Battle: I shall give way in a moment.

If that family could afford to buy the house, they would not be able to get a mortgage precisely because those homes have been classified as defective by the Department of the Environment. If they had bought a defective house they would not be able to sell it to someone else. Therefore, they would not be able to move and would be trapped, because the house was classified as defective. If the local authority or others cannot carry out substantial repairs to those defective properties—and the backlog is massive—people will be condemned to live in defective properties until the end of the century. People will have to live in houses that are bad for their health because of the lack of heating systems. They will have no hope of living in a decent and appropriate home.

That applies to some 18,000 people in Leeds who are on the waiting list for a decent and appropriate home. Elderly people cannot get up and down stairs in blocks of flats and need ground floor accommodation. That right should be met and not written off as a statistic. There are 14,500 people on transfer lists waiting to be transferred to housing that suits their needs, as family needs change as people have families, as families grow up and as people become elderly. The figures that I have quoted for Leeds do not take account of the rising tide of homelessness in our society.

Mr. Patnick: I thank the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for his courteous remarks. As a senior Member, he sets a bad example. I ask the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) to tell us who supervised the building of those council houses that were badly built? Who paid for them? Who wrote the cheque? The fact remains that they were supervised by councils and by their employees who were satisfied when they were built. Suddenly, we decide that they were not up to standard. It is a bit late in the day.

Mr. Battle: It may be worth tabling a motion to discuss defective housing with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) and other hon. Members. I seem to recall that the Building Research Establishment gave certificates stating that those houses were in decent order when they were built. The defects were detected after some years of wear and tear. I suggest simply that the defects were not known, or the building was badly supervised. I am not going into a full account of defective housing.

Most people feel that the prospect of having a decent home that is appropriate to their family and personal needs is disappearing before the end of the century in city areas such as my constituency. The Government amendment to our motion refers to

"a return of prosperity across the whole country".

That prosperity does not apply to everyone.

Mr. Tony Banks: Look at the Embankment.

Mr. Battle: As my hon. Friend says, hon. Members should try asking those who have to sleep out whether they feel that they are participating in that return of prosperity across the country.

Mr. Holt: Does the hon. Gentleman agree, or disagree, with the Labour-dominated northern regional council report this year, which says that the north of England is improving under the economic policies of the Government?

Mr. Battle: I am glad that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) put it in those terms. The situation is improving, but we are slightly tired of hearing remarks about prosperity across the country. The Prime Minister says that everyone is participating in the increased wealth in Britain. Clearly, everyone is not participating in that wealth. It is unfair to make an inclusive statement that

suggests that everyone is sharing in it when some people have been excluded from the wealth that Conservative Members claim exists.

Finally, I must address the issue of homelessness. In the late 1960s and the early 1970s I spent some time working with organisations such as the Cyrenians which tried to deal with homelessness on our streets. Homeless people used to be elderly single men who were alcoholics or who had been broken by the wars. Now, homeless people are predominantly young people and people with families. I never imagined that that would happen in my lifetime.

I believe that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has already asked this question, but will the Minister tell the House whether the Government intend to change the law on statutory provision for the homeless in our society and to weaken it to reduce the number of homeless people by the statistical exercises that were used in the unemployment debate? Just as the millions of unemployed do not have jobs, and still exist in areas such as my constituency, so the homeless will still be sleeping out on the streets, to the shame of all hon. Members, who at least return to their beds after our debates. Will the Minister confirm that he does not intend to repeal the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act and to limit local authority provision of temporary shelter? It is not just a bed for the night that is required. Surely human beings have a basic right to decent and appropriate housing which they can afford to rent or buy.

I ask the Minister to make it absolutely clear to the homeless and those who work with them that the Government are prepared to honour their responsibilities and will not renege on them.

6 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): It has become clear during our debates on housing that the Opposition have not bothered to understand the Housing Bill. The performance which some of us sat through, hour after hour, last Tuesday going through into Wednesday, made it clear that the Labour party does not have a serious strategy in this important area of policy to put right the serious problems which we all know exist in our inner cities, especially London. What the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said shows that, far from having anything like a serious strategy, the Labour party has not tried in policy terms to deal with this important area.

We have heard the trivial remark that the word "homelessness" does not appear in the Housing Bill. That is insulting to the homeless because it suggests that the Bill does not deal with the problems that lead to homelessness. If Opposition Members had bothered to listen to what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said today, they would know that many of the Bill's provisions will help homeless people. No doubt we shall return to those arguments when we debate the Housing Bill next week.

We must examine Labour's record on this subject. I refer to its record not when in government, or indeed what it has promised it will do, but right now. In London, the Labour party controls many councils, and some of the worst slum landlords in London are Labour-controlled councils. They suffer from bad management and a work force which does not work.

The London borough of Lambeth is plagued by strikes. When people in the housing department moved to new refurbished offices the alarm system was still being worked on, so they came out on strike, on and off, for two months. Never mind negotiating and getting on with the job of serving people who need help in Lambeth, they just went on strike. When they are not on strike, they have an unparalleled sickness record. The housing department has gone through three directors in as many years.

Worse, a system designed to help people in sheltered units and the elderly living alone in flats was delayed for years. Now, after five years, that Piper system has been installed in only a small number of sheltered units. Because of political interference—it is difficult sometimes to tell the difference between officers and councillors in Lambeth—the council refused to offer the system to surrounding blocks of flats where old people live by themselves because it was thought that that would somehow be helping the private sector and people who own their own homes. Labour's record is shameful.

There is political interference. For example, Councillor Hazel Smith, when chairman of the housing committee, destroyed officials' confidence by giving instructions to officials at all levels in the housing department. She destroyed their confidence to get on with the job, which is why I say it is difficult to tell the difference between councillors and officers.

When Councillor Fred Taggart was chairman of the housing committee, he said that Vietnamese refugees, whom we all want to help, were fleeing a perfectly reasonable regime and that they were therfore not political refugees. Because of his refusal to help and his instructions to housing officials, 80 and 90-year-old women from Vietnam are living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation to this day. He is also a senior officer in the London borough of Hackney.

Mr. Tony Banks: Bearing in mind old Pol Pot in No. 10, perhaps the hon. Gentleman has got a point. The hon. Gentleman has given us a lot of anecdotes. Will he tell us the source of this illuminating material?

Mr. Hughes: Anybody who knows how Labour councils hound and harass their staff if they are not members of the Labour party would think me mad if I revealed my source. It is interesting, however, that the hon. Gentleman should challenge my source rather than the veracity of what I am saying. He must be patient as there is lots more where that comes from. If the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) thinks that my information is not correct, he should find other facts and tell us that what I am saying is not true.

Lambeth council cannot use its housing stock effectively. Joe Hunte court in Knights hill is a sheltered unit reserved exclusively for Afro-Caribbean use. Some hon. Members may say that that is the wrong way in which to use sheltered housing stock, but we should put that argument aside and assume that it is done for the best of motives. The council could not find enough Afro-Caribbean people who qualified for places, so it left at least six units empty. It preferred to leave units empty than to give them to people who desperately needed them. For all I know, some are still empty.

We all know how much it costs to convert a flat for use by a disabled person, but Lambeth does not have a central record of where its disabled units are, so, when somebody moves out, the council cannot put another disabled person in. The result is often that units are squatted and

[Mr. Hughes]

vandalised. Expensive units, paid for by ratepayers or the Government, are therfore no longer available to disabled people, but the council says that it wants more money.

About a year ago, councillors, including the mayor, and council officers went around the Tulse hill estate to see how tenants were getting on. They found that most of the people who lived there were not on the council's roll of tenants, and that there were tenants of whom they had never heard in flats that they expected to be empty. They discovered that rent books were changing hands for money. In short, on that estate, as with many others, Lambeth has lost control of its housing stock.

Mr. George Howarth: The hon. Gentleman mentioned Lambeth's record on adaptations for the disabled. Was he arguing that more, or less, money should be spent on such adaptations?

Mr. Hughes: That is a silly point. Of course, we want money to be spent on the disabled. What I am saying is that when we spend it, we should not spend it on people such as those who run Lambeth council who plainly do not know how to use it.

Inner London is littered with empty blocks of flats in areas of highest stress. That blows out of the water, as does my example of disabled units, the claim that we need more Government money. The examples of empty flats go back further than that. For instance, in Turner road in east London, late 19th-century properties owned by Tower Hamlets council have been empty for 15 years, although I do not blame the Liberals, who control it, for that. When housing associations and charities have sought control of those properties, at least temporarily, to use them for homeless people, Tower Hamlets council has refused.

In case some hon. Members think that that is only a short period, let me give an example involving a longer period. During the past 24 years, the people of King George street, London, SE10, have seen Governments come and go, they have seen policies come and go, but they have seen two properties, owned by the Inner London education authority, stand empty. To suggest, as Opposition Members do, that those properties would be brought back into use if only the Government would provide more money is nonsense and insulting to homeless people in London. If Opposition Members would get off their butts and make sure that those properties were brought back into use, they would be able to talk about this subject, but, until they do, they have no status at all to do so.

There is an absence of Labour strategy. The Leader of the Opposition, in his speech—presumably made on the hoof—at the Institute of Housing last week, referred to the crux of everything that we have heard from the Labour party today and in the Housing Bill Committee. All that we have heard is that councils must invest massive amounts of money in council housing, which would be a return to the sort of management that is doing so well in the London borough of Lambeth. That is an insult to those people who need genuine help. The Leader of the Opposition has understood what is needed, but it is a pity that his hon. Friends who speak on housing have not. He said:

"Those policies for housing must include the sensitivity to calculate whether forms of provision that might meet simple demands for accommodation also meet the more complex need for homes."

That is absolutely right. The crux of the Housing Bill is that is provides variety. We are seeking to provide social landlords of various sorts, expand housing associations, bring back private renting and protect private tenants from being harassed. We are seeking to expand the provision of housing in London to help the homeless. It is Opposition Members, with no imagination, policies or strategy, who would keep people away from any solution to the problems of housing and homelessness.

6.12 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I shall not follow the comments of the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes). One speech by a Conservative Member which rang a bell and deserves study is that by the hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay), who raised a number of important points of which I hope the Government will take note.

The motion combines the housing problems of south-east England and of other parts of these islands. The problem came home to me graphically the other day when a taxi driver mentioned that, some time ago, he had sold for £80,000 the council house that he had bought for £10,000. He then moved in with his mother-in-law, whom he and his wife clearly expected to die fairly soon, helped her to buy the flat in which they were living, and expected to have about £150,000 at his disposal before long. He then hoped to move from London to either Cornwall or Wales, buying a property for £50,000, having £100,000 in the bank and living on the interest.

That brings home the problem that is hitting my part of the world at present and is affecting other areas, including Cornwall, the Lake District, East Anglia and other parts of Wales. The real crisis in rural Wales is the cheque-book invasion—by people who are selling out, particularly in south-east England, and buying up housing stock, as a result of which the prices are shooting up. In the past three months, house prices have gone up by about 20 per cent. One of my constituents has been gazumped three times in six months in trying to buy a property in the constituency, and he can no longer compete. That is the problem facing young married people in my area, where incomes are very low.

The problem is exacerbated by the amalgamation of estate agents. Large companies are now moving in so that, as soon as a house becomes available in some of the rural areas, it is immediately advertised in conurbations such as Manchester, Cardiff, Birmingham and London. The cheque-book invasion starts before local people have a chance to compete in the market place. That is having a massive effect on the community in my area and a greater effect in such places as the Lake District, East Anglia and Cornwall. It has an even greater effect in areas where there is a linguistic difference. Hon. Members can well imagine the effect that that can have on a community.

We have heard about the way in which wealth is apparently sweeping across these islands. A press report last February stated that Wales had slumped in the national wages league. According to a report last month in a newspaper covering north Wales, family incomes are less than £80 a week. On average, wages in Wales are £183 per week, according to the new earnings survey last year,

compared with £246 per week in south-east England, but many areas of Wales have substantially lower wage levels. In the Arfon area, in my constituency, 43 per cent. of families have less than £80 a week, as the press report states.

There is high unemployment in that area. In the adjoining area of Dwyfor, the unemployment figure last winter was 24·7 per cent., yet that aready has the longest waiting list for houses in Pwllheli and Dwyfor that I can remember, as people turn to the public sector to obtain rented accommodation because they cannot compete with people moving in to buy private housing stock. It is a classic example of uneven development and of the core-periphery relationship. We are very much on the periphery.

The situation in my area is exacerbated by the problem of second homes, although that problem is not restricted to my area. In Dwyfor, 17·5 per cent. of the housing stock consists of second homes and, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), the figure is 16·8 per cent. More than 50 per cent. of some villages consist of second homes. That means that the services disappear in winter and the population then wants to move from the villages to the towns because the basic services are not available, which worsens the situation.

A package of policies could be implemented to reduce the impact of this problem. First, we must consider planning control when a house changes from being a first home to a second home, just as we do when a house becomes a shop or office. Secondly, there should be greater resources for local authorities to intervene to buy up houses to let them in areas where local people could not otherwise compete. That has already started. Some £200,000 has been allocated in the Dwyfor area by the Welsh Office for that purpose, but we need more resources to make an impact. Thirdly, the use of section 52 powers needs to be clarified. The Lake District tries to use those powers considerably to ensure that local authorities can help local people to have a first option on new housing stock in that area.

In Wales, we have a severe problem with unfit houses. A recent house condition survey in Wales showed that 70,000 houses were unfit, out of a total housing stock of about 1 million. The cost of putting those right would be £1·25 billion, which is an enormous sum. That sum reflects a backlog over a number of years. Once again, the Dwfor area in my constituency has the worst figures. A quarter of all the housing units were deemed to be unfit. We expect the valley industrial areas to be the worst, yet a scattered rural area such as Dwyfor came out worst in that survey.

Mr. Morgan: May I draw to the House's attention an item in yesterday's *Western Mail* which shows that a house in Aberaman in the Cynon valley is on sale for £2,550? It is a partially improved miner's cottage. That sum probably represents the weekly increase in house prices in parts of the home counties. The reason why one can buy such a property for that sum is that local people do not have the incomes to undertake the major repairs required. As a result, we in Wales do not wish to be patronised, as we were at the Conservative party Welsh conference last weekend, when the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said:

"If you are going to spread prosperity more widely in the North, in Wales, in Scotland, you need the South-East to be prosperous . . . Its wealth helps pay for the policies to make the rest of the country more wealthy."

Mr. Wigley: I accept that. There is a problem in that buying these houses involves the cost of renovation, not simply the cost of buying. Many in the valleys of industrial south Wales are worried that people will move in because they have the resources to buy up these houses cheaply and renovate them, so that local people are priced out because they do not have enough combined resources both to buy and to renovate. This is also a worry in the Swansea valleys, in Glamorgan and in other areas of Wales from which I have had representations.

Some bodies are trying to overcome these problems —for example, the housing associations. Some of them are doing excellent work in buying up, renovating and letting property, but there is a great danger that, if housing associations have to go to the market to get capital and therefore have to pay the going rate for that capital, the inevitable rents will be out of the reach of many of the people who need such housing. A housing association in my constituency has done a survey of the income level of its tenants, and the average is £60 a week. Such an income will not fund the loans that have to be paid at commercial levels.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I am aware that there is not a Welsh Office Minister on the Government Front Bench, but I hope that the Minister for Housing and Planning, or a Welsh Minister, will look into this problem. There is a need for the Housing Corporation, as it has been restructured in Wales, to be a broker between commercial funds and housing associations to enable adequate additional funds to be both made available from the commercial sector and distributed evenly among the housing associations in Wales.

Mr. Wigley: We need that mechanism, but we also need to make sure that the interest rates do not lead to a rent set at a level above the means of those who need the housing stock prepared by housing associations.

There is also worry in my area about the implications of the wholesale disposal of council estates that is implicit in the Housing Bill. There is a worry that, some five or six years after some of the more attractive rural council estates have been bought up, commercial companies will sell out to the cheque-book invasion and there will be even less rented housing stock available for local people. The answer in such areas does not come from rented private houses, because those who have private rented stock want to retain it for the holiday home market in summer, when they can get a higher rent.

All these problems come together, but planning can overcome them. First, we need primarily to build to meet the local need, and the hon. Member for Berkshire, East made the same point in different circumstances. Planning decisions need to be taken locally, as has been stressed by a number of hon. Members, and the Secretary of State must not overrule planning refusals unless there is an overwhelming case for doing so.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): In relation to planning matters in north Wales as in my constituency, is not another restraint on new development the incursion of British Coal's Opencast Executive, which blatantly affects planning applications on green belt land and land next to

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

urban and semi-urban development by the use of large-scale opencast developments, which has a major effect on the environment and the community in the development of new housing and the retention of old housing?

Mr. Wigley: That is a worry in Clwyd and other parts of south Wales. It is important that the interests of the community are taken into account.

I warn the Government of the tensions that are building up because of the cheque-book invasion. People are calling for protection against that invasion in the same way as the people in the Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands called for the protection of their housing stocks. We realise that there are impracticalities. However, tensions and feelings are building up, and the Government must realise that they need to make sure that local communities, whether in rural Wales, Cornwall, East Anglia or the Lake District, have enough protection to ensure that their people have a roof over their heads.

Mr. Tony Banks: Something else is happening. Because of the prices in the south-east, people can make a computation between the cost of moving right out of London—often into south Wales—and commuting back to London, and still be in profit. That has put another pressure on prices of housing in places such as south Wales.

Mr. Wigley: There are great pressures on local people on lower income levels. One realises that income levels are higher in the south-east because of the higher costs, but when such people come in to our areas, it is difficult for our young people and young families to buy. The Government's policy to maximise owner-occupation will not be achieved in such circumstances. There will be tension unless there is action.

Local authorities need resources to buy in, renovate and either rent or sell to people on the waiting list, as happens in Berkshire. There must be lower interest finance to enable local people to compete in buying houses against people from outside the area with higher incomes and we need, overwhelmingly, greater economic growth so that we can have natural competition and do not need to rely on artificial barriers. If our people are forced into a future in which they have neither work to sustain them nor homes which they can afford, there will be a highly explosive cocktail, which the Government will ignore at their peril.

6.25 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Any debate on housing policy shows the divide between the two sides of the House in both practicalities and philosophy. In terms of practicalities, it is necessary to look at what the Labour party did when it had the opportunity to do something, as the Labour Government's failures in housing gave this Government the opportunity to do what they have been doing. They were no saints. Their failure to keep to their bargain on house building and their severe cuts in home improvement grants were due to their failure to get their sums right and to live up to their promises.

In housing philosophy, the failure was even more marked. Labour's post-war housing philosophy is marked not so much by its professed desire to supply appropriate housing to all households, but more by its determination to use council housing as the sole vehicle for this, whatever the cost and whatever the failures. Secondly, it was marked by a gut desire to restrict the private landlord and the private rented sector, which was to have profound consequences for homelessness today. The loss of 400,000 private dwellings from the rented sector between 1974 and 1979 has cost us dear in the changing nature of homelessness in the past 15 to 20 years.

In this atmosphere of failure of both philosophy and practical policies, the Conservative Government came to office in 1979. The interesting changes of both philosophy and practice have helped to give the Conservative Government's housing policy the large measure of popular support that it now enjoys. First, it has increased involvement of tenants in the management and running of their estates. Not many hon. Members have mentioned the success of the Government's Estates Action programme. In my constituency that programme has been at work in one of the poorest estates, where there is now a growing difference in attitude and environment. Smaller scale management has been encouraged, and there is no doubt that the closer the relationship between those who are tenants and those who manage them is bound to lead to an improvement in relationships and the general environment for those who live on the housing estate.

There has also been a boost in owner-occupation and home ownership. I do not want to make too much of that, because it is possible to over-egg that pudding. The Government's desire to reverse the antipathy that the Labour Government felt towards owner-occupation meant that they may have missed the necessity to concentrate also on the need for low-cost rented housing. However, there has been a marked improvement on that in the past couple of years. The proposals outlined in the Housing Bill to encourage further development in the rented sector, both public and private, will have profoundly beneficial consequences for those who, up to now, have been homeless. It has been necessary for the Government to adopt a two-pronged strategy of both owner-occupation and a greater mix in housing.

The major complaint that my constituents would have of Opposition Members is their rigid adherence to the old solutions to housing problems. There are many areas in this country which have been under Labour local control for about 50 years irrespective of changes in central Government, many of which are still in the same state of decay from which they suffered 30 years ago. The failure of traditional council house management policies since the war has caused the problems that now face us.

The Government have reacted by a change in thinking. They have tried new measures and varied ownership by supporting co-operatives. We welcome the fact that the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) is a great supporter of co-operatives. A few years ago, Liverpool city council—Liverpool being only just down the road from Knowsley—operated a direct policy against co-operatives because it decided that the only way through for rented accommodation was to be found with municipal housing. That is a dead policy.

The dead policies are being pursued by Opposition Members. Improvements in housing in owner-occupation and the rented sector lie only with the Government, where there is variety, choice and freedom.

6.30 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I accept that, following the elections of 1964 and 1966, the housing policy of the Conservative party became generally a vote winner for it. In 1964 and 1966 the Labour party's policy was definitely a vote winner. Unfortunately, we lost the initiative. That was partly because of the Government's successful sale-of-council-houses policy. The selling of council property to sitting tenants at large discounts proved to be extremely popular.

Mr. Tony Banks: Giving away money is always popular.

Mr. Roberts: Exactly.

Housing policy has once again become a vote winner for the Labour party. That will be become increasingly clear as the Housing Bill is understood and the Government's record dawns on people the length and breadth of the country; when people on council estates realise that their homes will be sold to the private sector over their heads. Labour is back in harness and winning votes on account of its housing policy. The Tories are losing votes by wanting to hand over housing to the private market, with all that that means.

I listened with care to the Secretary of State for the Environment. With apologies to Gilbert and Sullivan, I have produced an ode to the right hon. Gentleman. It is as follows:

"I am the very model of a modern Housing Minister; my policies are Conservative, free market, very sinister.
I seek acclaim for all the acts of mine which I deem suitable.
But blame all local councils when my mistakes are irrefutable.
I baffle all in Parliament with a lengthy documentary,
Ensuring that every syllable gives rise to great controversy.
And then if southern Tories are still the victims of perplexity
I blame the right hon. Member for Henley, the only thing that makes sense to me."

That was the sum total of the right hon. Gentleman's speech. He blamed local authorities for the housing crisis that has been created by the Government's policies. He chose to blame the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) for the disastrous planning policies that the Government have pursued in the south of England.

The Government's record needs careful examination, and the British people understand that. There has been a doubling of homelessness and the creation of the transient homeless youngster because of the Government's changes in social security benefit. There are 2 million who are living in homes that are unfit for human habitation. There are 390,000 concealed households—homeless households who are dependent on relatives and friends. These are the "front-room" families. There has been a 30 per cent. increase in the number of families on local authority waiting lists since 1979. That is not surprising when there has been a 75 per cent. cut in Government money to local authorities to house these people. Local authorities are prevented by the Government from building to replace the dwindling supply of attractive modern council homes. The massive backlog of essential repairs to local authority housing follows in the wake of Government cuts. The Audit Commission estimates that the cost of these repairs is growing at the rate of £900 million a year.

The plight of the public sector pales into insignificance when we consider the state of the private housing sector, where 77 per cent. of unfit dwellings are to be found. Shelter estimates that at the present rate of progress it will take 167 years to eliminate overcrowding for the 1 million who are currently living in multi-occupied housing. It is worth noting that if the pace of house building that prevailed until 1979 had been continued we would have at least 330,000 more homes for 330,000 more families.

We are faced with what amounts to a Government created housing crisis. There is a housing shortage of massive proportions, with an especial shortage of housing to rent. If there is a shortage of a commodity as vital as housing, there must be rationing. If council housing committees, or housing associations, are not controlling the rationing, the market is. Control is inflicted by price. Because the availability of housing to rent and to buy at prices that ordinary people can afford has diminished, families in many parts of the country are stretching themselves to financial breaking point to get on to the ownership ladder. Household debt has consequently increased from slightly less than £51 billion in 1978 to over £204 billion in 1986. Of that sum, £173 billion is accounted for by mortgages. In its wake, repossessions by building societies have increased tenfold between 1979 and 1987. According to the Association of District Councils, 53 per cent. of households in the east of England could not afford to buy their own homes, compared with 15 per cent. only four years ago. Yet the Tories have the audacity to claim to support and assist owner-occupation.

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend has referred to repossessions by building societies. When repossessions take place and families are thrown out of their homes, local authorities have to put them in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. I dealt with such a case at my surgery last Friday. The local authority is having to spend more money keeping the couple in bed-and-breakfast accommodation than the couple were having to pay in mortgage payment instalments.

Mr. Roberts: That is happening the length and breadth of the country.

The Tories claim that they are the party of freedom as well as the party that supports owner-occupation. Why do they not implement the Labour party's policy and give tenants of private landlords the right to buy? Why not give the private tenant the right to opt for another landlord, such as the council, a housing association or a co-operative? Why not do that if they want alternative forms of tenure? Why do the Tories not adopt the Labour party's policy of a real right to rent? We would define categories of housing need, and if families came within them they would be entitled by law to accommodation to rent in the local authority sector. If local authorities did not have sufficient housing, the resources that would be provided by a Labour Government would be used to acquire property from the private sector to rent to those in housing need.

That is the reverse of what the Government intend. It seems that they now intend to destroy the homeless persons legislation. They seek to destroy the limited rights to rehousing that homeless families now have in law. Yet the Conservative party claims to be the party of freedom. There is no freedom in a housing crisis of scarcity and price.

The Government's proposals as set out in the Housing Bill—it is still before Parliament, thanks to the Labour party—will make the position even worse. Where is the choice for the council tenant who cannot get a transfer or exchange, who wants to move and who cannot afford to

[Mr. Roberts]

buy? Where is the choice for the tenant who is railroaded into a housing action trust and into the hands of an unknown housing association, with no vote or right to consultation? The Institute of Housing assessed HATs and stated:

"The danger of a housing centred approach based upon changing tenures is that regeneration may come about through changing the nature of the population living in the area, rather than through improving the economic circumstances and life chances of those already there."

It is social engineering of the worst sort. That is why the majority of tenants in potential HAT areas are opposed to the proposals.

Where is the choice for tenants under the Government's pick-a-landlord scheme; tenants who do not want to opt out but who see the decision-making system rigged and the voting system fixed to make nonsense of the idea of choice? We read today in *The Guardian* that the people who, in the pick-a-landlord scheme, opt to remain with the local authority will pay the same high rents as those who choose to go to a private landlord. It will be chaos. The Minister has said that the local authority can subsidise the rent of the person who has opted to stay with the council and who has to pay the same rent as those who chose to be with a private landlord. We have the local authority, with diminished resources, having to subsidise the private landlord. That is what the Minister's remarks mean.

Where is the choice for the family who are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation? Where is the choice for those who cannot afford the Tory's new market rents? Where is the choice for the elderly who cannot get into sheltered housing or an old person's bungalow? Where is the choice for the elderly who have to sell their house after a lifetime of paying for it to provide an income to supplement their benefit, which has been so cruelly cut by the Government? The Government believe in housing choice—choice for the rich to be well housed, choice for the private landlord and not for the tenant, and choice for the poor and those on low incomes to be badly housed. That is the kind of choice offered by the Government's housing policies and Housing Bill.

This debate is also about planning, and something needs to be said about the Government's record in that respect. The Tories see planning as a fetter on the free market, and since 1979 successive Secretaries of State have been doing their best to destroy Britain's proud planning system. The present Secretary of State may be the worst and the ultimate arch free market man, but the right hon. Member for Henley was not much better. He began and inspired the whole process in the first place. As the party that founded the planning system with the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, Labour has been watching with dismay as the planning system has progressively weakened, especially at a strategic level.

The Government have produced a number of special measures which they claim are designed to revive urban areas, enterprise zones, urban development corporations and now simplified planning zones—to say nothing of garden festivals. Such measures may have revived a few areas of urban land, but that has been done at the price of local democracy. Local urban development corporations have imposed policies that are at complete variance with those of the local authorities. Urban development corporations, and particularly the LDDC, behave as if they are dealing with green-field sites rather than with places where people already live and work. Elsewhere, dereliction has been created. Research commissioned by the Government themselves shows that, in many cases, enterprise zones and urban development corporations have merely sucked in development from the surrounding area, so dereliction has only been moved, not reduced.

At the same time, the Government have been dismantling strategic planning. The abolition of the metropolitan authorities and the GLC has left a gap that district and borough council joint committees cannot fill. The Government now propose to replace county structure plans with weaker "county statements". The power of counties to intervene when districts are faced with plans that go against structure plans has already been removed. Planners are being asked by the Government to facilitate development, not to judge it. That is the basis of the difficulties in which the Secretary of State finds himself with his own supporters in the south of England.

The Government claim, under pressure from their own supporters, to be protecting green belts and the countryside from piecemeal development, yet their public investment programmes direct development towards the countryside. New motorways such as the M25 and M40, and the concentration of defence establishments along the London to Bristol access, are two huge examples. Individual decisions by the Secretary of State on housing, out-of-town superstores, second homes, mining or forestry for national parks breach the plans for areas under pressure and create more "hope value" and development pressure around them.

The recent change in opencast coal mining policy announced by the Department of the Environment is a prime example of the environment being sacrificed to facilitate development and of the Department's decisions being investment-led, rather than environment-led, which is wrong.

What is Labour's alternative? We believe that there should be a strategic overview. A strategic authority should be established to provide planning guidance and set the context for local planning. As part of a general commitment to a better environment, land use planning should incorporate an environmental dimension. Noise, air and water pollution and the protection of natural areas all need to be considered when planning applications and local plans are discussed. Our proposed environmental protection service, which a Labour Government would establish, would be locally run and be provided with the necessary back-up.

At present, people have only limited powers within the planning system to control the shaping of their environment. Labour is committed to changing that. Our charter for the environment sets out proposals for public action zones, which we shall empower and encourage local authorities to declare. As with urban development corporations, public action zones will have Government support, strong compulsory purchase powers, and considerable public funding to tackle key areas of decline. Unlike urban development corporations, they will be based on the needs and wishes of local communities; they will not override them.

The Labour party seeks a balance between city and country and to revive urban areas, making them pleasant and attractive places in which to live. If further urban expansion is needed, it should be planned, with properly serviced and properly centred development, rather than an

unplanned sprawl. Both existing and new urban areas should be affordable to all. Unlike the Government, we seek to enhance and protect the countryside, but as an open recreational resource accessible to all. Planning should not be considered in isolation. It is the means of creating healthier, livelier and more pleasant communities for all. The Tories see planning as an impediment to the operation of the free market. If the Secretary of State has his way, planning as we know it will be destroyed, as the free market takes over. As the planning system is destroyed, so too will be the environment.

6.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Marion Roe): Hon. Members have made a number of points, to which I shall respond, but first I remind the House of two comments made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State at the beginning of this debate. Opposition Members have charged that we do not have any regional housing and planning policies. It is true that we do not believe that all house building should be centrally planned and directed. As the last Labour Government proved, the centralist approach neither aids growth nor helps the poorer regions. Instead, it delays change, inhibits growth, and depresses living standards.

By contrast, the Government's approach has been proved to work. In housing, we first set out to encourage owner-occupation. The number of home owners has increased by 3 million and private house building is at its highest level since 1973. We are now tackling the rented sector, encouraging investment and creating the conditions that will allow a more diverse and responsive rented sector to be created. Again, we aim to put consumer choice in place of state imposed choices. By doing so, we believe that we will both increase investment and give the people the housing that they want.

We need to bear in mind the link between housing and planning policies. Turning first to the planning side, the Government have strenuously sought to update the apparatus of planning and to keep policies for the development and use of land in tune with current needs. The planning system that we inherited had to be adapted to cope with the realities of the 1980s, and successive Secretaries of State have faced the need to make the many —sometimes controversial—changes that were required. We have increased permitted development rights by changes to the General Development Order, recast the Use Classes Order, and introduced provisions for simplified planning zones.

At the same time, we have not hesitated to increase control where that has been needed to protect and enhance the environment. For example, we have increased controls over farm and forestry buildings and roads in national parks, and in revising the General Development Order we shall be introducing controls over intensive livestock units, loft conversions, and stone-cladding in conservation areas.

Many people have expressed concern about the green belts and the Government's stewardship of them. Those fears have proved unfounded, as all Members must now concede. Despite frequent challenges and planning applications and appeals, local planning authorities and the Secretary of State have consistently upheld the integrity of the green belts.

Concern has been expressed today that too much unrestrained development is taking place in the south-east. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked whether the estimates of future housing provision by SERPLAN and LPAC, covering the period from 1991 to 2001, are correct. We would all like a definite answer, but there are a number of variables. They include the estimated number of extra households, the number of existing dwellings, and the number of properties that will be built between now and 1991. SERPLAN provided new evidence last week and LPAC is still working on its advice to the Secretary of State. We shall be resolving that matter and issuing strategic guidance for London and the south-east in due course.

We would like to encourage development in other areas where it will be welcome; hence our inner-city policies. The uniform business rate will make locations outside the south more attractive. High land and house prices will also tend to encourage development elsewhere, where prices are lower and skilled labour is more readily available. As my right hon. Friend commented, there are already signs that the growing prosperity, which first became evident in the south-east, is spreading to other parts of the country. Opposition Members should be wary of discounting those market mechanisms too quickly and committing themselves to the bureaucracy and inefficiency of centralised planning.

My hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) mentioned the problem of coping with extra housing provision in Berkshire. The modifications to the structure plan proposed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State were to ensure that provision met the requirements arising from the local population.

It is necessary to be realistic about what the planning system alone can achieve. It cannot stimulate development that does not meet demand. Restraint in one area will not automatically steer development to another. As 1992 approaches, we also need to be cautious about driving development out of the country altogether. We do not want to force people to live where they are unwilling to go. The household projections show that the growth in households in the south-east comes largely from indigenous growth. All of us should think very carefully before committing ourselves to a policy which might, in effect, force sons and daughters to seek homes and work away from the areas in which they were brought up.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Lady mentioned the unified business rate. Why are the CBI and the chambers of commerce in the south strongly critical of that?

Mrs. Roe: They have obviously not read the proposals in detail and are unaware of the benefits that that will bring to other parts of the country.

There is already restraint in the south-east. The debate is about whether it would be wise to make that even tighter, with all the consequences for house prices and the availability of housing for the less well off that that would entail. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) made a cogent statement of the arguments and of the need to provide more housing where people want to live.

The pressure for development and the increasing resort to the appeals machinery have put increasing strain on the planning system. It is important to stress that 98 per cent. of planning permissions are given by local authorities.

[Mrs. Roe]

That is as it should be, and Conservative Members have no wish to resort to the "Whitehall knows best" approach that underlies the Opposition's motion.

More frequent resort to appeals can also create uncertainty. But in many places that is compounded by the absence of any local plan. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned, last week we issued for consultation a draft planning policy guidance note on the preparation of local plans. The message to district planning authorities is to prepare plans as quickly as possible, particularly for areas where there is a conflict between the need for development and the interests of the local environment. Proper consultation on local plans will provide the best way of allowing local communities to resolve these conflicts themselves in a sensible and realistic way. We believe this message will be widely welcomed and we hope that districts will act quickly to extend their coverage of detailed plans.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North) *rose*——

Mrs. Roe: By this means local amenity can be safeguarded——

Mr. Gale *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Lady is on her feet.

Mrs. Roe: By this means local amenity can be safeguarded and provision made for necessary development, including additional house building. More importantly, this approach will help to ensure that, wherever possible, the conflicts between development and amenity are solved at local level.

Mr. Gale: If my hon. Friend is saying that the Department of the Environment will heed the wishes of the county and district councils, will she convey that to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who has overridden Dartford and Thanet councils in two Parliaments?

Mrs. Roe: I hope that the local plans will be brought up to date. Many councils do not have up-to-date local plans. Unfortunately, that means that there is no basis for a planning decision, and action has to be taken through the inspector appeals system.

On housing, our policies are clear. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey tried to argue that they were not, but we have always had two clear policy aims. Our first aim is to ensure that as many people as possible can own their own homes. That is why we are committed to mortgage interest tax relief and have pursued the right-to-buy policy and diversified the rented sector. The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) suggested that mortgage interest tax relief served no housing policy aim. Helping 3 million more people to own their own homes is a worthy aim.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mrs. Roe: In order to create greater choice for those who do not want or cannot afford to buy their own homes, we want to reduce tenants' dependency on the local authority sector and the restrictions that have squeezed out private investment in housing for rent. The provisions in the Housing Bill to deregulate private-sector rents and give tenants the opportunity to change their landlord represent the first step in encouraging a greater variety of landlords.

We have not avoided debate on those issues and we have been willing to bring forward amendments to the Bill. We are, after all, believers in democracy.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) talked about the effect of market rents. He quoted figures over £100 per week. The hon. Member for Knowsley, North made a thoughtful contribution, in which he pointed out that the supply of rented accommodation depended upon the economics of property ownership. He, too, felt that private rented housing would be out of people's reach. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey also stressed the need for new rented housing to be affordable. I agree with the hon. Member for Knowsley, North that it all depends on the economics, but Opposition Members have forgotten the extent of the measures taken to encourage private investment.

We will ensure that public subsidy is available where it is necessary to provide accommodation to let at below market levels. Housing association grant will be available from the Housing Corporation and local authorities will be able to provide subsidies to private and housing association landlords. We have just announced that, as with housing association grant, such subsidies can be up to 50 per cent. to 75 per cent. of total scheme costs, depending on the area.

On top of the direct subsidies available to the private rented sector, the business expansion scheme is to be extended to private renting, and that will give favourable tax treatment to investment in private renting over the next five years. The tax concessions, combined with subsidies from local authorities, will provide a powerful stimulus to private investment in rented housing, enabling us to get more houses from the public resources available for housing investment. The generous tax relief available and the subsidies available from the Housing Corporation and local authorities demonstrate that we are committed to putting Government support where it is needed most.

Mr. Battle *rose*——

Mrs. Roe: My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne was near the mark when he talked about rented accommodation at reasonable rents. The measures will provide a powerful incentive to bring private rented properties back into use and to build more for rent.

To answer the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), the measures will also help to stimulate investment in the repair and improvement of private rented dwellings. The hon. Gentleman asked us to restore expenditure on improvement grants to home owners. Spending on improvement grants is still nearly double in real terms what it was when the Labour Government were in power, and since 1979 we have spent £3·5 billion on grants to home owners.

Several hon. Members referred to the state of the local authority stock and the availability of resources for repair. Local authorities are spending nearly £3 billion a year on repair and maintenance, and a number of authorities, including Labour authorities, which complain of lack of resources, fail to use to the full their power to spend up to 100 per cent. of receipts for capital repairs.

That represents a coherent strategy to end the local authority monopoly in rented housing, to increase investment, to widen consumer choice and improve standards of management. We may not believe in direct public sector provision, but more public sector resources are being made available.

The Opposition appear still to hanker after the failed dirigiste attempts at planning of the 1960s, to want to impose the dead hand of control and regulation, and to exhume the bodies of the Department of Economic Affairs and the national plan. The Government's policies have created a boom in private house building and in owner-occupation; and we are now intent on reviving the rented sector. We want to create the conditions in which the private sector can thrive and where even those who need help with their housing costs have a choice. We aim to give people the housing that they want.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 229, Noes 326.

Division No. 374] **[6.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neillist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John

Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments)*:—

The House divided: Ayes 328, Noes 223.

Division No. 375] **[7.14 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'caster)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth

Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashby, David
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on its housing and planning policies which have helped more people than ever before to own their own homes and, while protecting and extending the approved Green Belts, have created the conditions for a return of prosperity across the whole country; welcomes the proposals in the Housing Bill to widen the choice of housing available for rent; notes with satisfaction the planned increases in the Housing Corporation's programme and the additional resources being allocated to local authorities to tackle immediate problems of homelessness, bringing to £74 million the additional resources made available over the last six months; and urges local authorities to use these and other resources to end the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for families as quickly as possible.

North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill *(By Order).*

Order for Second Reading read.

7.27 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

7.28 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will recall that on 11 May we had a Second Reading debate on a private Bill not dissimilar to the one that is before the House. During that debate I asked the Under-Secretary of State if at any time there had been a meeting between anyone in his ministerial chambers and the outside promoters of the Bill. He said that he did not recall any such meeting. The following Monday, in answer to a parliamentary question, the Under-Secretary of State said in effect that the chairman of Associated British Ports had met the Secretary of State for Transport about the very matter that was up for debate. I raised this on a point of order with Mr. Speaker on Tuesday 17 May, the day after I had received a written answer from the Under-Secretary of State. He rightly said that he was obliged that the Minister, having said something about which he was not sure, had put the record straight by having a meeting.

I raise this point of order simply because this is a similar Bill, although it is not promoted by the same outside body. There is a close connection between that Bill and this, and the Secretary of State for Transport has a direct involvement with this Bill. It occurs to me to question whether this is a private Bill if such a meeting has taken place on this Bill, as it did on the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. I would like you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to give a ruling. Perhaps you could suspend the sitting for a few minutes so that you can consider whether this is a private Bill, in view of its close connections with the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, and whether we should therefore be considering it in the time that you have generously allotted for the discussion of private Bills this evening.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The Bill before the House must satisfy and has satisfied all the criteria for a private Bill, otherwise it would not be before the House. Discussions that may have taken place outside the House are not a matter for the Chair.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the contacts that my ministerial colleagues and I may or may not have had with the promoters could be a matter of interest to the House, I have caused inquiries to be made. I am informed that there have been no such contacts with relation to the Bill.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I visited the Examiner and asked him about the Bill, he assured me that it was of a localised nature and not a hybrid Bill. It is my submission that it is a hybrid Bill, and as such should not be debated this evening in the guise of a private Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman has gone far enough. He said that the authorities of the House had satisfied him that this is not a hybrid Bill. I cannot, therefore, proceed on the assumption that the hon. Gentleman is correct. Like him, I accept the advice that is offered to me by the authorities of the House and accept their assurance that this is not a hybrid Bill.

Mr. Redmond: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I submit that the Bill has grave implications that go far beyond Killingholme. Bearing in mind the Government's Whip, we are asking you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under the Standing Orders governing private business, to suspend the sitting pending an investigation by you and questions to the Minister and the Government. That is in accordance with Standing Order No. 85. I would ask you, Sir, to rule that this is a hybrid Bill, irrespective of what the Examiner said, because of the information that is coming to light.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I know of no grounds on which to give consideration to the hybridity question, and I can see no reason why we should not proceed.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. According to the Bill, the company involved was Central Oil Refining Co. Ltd. a subsidiary of Chemical and Oil Storage Management Ltd.. In essence, my point of order is that no trace could be found of that firm. We finally went to the Private Bill Office and were told that Chemical and Oil Storage Management Ltd. is now Simon Engineering plc. We are therefore discussing a Bill that was not submitted by the people who are now in charge of it. Can one company put in an application for a private Bill and then sell to another company and most probably charge it money for the application, thus making a profit out of the workings of the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that that point is a matter for the debate. Clearly, the Bill has been scrutinised by the Examiners and it had to satisfy the Examiners before it came before the House. It has satisfied the Examiners.

Several Hon. Members: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have made it clear that it is not a point of order.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. If it becomes clear that there is a challenge to the ruling of the Examiner, am I to understand that hon. Members who have had no opportunity of questioning the Examiner are not permitted to challenge his certification on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. When the hon. Gentleman talks about the rulings of the House, he is referring to the rulings of the Chair. I very much hope that the hon. Gentleman is not, uncharacteristically, challenging my ruling on the matter. Of course, it is for the House to exercise its judgment on these matters and I hope that that is what we shall do in the remaining two and a half hours or so. I hope that we shall reflect the decision of the House at the end of the debate.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Surely such projects are normally within the ambit of local authorities, through their normal planning procedures. Those normal planning procedures give room for lengthy inquiries and scope for witnesses to be examined and evidence to be taken. As I understand it, we shall have only an hour or an hour and a half and not all Members interested will be able——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Bill before the House satisfied the Standing Orders and the criteria laid down by the Examiners. The hon. Gentleman may have doubts and reservations about our procedures, but I remind him that a Joint Committee of both Houses is considering all those matters at the moment. If he has any reservations about the way in which we proceed, he may care to submit evidence to that Committee. In the meantime, we shall continue to operate within the framework of the existing Standing Orders.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You may recall that, in a previous debate on the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) made it clear in answer to direct questions that he had no financial or other interest in the Bill. He referred the House to the Register of Members' Interests. It may be of benefit to him to recall that on 8 June, when the Select Committee discussed ports and he questioned Sir Robert Haslam, he declared an interest. He later said that he did not have an interest then but that he hoped to have one later. I do not know whether the Register of Members' Interests requires people to register if they hope to have an interest. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was joking but, considering his extensive travels to South Africa——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Neither the House nor I should be considering the hon. Gentleman's future itinerary, nor can we make a decision on the basis of a hypothesis. If hon. Members who wish to take part in the debate have a direct pecuniary interest, no doubt they will make it clear at the appropriate time. Perhaps the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) will soon allow the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) to make his speech.

Several Hon. Members: Further to the point of order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not a point of order.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I visited the Private Bill Office today to inspect the papers in connection with the Bill, as I am sure all hon. Members have done. Among the papers are six petitions. They are from the Coalfield Communities Campaign, the National Union of Mineworkers, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, Wakefield and Doncaster councils and North-East Derbyshire council, in the area that I am proud to represent. There were 11 submissions in relation to the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. In addition, extra papers are available for inspection, and an Ordnance Survey map——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Barnes: —and plans and sections. In connection with the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill that is before the House. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will address his point of order to that.

Mr. Barnes: In connection with the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill and the two Acts to which it refers, the North Killingholme (Admiralty Pier) Act 1912, chapter clx, and the North Killingholme (Admiralty Pier) Act 1931, chapter lxiv, reference is made, as with the Associated Ports (No. 2) Bill, to a book of reference being available for our inspection. However, no book of reference is available——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me. It is a matter for debate.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One problem that you and people in your position continually face is the fact that without any doubt there has been a change in the practice relating to private Bills since you were elected in 1964. Hon. Members are expected to serve on private Bill Committees—and can incur penalties if they do not—if they have no involvement whatsoever in the matter before the Committee. Geographically restricted private Bills are, on occasion, bound not to affect many hon. Members. However, in this Bill, and in the one that we discussed earlier—but which we are not here to discuss today—such geographical restrictions do not exist because it is inconceivable that any hon. Member could not be affected by the importation of South African coal. No hon. Member could be found to serve on that Committee who could say that he or she would not in some way be affected by the decision.

Therefore, the whole private Bill procedure is faulty in that context. There is bound to come a time when some of us—those in the Chair and those in authority—must take the decision whether we can allow this private Bill procedure to continue when the Committee has to order hon. Members to appear before it, with penalties, if they are not in any way involved. When one remembers that about 70 Tory Members have connections with companies in South Africa, one begins to realise that many hon. Members do have interests. If one also remembers that, to a man and a woman, Opposition Members are against the Bill, one realises that one is bound to run into difficulties in finding people who are not tainted in some way.

I suggest that reference should now be made to the appropriate authorities and the Examiners to see whether this kind of private Bill procedure can continue on the basis of not being able to get appropriate Members of Parliament on the Committee.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one point at a time. What the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has said has no bearing whatsoever on the propriety of proceeding with our Second Reading debate this evening.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance and protection. When a private Bill affects public policy, as this Bill clearly does, how are we to be protected in terms of the

amount of time available to hon. Members to debate the issue? As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not represent a coalfield community, but I am assured by those of my hon. Friends who do represent such communities that, although the Bill clearly and specifically relates on paper to the North Killingholme cargo terminal, it could affect the relationship between this country and the development of our policies towards South Africa.

I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will tell me —quite correctly—that this matter has been considered by the appropriate Committees, which have looked at all the matters, and that your role now is simply to interpret what has been done before. However, I am concerned because the relationship between this country and South Africa has been consistently developing, changing and worsening. It has certainly worsened dramatically in the last few weeks, especially in relation to impending court decisions in South Africa, which affect not only our relationship with South Africa, but the whole of Britain's international standing

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Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. These are matters for debate, rather than ones on which the Chair can give a ruling.

Mr. Grocott: Just to complete what I am putting to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if a public Bill is being considered by the House, in the normal course of events, and allowing for statements, private notice questions and the rest, that Bill will have a minimum of five or five and a half hours for debate between 3.30 pm and 9 pm or 9.30 pm. That is not long enough, in my view. For several major and important Bills, it is considered necessary to have two days for Second Reading. If a Bill has major national if not international implications, and if all my hon. Friends and Conservative Members—who I know are also concerned about our relationships with South Africa, but from a different point of view—are concerned that such a Bill has a full, final——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have the gist of the hon. Gentleman's point. I repeat again that much of what he is saying is a matter for debate and one which hon. Members will take into account when reaching their conclusion at the end of the debate. Hon. Members may well argue that matters arising from the Bill are of such wide importance that they deserve further time. I must advise the House that, when I set down private business for the period between 7 pm and 10 pm, it is always open to me to ask the Government whether they will table a motion to suspend the 10 o'clock rule to enable the debate to continue beyond 10 o'clock. I have to be mindful of the demands on hon. Members' time and health and seek not to impose unreasonable obligations and duties on them. For that reason, I would be most reluctant to seek to extend any debate on private Bills beyond 10 o'clock, except where absolutely necessary.

I shall, of course, listen carefully to what is said in the debate and, when the House reaches its conclusion this evening, if it is necessary to do so, I shall reflect on what the hon. Gentleman has said. However, he has raised matters that should be taken into account in the debate and no doubt they will be weighed by hon. Members when they reach their conclusion at the end of the debate.

Mr. Grocott *rose*——

Mr. Redmond *rose*——

Mr. Bermingham *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Grocott.

Mr. Grocott: I am simply seeking your protection on this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Hon. Members may well have looked at the Order Paper today without appreciating, from a glimpse of it, the major national and international significance of this Bill which masquerades as a private Bill, and many hon. Members who would have wished to contribute may not be able to do so. Indeed, it may well be

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Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman needs my protection. When hon. Members say that they are seeking my protection, I look at them and wonder who needs to be protected from whom. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends have been left in any doubt during the past week or two about the importance and significance of this Bill.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Redmond.

Mr. Redmond: I asked earlier whether the Bill was a hybrid Bill. You gave guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you were satisfied that the Examiner had examined and that he was satisfied that the Bill satisfied the criteria of a private Bill. May I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how an hon. Member can nave discussions with the Examiner to satisfy himself that the Examiner's decision was correct? When I and a colleague went to discuss this private Bill with the Examiners, the Examiner was helpful but unfortunately could not take into consideration the views that we expressed, because the Examiner who had passed the Bill to your good self, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had left the Examiners' office. Because hon. Members could not ask the Examiner who had passed the Bill directly whether he was satisfied with the decision, will you suspend the sitting under Standing Order No. 85 in order to satisfy yourself that it is not a hybrid Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I share the general feeling that we have every confidence in the professionalism of those who serve us. Irrespective of the circumstances that the hon. Gentleman has just described, I doubt whether the Bill would have proceeded to this stage if there were any question about its bona fides and vires. I am confident that it satisfies all the criteria, and I hope that we can get on. We have spent more than 20 minutes on points of order, some of which would be more relevant to the debate.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Could it not be the case that the Examiner, having left the Private Bill Office, is not aware that the promoters of the Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have a debate and inquiry into these hypothetical matters.Hon. Members are not only calling into question the competence of those who serve us, but are getting dangerously near challenging my ruling. I must remind the House that rulings from the Chair are not a matter for debate.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that this will be the last point of order, and that we can proceed.

Mr. Thompson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My point is different from the others, and I hope that it will help to clear up the matter. Normally, when we receive notice of a private Bill, we also receive from the petitioners a statement which explains the details of the Bill. Would it not be appropriate to receive a statement? I certainly have not seen one.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter within my responsibility. I understand that it is by way of information and a courtesy. I call Mr. Michael Brown.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance on the business before us tonight. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) referred to the book of reference. How can we go about obtaining that so that we can have the information for the debate while an hon. Member is speaking——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have dealt with that matter. I said to the House that that was a matter not for me, but for debate. I call Mr. Michael Brown.

Mr. Michael Brown: The Bill will empower the promoters to carry out works——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Many of the points of order have not been bona fide points. The Chair deprecates business being delayed by procrastinating, bogus points of order. I hope that the House will be allowed to proceed with its business. I shall allow the Labour Front Bench spokesman to raise a matter and then I hope to get on with the debate. I intend to take no further points of order after this.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Gentlemen have just heard my ruling, and I hope that they will not challenge it.

Mr. Grocott: On a new point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you were in the Chair during long stretches of the night when we discussed the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill, I am sure that you will understand the natural anxiety about the conduct of debate on a private Bill. We all know that during its consideration it came to the attention of many of my right hon. and hon. Friends —and, to be fair, it disquieted many Tory Members—that the judgment of many hon. Members was being affected by the expensive hospitality offered by the Bill's sponsors.

This is an extremely serious point of order. On any outside reckoning, any neutral individual would take the objective view that wine, champagne and other drink, and hospitality for Members' wives—film shows were in operation and were being circularised by the Bill's sponsors—must affect the judgment, willingness to stay and stamina of hon. Members. Hon. Members and others need to be reassured whether, as we come to consider another private Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. One private Bill at a time. Is the hon. Gentleman making allegations that hon. Members have been influenced improperly?

Mr. Grocott: My problem, which I am sure is shared by everyone outside and the newspapers which will want to report this, is that I do not know. But this is extremely important, and you will understand——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not persist with an attempt to make me rule on some hypothetical hearsay. I cannot get involved in these matters, nor can I rule on them. I call Mr. Michael Brown.

Mr. Michael Brown: —to carry out works required to reconstruct the jetty in the tidal part of the estuary.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I made it clear that I would not take any further points of order at this stage. I call Mr. Michael Brown.

Mr. Michael Brown: The jetty is already capable of handling vessels up to 30,000 tonnes deadweight and the jetty is now in need of strengthening and organisation. I can assure the House that the Bill is absolutely necessary because of the reconstruction of the jetty, which will interfere with the public rights of navigation. *[Interruption.]* Planning consent could not override those rights and would not enable the jetty to be reconstructed. *[Interruption.]* Associated with the jetty will be a cargo terminal, which will be located within an adjacent area already designated for industrial use and set aside for activities requiring access to the deep water channel in the Humber. *[Interruption.]* The local authorities, the county councils, Glanford borough council and the local authorities immediately around the——

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I ask you to ask the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) to read slowly so that we can catch what he is saying? He is deliberately speaking fast —he was guilty of that when he moved the Second Reading of the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill—so that we cannot hear what he is saying.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for me, but doubtless the hon. Gentleman will bear it in mind.

Mr. Brown Yes, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Because of the location of the terminal, it is most unlikely that there will be any adverse effect on the environment in the area, and consultations with the local authorities have resolved any problems of that sort. The area around North Killingholme has been in decline for many years. It was blighted by the proposal, which was thankfully withdrawn, to dispose of nuclear waste in the area, so we are delighted at this proposal, which will provide a large number of jobs for my constituents. In so far as I have an interest in this Bill, it is confined to the fact that I stand to benefit, as do my constituents, from the enrichment of the area by a large increase in the number of jobs.

The estuary is strategically located for the European Economic Community and is favourably placed for accessibility from industrial locations within the United Kingdom. A study undertaken for Humberside county council by Coopers and Lybrand as far as back as 1982 shows that Humberside's importance in terms of cargo moving through the area is tremendous; there has been a 5·5 per cent. increase in the amount of tonnage through the

ports on Humberside as a whole. That is two and half times more than the rate for the United Kingdom, so it shows that there is tremendous potential for the port development, which the country requires anyway. As a result of their own market studies, the promoters are confident that they will capture a share of the existing import and export traffic.

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I asked, through you, that the hon. Member should speak more slowly so that we might fully understand and appreciate what he is saying. While he continues to gabble——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has got the point.

Mr. Brown: My rate of speaking is about 110 words a minute, which is very slow compared to the average rate in a public debate.

More significantly, the new cargo terminal is intended to divert other traffic away from Rotterdam, where it is going at the moment. Traffic is going to Rotterdam, where large cargoes are split up to be sent to the United Kingdom. So we stand to gain through the revenue which will come to our ports initially.

Mr. Barron: The hon. Gentleman has talked about cargo going to Rotterdam. Could it be coal from South Africa? My hon. Friends and I have not failed to notice, not only that the cargo is coal but that the Minister responsible for coal has come to listen to the debate on this so-called private Bill because he wants to privatise electricity. Will the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) be more forthcoming about what the cargo is likely to be?

Mr. Brown: The import and export traffic will be in bulk commodities, which include grain, coal, coke, aggregates, fertilisers and minerals. If Opposition Members think that by defeating the Bill they will in some way prevent commodities coming direct to this country which do not do so now, they are wrong. All that will happen if the Bill goes through is that cargoes which get to this country by means of small vessels, with the revenue going to the port of Rotterdam, will come to Humberside instead, with the revenue also coming to Humberside. That is the point of the Bill.

Mr. Redmond *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I have been very generous. The hon. Gentleman has raised several points of order. I should like to press on.

Opposition Members have expressed concern that the new port facilities capable of handling bulk cargoes could have an adverse effect on the coal industry. I should like to draw the attention of Opposition Members to two points. First, the CEGB has an 800-acre site immediately adjacent to the proposed cargo terminal. The site has planning permission for the development of a power station. When constructed, the power station will be served by its own jetty. Therefore, the promoters do not expect the CEGB to use the North Killingholme cargo terminal for coal movements.

Secondly, notwithstanding the Channel tunnel, United Kingdom industry as a whole relies, and must continue to rely, on an efficient modern port facility to serve its import and export needs.

Mr. Lofthouse *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I hope the hon. Gentleman will catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Bill is particularly relevant as 1992 approaches. If protection were to be sought for one sector of Britain's industry, it should surely not be at the expense of other sectors whose costs would increase if our port facilities are not as up to date as those of our rivals on the continent. Creating adequate competition in the provision of port services is surely vital to the health of our economy. I ask the House to give the Bill a Second Reading.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before I call anyone to speak, may I remind hon. Members that it is fundamental to the nature of the House that we give others an opportunity to address the House, no matter how disagreeable we may find the views expressed. I hope that hon. Members will not upset that tradition too much.

8.3 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I expect that your forecast that our speeches will be disagreeable will be fulfilled. I hope that my speech will be viewed as most disagreeable by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). It has been a difficult time for you in the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the occasion amply illustrates, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) pointed out, that we have reached a point in parliamentary history when the private Bill is used for purposes that are not appropriate for private Bills. This Bill may be ostensibly about one small part of the Humber estuary, but it goes to the very heart of Britain's trading, political and social problems. Because of that, my hon. Friends and I are implacably opposed to it, as we are to its sister Bill, which will be considered tomorrow.

We will spell out in considerable detail on Second Reading, and even more so if, unfortunately, the Bill reaches the Report stage, our total resolve to contest the Bill now and at any time word by word, line by line and stage by stage.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The hon. Member has just said that he thinks the private Bill procedure is inappropriate for such a measure. Does he accept that it is impossible for the legislation to be introduced in any way other than as a private Bill? Furthermore, there is an absolute stack of precedents, going back at least 200 years, for matters of this kind being dealt with by the private Bill procedure. The hon. Gentleman must look at the precedents and accept what I have said.

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Gentleman should understand that some of us may never pose as experts in constitutional politics and practice, but he might care to refresh his memory about the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act 1988, to which reference has already been made. He will understand that many people suspect—the suspicion is not restricted to this party or to these Benches—that there are now many occasions when the private Bill procedure is used to circumvent alternative procedures.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be to the advantage of the House, and not least to that of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr.

[Mr. Lofthouse]

Brown) himself, if he had given an assurance that he had no hope in future of being involved financially in any of the companies? It might have helped the House if he had told us whether, on a recent visit to South Africa, with all expenses paid, he discussed the landing of South African coal at these ports. Furthermore, did he discuss with the South African coal company representatives who were in London the landing of coal at these docks?

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not deal with the point now. Later I shall refer specifically to the South African link. It might have been appropriate if the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes had said a little more to explain the nature of the trade in South African coal. He did not do so. We shall shortly do it for him. I trust that he and his hon. Friends will remain in the Chamber so that we may ensure that ignorance will be no excuse in the House's consideration of the Bill at later stages.

I want to deal specifically with our implacable resolve to oppose the Bill. We are totally opposed to the Bill because it is a foolish duplication of existing port capacity. We had arguments about Felixstowe. My hon. Friends who attended that debate know that a vast sum of money is to be spent on a port at Felixstowe when other ports are underused. After protracted consideration, the House, in my view foolishly, approved the Felixstowe development. So we have even more port capacity than we had a year ago. There is no evidence that the volume of exports is increasing. If it were, that would justify additional port capacity.

That is the first argument. If and when the Minister for Public Transport chooses to contribute to the debate, I hope that he will tell us whether the Government consider that we have any great inadequacy in port capacity. If we have not, there is no justification for spending vast sums of money in the pursuit of duplication.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. Does he consider that the reason for setting up these ports on Humberside is one of geography, rather than one of capacity? They will be within 50 miles of some of the biggest coal users in electricity generation in the country. They are designed to penetrate that market, and no other market that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) mentioned. There is over-production in the grain market.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is right. There is over-production in Europe of cereal and other agricultural products.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes said that the CEGB owned land adjacent to the port. He suggested, or sought to mislead the House by suggesting, that the CEGB owned a nearby site and had the capacity to provide its own jetty to operate a power station nearby. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that the facility is not designed to serve a power station in the immediate vicinity of the port. The facility is designed to replace British coal in power stations such as West Burton, which is not very far away, or in other power stations in central England. That is one reason why we are implacably opposed to the duplication of port facilities, but there is a variety of other reasons for our view.

People are increasingly paying detailed attention to the case that is at the heart of our argument, because such a development is very much against the national strategic interest. We believe that developing an energy reliance on imported materials is foolish and that the promoters of the Bill are contributing to that folly. The strategic interest of the country is being ignored and the most shortsighted decisions are being taken.

The hon. Gentleman may consider that his constituents unanimously support his very doubtful position, but we have an obligation to our constituents, whose jobs will go where jobs have already gone. The economic heart of our communities will be further damaged, when damage enough has been caused in the last few years. The hon. Gentleman might be prepared to disregard morality and the strategic interests of the country to serve his constituents, but I wonder how many people in Brigg and Cleethorpes are also supporters and upholders of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): My hon. Friend referred to the capacity of British docks. If I remember rightly, the total capacity of British docks is about 47 million tonnes per year. At the height of the use of the docks industry, no more than 42 million tonnes of capacity have ever been used. That shows that there is over-capacity in Britain's docks. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) said that ships coming to Britain with bulk cargoes go first to Rotterdam, the cargoes are broken down and transhipped to Britain. That is because of Government policy. The Government do not direct the ships into port. They allow a laissez faire system in which owners bargain for individual cargoes. That leads to chaos. Not only the jobs of miners and power workers threatened, but dockers' jobs throughout Britain are threatened.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend illustrates the position that was argued when points of order of some doubtfulness were raised and the Bill was described as having the widest possible implications which do involve not merely a small part of the south Humberside coast or the nearby mining communities, but the nation's energy policy. I shall refer to that in a moment.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes scarcely mentioned South Africa. All the documents that I have received from the promoters of the Bill contain not a word about South Africa, Colombia or anywhere else. They contain no reference to coal. The hon. Gentleman confirmed our suspicions by mentioning coal and coke in his introductory remarks. We believe that it is a sordid link, and it is a pity that any hon. Member should be involved or have sympathy with such a sordid link. The promoters of the Bill appear to have a tolerance of deceitful practice. One would hope that the House would deplore deceitful practice. Coal is being imported into this country which is labelled as, and known to be, South African coal, but a greater tonnage is coming from South Africa in disguise. It is being landed at Rotterdam, and it is then described as Dutch or Netherlands coal being brought to Britain. The fact is that the Netherlands produces not one cobble of coal.

Some years ago I visited an establishment in the east of the Netherlands. As we drove to the establishment, which was an important base for the Western alliance, I said to the chap who was sitting with me on the bus, "This looks

like a coal mining community and the building that we are approaching looks like a coal mine." It was perhaps the last coal mine in the Netherlands. It is used for European security purposes, and is certainly not used to produce coal. I know of no Dutch politician who would dream of claiming that the Netherlands produces any coal. Therefore, it is quite reasonable for hon. Members to question the import of Dutch coal, when we know that no coal comes from the Netherlands.

Some of the coal is described as Luxembourg coal. Luxembourg produces no coal at all. Some is described as Belgian coal. One or two Conservative Members may know a little about the coal industry, and they will know that the Belgian coal industry has been contracting rather faster than ours during the past decade and is now of a negligible size. It is certainly not capable of exporting substantial quantities of coal.

The coal that is blended in Rotterdam is, to a substantial extent, from South Africa. The people who are bringing it in know that people in this country, perhaps not in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, but in many others, are rather more critical of South Africa than are Treasury Ministers. Therefore, they are disguising the trade by their description of the coal. That is deceitful and sordid and is another reason for our hostility to the Bill.

Mr. Redmond: The promoter of the Bill does not care where the coal comes from or whether blood is on that coal, so long as he and his friends make a profit from the blood, the sweat and the death. He would import coal from Bolivia and Colombia, which to a large extent is produced by women and children.

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes lays himself wide open to that accusation. Although he was able to measure his speech in the number of words per minute, he offered not one word of justification for his political or moral position. It may be that the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends met Rand Mines, Anglo-American, Glencor and Johannesburg Consolidated which visited Britain on 22 April. I believe that I know why they came to Britain. They came because they believed that the climate was ripe, and that people in power in Britain were receptive to the idea of more coal being imported. Such imports have been stopped in Denmark, and, I think, in Germany. The Swedes and Norwegians will not touch this coal. Even the French have banned it. South Africa thinks, therefore, that it can send more to Britain.

We once had a decent tradition here, but it has to a large extent been sacrificed by Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes may have met the companies in April. Another reason they came is that they believe that they can get in on the ground floor of electricity privatisation and that by establishing, directly or indirectly, more port facilities they can influence not merely the export of coal from South Africa but its consumption here. That is another pretty shoddy pass that we have reached.

Such an approach is sad and foolish for Britain, because it ignores the facts as we approach the 1990s. I do not like reading speeches, but I must make a brief quotation:

> "Increased United Kingdom imports would inevitably force up world prices. The amount of steam coal traded internationally is not much more than the size of the United Kingdom market."

We are not a huge part of the total energy consuming world, but large-scale imports would have a major effect on prices. They would narrow the gap between the price of British coal and the price of world coal.

Hon. Members who think that we can defy the laws of economics and develop a huge dependency on imported coal without suffering any economic consequences are labouring under a serious delusion, because as soon as we increase the demand for coal on world markets the price will inevitably increase substantially. That fact goes to the heart of our argument, and it presents serious dangers for Britain.

The Bill is shortsighted and foolish in economic and energy terms. It is time that we began to understand the realities of energy. We have 0·8 per cent. of the world's proven oil resources, but we are producing almost 4·5 per cent. of the world's oil. We are therefore producing at a rate five times faster than is sensible. As each year passes, the Treasury will have to make more and more concessions to oil producers to invest and increase the rate of extraction from British fields, the bulk of the best parts of which may already have gone.

We have about 0·6 per cent. of the world's gas, but we are producing more than 2·5 per cent. of the world's current output, and have done so for some years. That means that we—a supposedly intelligent nation—are rushing to embrace energy dependency again. As our oil and gas resources are depleted at an astonishing rate of blind prodigal folly, we shall develop dependency on imported coal, because it is cheap at the moment, and wipe out viability in the British coal mining industry.

That lies at the root of the matter and it is why my right hon. and hon. Friends are here tonight, hoping that some Conservative Members will have some sense. A few moments ago, I said that I was quoting. I had hoped that a Conservative Member would ask who I was quoting, as I was quoting what the Secretary of State for Energy said at the Institution of Mining Engineers conference last month.

Mr. Michael Welsh: When the Secretary of State said that imported coal would hurt British pits, but that if the price of coal went up we would have a chance to compete, he made an important statement, but is that not an example of economic madness? Does my hon. Friend agree that, once a pit has been closed, output cannot be increased just to suit demand? Once a shaft is closed, no more coal can be brought out. The critical path of a pit is 15 years. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Secretary of State was talking economic nonsense to the engineers, and they must have known it?

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is right. It is a pity that there are no Ministers from the Department of Energy to hear our balanced and justified critique. The Secretary of State's comments on prices were recognised as important at the conference, and not all of those who attended are Socialist or Labour supporters. Indeed, some of them may still be clinging to the coattails of the Conservative party. Nobody with expertise in mining of energy, however, would dream of endorsing the shortsightedness that the Bill represents.

The Secretary of State acknowledged that Britain has huge and rich coal reserves. He said:

> "You all know that, and I know it."

He acknowledged that the mining engineers know it and claimed to know it himself, but he has not had a word with

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the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes to say that his Bill and that which, unfortunately, the House is to consider tomorrow night contradict what the Secretary of State said at the Blackpool conference on 13 May. He said: "We have discovered a resource which if allowed to could compete with the world for as far ahead as we can see." How far ahead do the Government look? How far ahead does the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes look? He does not have to look far to see such turmoil, stress, strain and bloodshed in South Africa that would imperil the source on which he wants Britain to depend.

The Secretary of State went further than recognition of the facts. During his speech to the Institution of Mining Engineers he confirmed the enormous investment that the Government have put into mining. We all recognise that vast investment has been made. There are not many Conservative Members present, but some of them might pause for just a while and consider whether it is wise for a Conservative Back Bencher to present a Bill to the House which destroys investment on that scale and about which the Secretary of State boasted.

This is madness economics. It is the financial practice of lunatics. The hon. Gentleman is sabotaging public policy. If we were at war and the hon. Gentleman decided to destroy the armaments on which the country depended, he would probably be shot in the Tower as a traitor, even though we do not currently have capital punishment. If he carries on in this way, he will no doubt appear in an honours list before long. We have spent £9 billion on the coal industry, and the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends are cheered for introducing a Bill that will ensure that that investment proves worthless.

I cannot say that I am always an enthusiastic adulator of British Coal, but it regularly keeps hon. Members informed. Indeed, I suspect that some Conservative Members may have been informed more quickly than Labour Members. I received a press release from British Coal which stated:

"The national productivity record has been broken at Britain's collieries for the fifth time in the last 12 weeks. Miners last week achieved a new peak performance of 4·42 tonnes output per man shift."

That is a significant achievement and has been made because of the very real change in the industry. There are now 260 heavy duty coal faces, whereas three or four years ago there were over 500. Three years ago there were five collieries in my constituency; now there is only one. We have made a bitter contribution to the colliery output records achieved by British Coal. The consequences to areas such as mine have been enormous, yet those changes, sacrifices and burdens are mocked by the Bill.

In the Bill, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is saying that we shall have to do even better to compete with South African coal. The British mining communities will not be made the coolies of western Europe. They have made an enormous contribution to the history of this country, and we do not intend to see ever-increasing demands, hardship and deceit.

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend makes an important point. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) said that the installations would create some jobs. They may well create a few jobs, but when one considers the devastation that will take place in the remaining mining communities, one feels that the hon. Gentleman should broaden his horizons, see what is happening on the other side of the hill, meet the people and understand what is happening in those industries that are suffering as a consequence of the policies of the Government and of people such as the hon. Gentleman who seek to import further blood coal into this country.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is right. His constituency is next to mine and, in the past three years, the number of collieries there has fallen from five to one. In the past three years the number of collieries in my constituency has also fallen from five to one. As other hon. Friends in the House this evening could testify from experiences in their constituencies, the effect on the social and economic structure in areas such as mine has been brutal and cruel and is now mocked by the Bill.

The one remaining colliery in my constituency, Silverwood, is a profitable colliery, as many of my hon. Friends know. It has made enormous profits since it was sunk in 1912, both for the owners before nationalisation, and since it has been owned by the state. It provides coal for Drax and West Burton. The port that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes wishes to develop will bring in South African coal to replace that of Silverwood. I am not prepared to sit by and let that happen.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does my hon. Friend agree that the threat of electricity privatisation and of the proposal in respect of this port is estimated, in a recent report by the Coalfield Communities Campaign, which, to some extent, Sir Robert Haslam endorsed in the Select Committee recently, to mean the loss of another 50,000 jobs? The greatest tragedy is that the average age of miners is now 34, so we are talking about 50,000 jobs involving men of 34 and under, without any compensation in the form of weekly payments.

Mr. Hardy: I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to develop that point, either tonight or in the relevant debate tomorrow, by referring to an aspect of the matter that causes me serious concern.

The House will be aware that, in addition to representing a mining constituency that has seen its mining interests dramatically reduced, I am sponsored by the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers, which is holding its conference this week. I shall speak at that conference on Friday, and I hope that I can convey to the members the information that the House is not completely daft and that it has some compassion for, understanding of and obligation to all parts of the country, instead of only to the affluent parts of the country that Conservative Members may know better than I do.

As the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) might remember, that association has a fundamental obligation, not merely to supervise production, but to ensure that the laws and regulations of this land are observed to ensure that the mining industry is operated as safely as possible.

I want to draw the House's attention to the question of safety. We are concerned about South Africa, not only because of the political injustice or the racial obscenity, but because South African workers are largely abused and do not enjoy the structures of legal protection that any civilised society would think it right to afford. It is appropriate for me, as a Member sponsored by NACODS, to make those points.

One of the South African firms that came to this country in April to discuss opportunities for electricity privatisation, Glencor, is known as the butcher in South Africa because of the fatalities in the underground colliery operations for which it is responsible. There were 177 dead at the Kinross gold mine.

Mining has been practised in my constituency for over 300 years, and it has taken a Conservative Government to bring about the prospect of having no mines at all. I did a great deal of research in local history when I was younger. We could easily travel round and see where 100 people, 50 people or 180 people were destroyed by explosions and by practices which may well have been slightly more tolerable because technology was not as advanced in the 19th century as it is today. There is now no need for scores of men to be killed underground.

A colliery deputy in Britain must be at least 25 years old and have worked underground for five years and on the face for two. Those are very much the minimum requirements. It would be most unusual, as any of my hon. Friends with a great deal of underground experience can confirm, for an official to have those legal responsibilities with only those qualifications. In addition, the official must pass the appropriate examinations.

In South Africa, the requirements are that the person must be 20 years old, and have worked 75 shifts at the face and 400 shifts underground. I am glad that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West smiles. His smile cheers me up, because it is sad that we should face this situation without an ounce of sympathy from the Conservative Benches. South African coal is not cheaply won. The wages are low, but the price is high, because people like those who came to meet the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes employ people responsible for safety who have worked only 75 shifts underground. That is why 68 men died in a fire in Hlobane mine.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): My hon. Friend is making a powerful case about safety and fatalities in the mining industries. Is he aware that, in speaking about the representatives of South Africa, he is speaking about the apostles of private enterprise? Is he further aware that if the Government win the next general election, they intend to privatise the coal industry? Is he also aware that in this century nearly 58,000 miners have been killed, my father among them, and most of those deaths occurred in the days of private enterprise?

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is right. Some people make mock of colliery nationalisation, but as a little lad I was with my father, outside Manvers colliery in 1947, to see the vesting of that pit into public ownership. My father, all his work mates and their families knew that one of the blessings of that act was that priority would be given to safety, a priority which was not given before, and which we suspect will not be given again if the Government are returned after the next general election. It is no good Conservative Members shaking their heads. The profit motive will dominate all other responsibilities and it will be short-sighted——

Mr. Illsley: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hardy: Yes, I will in a minute, because I know that my hon. Friend will have an important point to make.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I suspect that the debate might be turning into one about the privatisation or otherwise of the coal mining industry. We had better turn our eyes to North Killingholme.

Mr. Hardy: I accept that point because we ought not to stray too far, but this port is being developed in response to the opportunities that privatisation will create, so privatisation is partly related to the Bill. I accept that we should not range too widely, although we do not need to range too widely, because the material in the Bill gives us sufficient scope to debate it for many a long day, week, month or year. It is no good the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes smiling, because if ever this Bill gets to Report, he will not be smiling after the hours that we are prepared to devote to it.

I have been looking at the Bill, and I consider that it will be necessary, if it reaches Report, to table many amendments. I hope that the promoters will decide to cut their losses, because losses there will be. It is not an inexpensive matter to promote a private Bill, and if a large part of the House resents that Bill and deplores the motives behind it and feels it necessary in the interests of the country to issue a challenge, then the promoters must understand that the Bill will be an expensive undertaking.

Some of us devoted a great deal of time, quite properly, to the cause of the red grouse and the little ringed plover when we debated the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act. I will not mention all the species that were mentioned, although I would be in order to do so. In this Bill, our concerns go a good deal further than the avian. There are concerns about our areas, about our people and our country and about this fact above all. Conservative Members, like Nero in ancient Rome, ignore the reality of the economic evidence that is looking increasingly large. The trade deficit, approaching or exceeding £10 billion in 1988, cannot be brused aside by even the most irresponsible politician.

At the moment, the Government know that the trade deficit of £12 billion can just about be borne because of invisible earnings and the £4 billion or more of oil revenues. There will be problems the moment they go, and we have much less than 1 per cent.—little more than 0·5 per cent.—of the world's oil resources. We have been producing at nearly 5 per cent. of world oil production, so the Government, despite their disdain of economic reality, are merely ensuring that we approach energy dependency as fast as possible. They do not consider the consequences. They have seen the economic devastation of many parts of England and the eradication of large sectors of our manufacturing industry. When the oil income diminishes, the trade deficit will press hard.

It may be that, by that time, the pound's value in the world's exchanges will be diminished, and the price of coal, which will rise in any case, will in real terms be a burden that the country cannot afford. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes and his friends are seeking to wipe out large sections of the British coal industry, and to develop a dependence on imported energy. If that happened in very few years, we would not have the economic capacity to go into the world markets and buy the energy on which we depend. That is at the heart of the matter. I do not know what brief or advice the Minister has been given for his inevitable contribution to the

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debate, but it will be interesting to see whether he is prepared to offer some modest comment about the economic implications of the Bill.

Mr. Illsley: My hon. Friend has spoken about the conference that he will attend this week and about the regulations that govern deputies in mines. Is my hon. Friend aware that already the Government are dismantling the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and have published 15 sets of new codes of regulations which will decrease the safety standards applicable to deputies in the British coal industry?

Mr. Hardy: I am aware of the matter, and it will be figuring quite largely in the discussions that I shall have in Glasgow over the next two days. It is a matter that causes NACODS real anxiety. I only hope that no Minister, although he may believe it, will have the gall to say that we have to dismantle the safety structures so that British coal can compete against South African coal. I hope that Ministers will not argue that we have to put at risk life and limb in Britain to compete with Colombia. I know that Colombian coal is selling at $28·20 a tonne on world markets, but it is being sold at well below the production cost, which on average is $33·90. I was interested to see in the documents that I have studied that the companies that own Colombian coal, which are rather more intelligent than some Conservative Members, have said that they are prepared to subsidise Colombian coal until such time as world markets recover and profits are within their grasp. That will happen when the port to which the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is dedicated is constructed.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The proposals to substitute the provisions of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 by codes of practice, not by regulations, are designed to enable British Coal to increase its profitable element. That Act contains absolute safety provisions, which are statutory provisions. On the other hand, a code of practice is not a statutory provision, and breach of it is not even an offence; it is taken to the courts only when the court case is considered. In other words, the dismantling of that Act represents a massive reduction in safety standards precisely to compete with cheap coal coming through ports such as the one suggested here.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is an authority on employment law and health and safety matters, on which he has a distinguished record. The Government cannot deny opportunity to the House to consider the serious matter on which he has touched, which concerns me.

Before I proceed with my speech, I wish to apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). I remember that I promised to allow him to intervene. I shall be glad now to remedy my failure to do so.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): A short while ago my hon. Friend referred to the Minister and asked rhetorically whether he had been briefed. My hon. Friend and I know what is going on and the Minister is aware of the Government's policy. The Government favour the Bill because it fits their policy on the privatisation of electricity. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) —that little lad on the Front Bench below the Gangway who knows nothing about mining—is having an education this evening. He now knows what the Bill involves.

I received some visitors today, and when I was with them I saw the Secretary of State for Energy, who was also with some visitors. I asked him whether he would be in the House this evening, and he said he would. Why would the Secretary of State be in the precincts of the House this evening when a private Bill is being discussed? It is a fact that the Government have fixed the vote to secure the Bill's passage. This is a serious matter and I ask the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes to remove the grin from his face. As I have said, the hon. Gentleman has received an education this evening.

There are 19 pits in Nottinghamshire. If the Bill is enacted, coal imported from South Africa, for example, through the proposed port would close nine of them. There are nine pits in Nottinghamshire which supply coal for the power stations on the Trent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be brief.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend's intervention may have been lengthy but it was relevant and important. My assessment suggests that he may have understated the position. I hope that no Conservative Members will deny my claim that it is by no means an overstatement.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield referred to Nottinghamshire. I talked earlier about the astonishing achievement of the county in establishing the highest productivity record for British coal nationally. The productivity record established in Nottinghamshire in the recent measured period shows output per man shift exceeding 5 tonnes for the first time in British history. The attitude of the lackeys on the Government Benches, with the connivance of the Government, unless the Minister can make an extremeley convincing speech, means that Nottinghamshire pits are under threat. What a reward for all those in Nottinghamshire who have been praised and congratulted by Conservative Members in the past.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): The intervention of the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) was not relevant to the debate. Indeed, it was entirely false. I put it to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) that the Government are not involved in the Bill. If they were, all Opposition Members would be aware of the fact. If that were the position, the payroll vote, as it is affectionately known, would be expected to support the unofficial policy of the Government. Some Parliamentary Private Secretaries have been told that there will be a free vote this evening and that they may speak against the Bill. Indeed, some will try to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that they may do so, and vote against the Bill.

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Gentleman has touching faith in the Government's objectivity. I thought he said that a certain section of the House is known "affectionately" as the payroll vote. I realised immediately afterwards that I had misheard him and that he said that it was effectively known as that.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I said "affectionately" and I meant "affectionately." Those of us who are part of the payroll vote resent the term because we do not get paid.

Mr. Hardy: In a better world and at a better time I was part of the payroll vote when the Labour Government were in office, and in a position similar to that which is held by the hon. Gentleman. There were many occasions when

I and others in the same position, whether we were regarded affectionately or not, were not given advice on Bills of this sort. We were never given advice on private Bills. Our Whips recognised that it was not for them to contemplate any interference by the Government. I shall need a great deal more convincing than has been offered in the hon. Gentleman's reassurances.

I know that the Minister will not speak at length in this debate. Ministers never do on these occasions. However, I want him to tell us three things when he gives us advice on the Government's position. I want him to tell us whether the Government are prepared to adopt the same attitude towards South African coal as other member states of the Western Alliance and the European Economic Community. I want the Government to advise the House whether it would be sensible to enact a Bill that would nullify public investment in the British coal industry. I want the Government to advise the House whether it would be intelligent for the Government or the country to allow a port to be established, in massive duplication of other facilities, which would ensure that strategic interests were not served. That is not much to ask.

I have been involved in a number of private Bills in the past 12 or 18 months and I have been appalled by the attitude that has been displayed by various Ministers. We had a classic example. A Minister assured the House that the Government were neutral. Having heard that, I voted and went quickly to stand outside the Aye Lobby. I saw Government Whips and Ministers flocking out of it. That happened immediately after a Minister had told us that there was neutrality. According to that Minister, the Secretary of State for the Environment was neutral. He voted in favour of the Bill when the two public agencies which reported to him were petitioning against it.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend may recall that the very same Minister, who is on the Government Front Bench tonight, when speaking about the Associated British Ports Bill a few weeks ago, said that the Government had no position on the Bill but he hoped that hon. Members would vote with him to give it a Second Reading. I suspect that the Minister will say very much the same tonight.

Mr. Hardy: The Minister is developing a reputation for frankness and integrity, which may mean that he has reconsidered his position. Only last Monday, I asked a question of him—I recognise that this is not strictly relevant, so I shall be brief—concerning red seats on railway platforms. At Grantham station the seats are blue, and when I commented that that was inevitably because of the Prime Minister's connections, and suggested that the right hon. Lady's attachment to railways is meagre and wretched, the Minister said that that was not the case because his right hon. Friend had told him that she had enjoyed a railway journey. That was frank of him; he could at least have avoided the singular. He did not do so. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman's reputation rose in my estimation.

It may be that he has decided that the course of integrity and responsibility is such, even with demanding masters, that when he stands at the Dispatch Box he will recognise the merit of our argument. If he does, his reputation will be improved beyond that of the tawdry level of so many of his right hon. and hon. Friends who occupy the Government Front Bench.

The Government have divided Britain in an astonishing way. I mentioned the plight of my hon. Friend's area and mine, which is relevant to the Bill. In each of our constituencies, we have one colliery remaining that could be threatened by a dependence upon imports. Our constituents are angry—as are those of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), who has had a similar experience—and we are angry at the way in which we are treated by the Government and by Ministers. About four years ago, I wrote to the Prime Minister about what would happen in my constituency. A few weeks later she replied saying that I had overstated my case and that only 2,800 mining jobs would be lost.

On several occasions since I have raised the matter again. Four weeks ago, I wrote to the Prime Minister, saying that the position was worse than when I had written to her a month previously. Last week, she replied, and it is disgraceful that a Prime Minister should put her name to a letter designed to be grossly misleading. For example, the right hon. Lady insisted that unemployment in my area is falling when it is not. She claimed that my area is receiving special priority under the urban programme when it is not. There are still a few Government supporters north of the Trent, and there may be present Conservative Members from areas that I could name, where unemployment is half the level it is in my own constituency and that of my hon. Friend, but which—despite the fact that their average population is one third of that in my metropolitan area—are receiving larger sums in urban area support. Some special priority!

An even more unacceptable development, which would be aggravated if the Bill is passed, is that the Government have changed the rules for derelict land grant. The House knows that I am committed to the cause of conservation. One hon. Member mentioned that I embraced it long before many other hon. Members did, and sometimes I am cynical about their support. Nevertheless, I am committed to seeing the Dearne valley, where I live, made green again. We have lost the pits and we are now losing hope. The remaining jobs there are under threat, yet the Prime Minister informed me that the area was being greatly helped by the derelict land grant, when in fact the Government have changed the regulations and made it virtually impossible for any public moneys to be devoted to reclaiming colliery spoil heaps or the area within the curtilage of any colliery. In my own constituency there are in one colliery complex 675 acres that cannot be improved and which will remain desolate, despairing and disgraceful because of the Government's insensitivity—an insensitivity that is compounded by the Prime Minister's great deceit. I am waiting for the right hon. Lady's explanation of the various points that were made in the letter.

That area, with the adjoining constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) to the east and for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) to the west, has seen the most colossal job losses.

It may be that the Minister will tell the House that he can offer all sorts of assurances that this is a reputable private company which can give guarantees, but I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that after my experiences in my constituency over the past 12 months I am cynical about taking the word of private sector businesses, unless I know them very well indeed.

Mr. Redmond: Does my hon. Friend agree that what is important is jobs for the youngsters? In its prime, prior to the strike, the coal board employed approximately 650

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apprentices each year. After the strike, in 1985, in 1986 and in 1987 there were no more apprentices. How many apprenticeships will replace that loss?

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is right to ask the question, but I cannot answer it. However, I doubt whether the commitment to training and education in the private sector generally is anything like adequate. It is most unlikely that the training being given by the public sector to young people in the steel and coal industries and other sectors of the economy will be replaced once privatisation has been completed.

Mr. Illsley: Before my hon. Friend leaves the point that he was making about private companies and the assurances that he would take from them, will he comment on the matters raised at the beginning of the debate when we seemed to have some difficulty in identifying the promoter of the Bill? He might recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) had elicited that Chemical and Oil Storage Management Ltd. did not seem to exist and that it may have been taken over by a company called Simon Storage. Does that not emphasise my hon. Friend's point that we should be wary of who we are dealing with in this matter?

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend makes an important point. It is one of the modern tragedies of Britain that the captains of industry should have allowed within their ranks men whose word cannot be believed. I am not suggesting that the company is dishonourable, nor that the people within it are dishonourable, but the fact remains that we have had such experiences over the past few years as to make us extremely suspicious of the word of big business men.

It would be wrong to detain the House for long, but my experience of the Guinness company, which cost us 500 jobs, after promises were made, caused me both anger and contempt. When the company, having twice offered me written assurances, then told the local newspapers that it had not given me any assurances at all, we really had reached a pretty pass. It is a pass which means that, in the interests of our constituents, as the Bill proceeds, if it does proceed, we must subject the companies involved in the Bill— the Central Oil Refining Company Ltd., a subsidiary of Simon Engineering plc, and another subsidiary of Simon Engineering plc, Immingham Storage Company Ltd.—to careful scrutiny.

That scrutiny will be a great deal more careful as a consequence of the experience that my hon. Friends will have had in their constituencies—an experience that I certainly had when Guinness became involved in misleading and cheating the ratepayers, the community and the representatives at national and local level in my constituency, creating a situation in which 500 jobs were lost directly and an additional number of jobs are still being lost as a consequence. That came at a time when Kilnhurst and Manvers collieries were closed and unemployment became even worse.

For the Prime Minister to say that unemployment is still falling in my area is in plain and stark defiance of the facts, even though the Minister and I and every Conservative Member know that the Government's unemployment figures are fiddled anyway. Even on their fiddled figures, the situation in the coalfield areas is disgraceful. What made me even more angry was that the Prime Minister said to me, "We can demonstrate our commitment to your area: 17,500 young people there are on youth training schemes." That is true; but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) knows full well, last year only 9·8 per cent. of them obtained jobs.

We shall need an awful lot of convincing from the Minister, and I do not think that he will allow himself sufficient time or energy to present a detailed and convincing case. However, if he does, I hope that he will address the relevant questions that I put to him.

We recognise that the matter may be the responsibility of the Department of Transport, but it is nevertheless of fundamental importance to the Department of Energy. I cannot expect the Minister to refer in detail to energy, but, as it is fundamental to the Bill, we are surely entitled to ask Conservative Members to comment on my quotations from the speech that the Secretary of State made at Blackpool to the annual conference of the Institution of Mining Engineers. We are also entitled to suggest that a Minister from the Department of Energy should have been here. It is absurd that a matter of such enormous importance to the economy—the making of energy policy and the mining industry, a matter of enormous relevance to the hundreds of millions of pounds invested by successive Governments on behalf of the taxpayer—is to be put at risk without a single Energy Minister being present.

I wonder where they are. Are they interested in their responsibilities? Do they not approve of the words of the Secretary of State for Energy being quoted with approval by Opposition Members, including myself? Do they not notice that we believe that the Secretary of State was absolutely right in referring to the prospects of British Coal—provided, of course, that it operates on a basis of common sense?

We are entitled to ask the Government to take a long-term view, but they must understand that we shall need a good deal of persuasion. After the Secretary of State for the Environment had been given the official advice of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission, which strongly opposed the Bill, the Minister came to the Dispatch Box and pledged the Government's neutrality. The Secretary of State, the Chief Whip and all the other minions led the troops, happy and laughing, through the Lobby in support of the Bill when their duties and responsibilities should have persuaded them at least to abstain.

Mr. Harry Barnes: We understand the Government's position. We understand that there is no neutrality—in fact, there is an unofficial Whip in support of the Bill. But, given the case that my hon. Friend has made about the effect on our communities, should not the Government be organising their troops to vote against this private Bill?

Mr. Hardy: That is right.

I do not want to detain the House for long this evening. I must make progress because I still have four or five small points to make.

I referred a few moments ago to safety in South Africa, but omitted to inform the House that the death rate in South African coal mines is well in excess of six times the rate per thousand men employed in the British mining industry. Life and limb should be regarded as important

by all hon. Members. We accept that Conservative Members may give them a slightly lower priority than we do, but they will give them some——

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): My hon. Friend said earlier that the miners of western Europe could become the coolies of western Europe—a fundamental point. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), with his connections with South Africa, never conveys that point. The Tories can never be neutral about the miners. Anyone who remembers the miners' strike knows full well that the Conservatives' aim is to weaken the mining industry in this country. They hate the miners, and have no consideration for South African miners, either. Nelson Mandela has been in gaol all these years. The Sharpeville six will be executed shortly. Are the Tories bothered about British miners? They will have the South African miners, with blood on their coal, competing with our miners to lower the standards of our mining safety and to close our pits.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is right. We suspect—the Minister had better note this—that one reason for the port is to provide another lever for the Government's attempts to dismantle the structure of safety in the British mining industry.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): As a former miner, like my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), who worked in the Nottinghamshire coalfield, I should like to take this opportunity to mention our real fears. Before we close the debate I want to clear up a misunderstanding about our worries. I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), when he goes to the conference of the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers, to give its members our assurance that we shall fully support their defence against the attacks on safety standards in the mining industry that have been made by the Government in preparation for privatisation.

Even the present legislation is inadequate. We should be strengthening, not weakening, it. I speak as a former union secretary in the Nottinghamshire coalfield, and I had the unpleasant duty of attending six inquests during my period of office. On each of those occasions the legislation proved inadequate to save the lives that were lost. Hon. Members will appreciate what it is like to have to go to a home in a mining community and tell a family that its daddy is not coming home. That explains our real worries about safety standards.

I think, too, of safety standards in, and blood coal from, South Africa. I can well understand what happens there when——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman is patient, he may be called.

Mr. Hardy: I believe that my association recognises that Opposition Members remain committed to giving safety a high priority. We are worried about the attitude of Ministers and Conservative Members.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for having given way, lest people think that the debate revolves solely around Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire. I represent a constituency in the north-east that contains four of the remaining six collieries in the old Durham area. I am sure my hon. Friend recalls the Prime Minister's remarks during the miners' strike to the effect that we were the enemy within. We have broken productivity records. Productivity has never been higher; nor has morale. Perhaps the enemy within sits on the Conservative Benches. Conservative Members are selling the country short by introducing this Bill, which will place the coal reserves of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the hands of international coal cartels. Does my hon. Friend agree?

Mr. Hardy: That is right. Unfortunately, the gentleman who held the trust and support of the Government was certainly taking Britain along the road of Mr. MacGregor's basic interest, which was to see Britain developing as a major international coal factor rather than a major international coal producer. I was pleased that he did not get his hands on British Gas after having dealt with British Steel and British Coal.

Some Conservative Members and Ministers may be so busy pursuing other interests that have attracted their attention that they have overlooked the reality of British electricity generation. Given that disregard, which has been made patently obvious in the debate, it is useful to remind the House of the coal generation market in the United Kingdom.

Conservative Members seem to believe that the Government have forced the CEGB to buy British coal, and that there are some printed rules and regulations requiring the CEGB to do that. That is not the case. There is a joint understanding. The trouble is that, whilst a joint understanding can properly be applied to public sector industry, private sector businesses do not operate on understandings. They cannot trust each other and they have to have laws.

Above all, I want the House to understand my next point. Over three quarters of British coal is used for power station generation and 55 per cent. of the CEGB's operating costs are devoted to coal. Conservative Members think that that is a lie and that that coal can be replaced by cheap foreign coal. They do not understand that 12 million tonnes of coal are purchased by the CEGB at world prices. There is no possibility of a £750 million bonanza waiting round the corner. That is why the Bill is misguided in its potential social effects and in its financial aspirations. That is why I and my hon. Friends will maintain what I said was an absolutely implacable resolve to contest the Bill in every detail. We will contest every word, every line and every paragraph at every stage of the Bill's consideration.

9.23 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): It may be helpful to the House if I intervene briefly to give the Government's view on the Bill. It is conventional on a private Bill for the Government to take a neutral stance, but in doing so to advise the House that the Bill should be allowed a Second Reading. This does not imply that the Government support the Bill. It is for the promoters to persuade Parliament that the powers they are seeking are necessary and justified.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) asked for the Government's view about whether the Bill involves the provision of excess capacity in the ports industry. We think that matching capacity with demand is best handled by those who put their money at risk on whether their judgment is right. Their judgment is at least as likely to be

[Mr. David Mitchell]

right as the judgment of politicians, and probably more so. The Government have no objection in principle to the proposals in the Bill. My Department has a minor point outstanding which it is discussing with the promoters, and it is expected that it will be satisfactorily resolved.

Mr. Barron: What is the minor point?

Mr. Mitchell: It is a minor technical point about lighthouses and Trinity House. As I have said, we anticipate that it will be satisfactorily resolved.

A number of petitioners are against the Bill, and they will have the opportunity to present their objections to the Select Committee. The Committee will be in a much better position than we are in this debate to examine in detail the issues involved, and they will have the added advantage of expert advice.

A number of hon. Members referred to the coal industry. It has never been the Government's policy to restrict the import of coal. The best protection for the United Kingdom coal industry is to produce secure supplies of coal that are competitive on the world market. The success of British Coal in competition with world coal suppliers depends on its ability to continue to get costs down and to maximise productivity. The purchase of coal, whether imported or indigenous, is a matter for the commercial judgment of individual consumers.

The hon. Member for Wentworth asked me two further questions. He asked about South African coal. I have no reason to assume that the pattern of sources of imports will be altered by the Bill. That pattern shows that the largest overseas supplier to this country is Australia and that the second largest is the United States of America.

Mr. Hardy: In order not to delay the House, I did not mention Australia. Australian coal capacity is under severe limit because, at the prevailing level of prices, not enough can be recouped to pay for investment, with the result that the collieries and coalfields in Australia are not operating at full production. That is a relevant point to make when we are considering the Bill.

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for agreeing that Australia still has surplus capacity that is not being mined. Australia is already the leading overseas supplier to this country. It is not, as the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends implied, South Africa. The second largest supplier is the United States of America. There is no reason to believe that the building of a new terminal will alter the pattern of imports and lead to South Africa, which is very low on the list of overseas suppliers, moving to the top of the list, as has been implied.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Mitchell: Let me deal with the point that the hon. Member for Wentworth raised. He questioned whether the development of the terminal would nullify British investment in the coal industry. I have already explained what the Government consider to be the most effective way for the British coal industry to ensure its future. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to draw attention to the need for investment in the British coal industry to enable it to continue to compete successfully in the United Kingdom and world markets. I am sure that he will welcome the fact that the Government are investing about £650 million a year in the British coal industry.

We believe that we should not use limitations of port capacity as a form of non-tariff barrier to imports in order artificially to protect the United Kingdom industry. That industry is now becoming so efficient, competitive and effective that it does not need such artificial discrimination to ensure that it can sell in the United Kingdom market.

Mr. Barron: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mitchell: I have tried to answer the points that have been raised in the debate so far. I know that a large number of hon Members want to participate and it would be unfair to them if I were to continue at any length.

I hope that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading so that it may proceed in the usual way to Committee for detailed consideration of the many issues that hon Members have made clear are likely to arise then.

9.29 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): It is an unusual exhortation to the House that a Second Reading should be given on the nod and that we should dispense with the entire Second Reading debate because the Government feel that the Bill should be given a chance to prove itself in Committee. In not so many years' time, when we have a Labour Government introducing their own legislation, and if the present Minister survives that general election, will he be prepared to accept Labour Ministers inviting Conservative Members to give a Bill a Second Reading on the nod so that detailed examination can be given to it in Committee? The Minister knows that that is nonsense on a private Bill or a Government Bill, because the whole reason for Second Reading is to seek answers to detailed questions.

Tonight's debate has been a contempt of the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) made an excellent speech, if a little brief, and he is certainly absolved from that charge, because he took the debate seriously. The promoter of the Bill, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), spoke in total for five minutes at, he told us, the rate of 110 words per minute. In 550 words, he made the case for the Bill having a Second Reading, but totally failed to answer many of the important questions that had already been raised, or to anticipate those that might be raised.

Mr. Michael Brown *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: I will give way in a moment.

The Minister is responsible not only for the Government's ports policy, but for representing the Government on the many issues that have been raised tonight. He gave us almost no reason for believing that the Government have any view whatsoever of the important issues which have been raised. I warn hon. Gentlemen that during my speech I shall invite them from time to time to respond to specific points that I raise because it is in the interests of the House that they be addressed tonight by the promoter and the Government, and that we should not have to wait until the Bill is in Committee.

Mr. Brown: Although you were not in the Chair at the time, Mr. Speaker, I commenced my speech at 7.30 pm and ended it at either five minutes past or 10 minutes past 8 o'clock. The only reason why I was unable to do justice to

that amount of time and to develop my argument was that many of the points of order were raised in the middle of my speech.

Mr. Lloyd: In fairness to the hon. Gentleman, I should say that he does not do justice to his speech even when he is not assailed by points of order.

Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman's attitude to the House if I quote from a letter which he sent his hon Friends, a copy of which has fallen into my hands. If I may beg your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, it is important that you take account of what is in the letter which the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes sent to all Conservative Members——

Mr. Michael Brown: No, not to all.

Mr. Lloyd: Well, possibly not to all. [HON. MEMBERS: "How many?"] Well, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes certainly sent it to one of his hon. Friends, who has let it fall into my hands—that is unless he made the mistake of sending it to one of my hon. Friends.

The letter states that this Bill is similar to the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. It says that both Bills are "very controversial"—he is right about that—and that Labour Members are "totally opposed" to the Bills. My hon. Friends have already made that point clear, and I reinforce it.

The letter continued:

"A filibuster prevented me from obtaining a closure on the first bill and there is a risk that this could re-occur on Wednesday."

I know that you, Mr. Speaker, would not accept that any filibuster took place, because you were in the Chair that night. The hon. Gentleman then stated:

"Nevertheless, I cannot take any chances and I wonder if I can impose on your goodwill by asking you to be present to support a closure which I shall request at 10 pm."

That is an unusual device. Indeed, it is unusual that I announce to you, Mr. Speaker, from the Opposition Front Bench, that the hon. Gentleman will seek to move a closure at 10 pm. I hope that you will take into account when you take your decision the total paucity of the debate and the speeches that have been made by both the promoter and the Minister. I urge that because the Bill is tremendously important in many different ways.

Mr. David Mitchell: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will recognise that a long speech does not necessarily contain more facts, figures or information for the House than the short, concise replies that I gave to the questions asked earlier by the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy).

Mr. Lloyd: That might be sound as a principle, but I assure the Minister that when brevity consists of emptiness, it is irrelevant in a speech from a Minister or a promoter of a Bill. I shall make points which, because the Minister will not speak again, he will presumably allow to go unaddressed.

Important transport issues have not been addressed, and I intend to turn my attention to them. There are also important issues about the coal industry itself, some of which were raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth and by our hon. Friends in their interventions. There are also important international dimensions, such as the role of South Africa and the apartheid regime.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Conservative Members are apologists for the apartheid regime.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend makes a valid point.

Some of the real issues concern how far we allow the apartheid regime to penetrate the British economy. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth pointed out that the South African economic regime is looking greedily at the CEGB. By purchasing those who use the coal, the South African coal industry can guarantee a ready market for its coal supplies in this country.

Mr. Barron: I tried to intervene in the Minister's speech when he made the specific point that both this Bill and its sister Bill had no direct implications for South African coal. Does my hon. Friend accept that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) not only went to South Africa this year on a visit paid for by the South African coal industry to look at plants there, but at the same time publicly called on the South African Government to lift restrictions to improve exports from South Africa to Europe?

Mr. Lloyd: I am always happy to allow my hon. Friend to intervene. The hon. Gentleman visited South Africa to demand that all bans on coal from South Africa be lifted. On 6 April 1988, in the *Daily Mail*—an apologist for the apartheid regime and the Right-wing Conservative party—its industrial correspondent, David Norris, wrote:

"It is understood they"—

that is, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes and some colleagues, including the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd), who is the Chairman of the Energy Select Committee——

"told the business leaders that the best way to go about" getting the ban on coal lifted

"was to take out a stake in the planned privatised set-up."

The hon. Gentleman may wish to deny or confirm that report, but it seems that those hon. Gentlemen were inviting the South African mining industry to take a stake in the CEGB, knowing that they would support the Government's privatisation of it next year. *[Interruption.]* Yes, Botha's friends will be voting to allow Botha's friends to buy a stake in this country's assets. The hon. Gentleman should make some statement about that. Although he tells the House that he has no personal interest, it is obvious that he has a strong one.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does my hon. Friend think that it would be for the benefit of the House if the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) stated categorically whether he discussed with the South African coal owners the possibility of buying British electricity and possibly the coal industry?

Mr. Lloyd: I am happy to repeat my offer to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes: if he wants to confirm or deny the report in the *Daily Mail*, I shall certainly give way. Was he one of those who told South African business leaders that the best way to get rid of the ban on coal imports into Britain was to take a stake in the planned privatised industry? That is a serious allegation. Not only does the hon. Gentleman want to serve the apartheid regime, but he wants to subvert United Nations resolutions and the whole climate of world opinion in order to prop up that disgraceful regime, which lives on an industry based on slave labour. He wants South Africans to reap the benefit of that slave labour through British industry.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene, I shall give way to him before my hon. Friends. Since he does not, I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall).

Mr. Wall: Does my hon. Friend not think it significant that the issue of South African coal has been avoided? Is he aware that Britain is a signatory to the EC code of conduct in relation to South Africa? That says that, as a minimum, there should be total opposition to the use of migrant labour, which is widely used in the South African mining industry, and that British firms which have interests in South Africa should pay wages at least 50 per cent. above the minimum level. Under this Government, they have been reduced to 28 per cent. above the minimum in South Africa. Surely the Government have a duty to be bound by the European code of conduct. Therefore, we should ask whether proper wages are being paid and whether the Government are meeting the conditions laid down by the EC. If not, it is a disgrace that the Bill is being sneaked through.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that. I am not surprised by the Government's hypocrisy. I draw his attention to the recorded vote in the United Nations in November last year on resolution 42/23B when Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, also an importer of South African coal, and the United States, with its dubious record on South Africa, were the only three countries which voted against the resolution asking members to prohibit the import of South African coal.

The Government are schizophrenic about South Africa. The Minister of State, Foreign Office is clearly embarrassed by her own Prime Minister. Obviously the Minister of State wants to do something serious about the apartheid regime, but the Prime Minister gives way to the apologists in her party and to the Right-wing hawks who would have us deal with South Africa as if it were governed by civilised, fit and decent people. Inevitably the Prime Minister will win the argument. That means that any code of conduct which the Government have entered into is as nothing when they are determined to prop up that awful regime.

Mr. Jack Thompson: Should we not consider another point on South Africa? If the Dutch Government follow the line of the Dutch people and decide to ban the import of South African coal to Rotterdam and Amsterdam, is it not likely that the South African coal will come to Britain to be exported to western Europe?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend raises an important point. I invite the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, who did not address the issue in his speech, to tell the House what he knows of Van Ommeren, the Dutch transportation company. Earlier this year the *Financial Times*, in relation to the North Killingholme cargo terminal, said:

"Dutch transport group Van Ommeren and UK industrialists Simon Engineering plan to open a deepwater mixed bulk cargo port on the Humber in summer 1989".

I have heard no denial by the proposers of the private Bill that they are in business with Van Ommeren. I have heard no denial of the suggestion that Van Ommeren and Simon Engineering are working together on this. It would help the House if the hon. Gentleman would tell us what the role of Van Ommeren is. Is the *Financial Times* right when it says that Van Ommeren is involved? The hon. Gentleman says that he does not know.

My hon. Friends may want to know what Van Ommeren is. It is one of the largest Dutch transportation companies, responsible for taking a considerable amount of coal from South African mines, at the behest of Shell and BP, to the Dutch market in Rotterdam where it is mixed with coal from other sources such as China. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth has already said, the coal is sold in Britain and in other areas as Dutch coal. As any hon. Member with the slightest inkling of the geography of the Netherlands or the history of the coal industry in Europe will know, the Dutch coal industry was expended a considerable time ago. The concept of Dutch coal is nonsense, unless it is coal which the present-day Dutch inherited from the Dutch who went to South Africa many years ago as Voortrekkers and which they are reimporting from that former Dutch colony.

I invite the hon. Gentleman to tell us what the role of Van Ommeren is. Van Ommeren already has a dubious record as a trader in apartheid and all its works, prepared to do the dirty business in Rotterdam by laundering the coal that comes from the Shells and BPs. If it is involved in North Killingholme, can the hon. Gentleman seriously tell the House that the company will not see this as a perfect opportunity to cut out the middle market and bring South African coal straight into the heart of Britain, into the midlands and the northern coalfields to destroy jobs in those areas, while at the same time creating profits for the South African coal industry?

Perhaps the Minister of State can tell us a simple fact. There is a very old quote about a nation built on coal. We are still a nation built on coal, and the House is testimony to that. Many of my hon. Friends come from that tradition, which is deeply respected in the Labour movement, but unfortunately it is despised in the Conservative party. The Government were prepared to pretend to miners in the UDM during the NUM strike that the Government were backing the UDM, but the UDM miners and the NUM miners will now find that their jobs will be sold to the apartheid regime.

Can the Minister of State explain to me, to the House and to the world how a nation with all those coal reserves could contemplate importing through the North Killingholme terminal and through its sister terminal at Immingham 10 million tonnes of coal a year? The Minister shakes his head. Perhaps he can give the House some information that he was not prepared to give a few moments ago. Perhaps the Minister will tell the House what those ports are all about. If he knows more than I do, I invite him to ask me to give way; I shall be delighted to do so.

The information we have is that the capacity of the two ports will approach 10 million tonnes a year. That will be equivalent to a balance of payments deficit of £250 million to £350 million each year. We are worsening our already parlous balance of payments policy when the coal could be produced in Britain, creating and maintaining employment in the British coalfields. Instead of wanting to maintain that employment and to improve our balance of payments, the Secretary of State for Energy wants competition. He says that the Government do not believe in trade barriers or artificial devices to restrict competition.

The Secretary of State for Energy told the Institution of Mining Engineers:

"We believe that competition makes industries stronger, not weaker. That is why we will not put up trade barriers to coal imports. Not only would this run against our

international treaty obligations. It would also, in the long term, result in a weaker mining industry at home. British Coal will be a fitter, more confident and secure employer if it wins its business on its merits."

Tonight, the Minister of State echoed that point. Will he tell the House how he seriously expects miners in the Nottingham and Yorkshire coalfields to compete with slave labour in South Africa? How does he seriously expect the British coal industry to compete with an industry which has blood on its hands because it does not even have the basic safety levels that were taken for granted in British pits before nationalisation? A safety regime would not be tolerated in South Africa.

Mr. David Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman asks how the United Kingdom industry can compete. May I remind him that the United Kingdom industry competes very effectively? May I help the hon. Gentleman and the House on the level of throughput which the installation will be capable of achieving? The hon. Gentleman mentioned 10 million tonnes. That is typical of the exaggeration which we have come to expect from him. I understand that the company hopes to attract various bulk cargoes, including coal, aiming for throughput of 2 million metric tonnes a year. The installation is thought to have a maximum capacity of 4 million metric tonnes a year. It is planning to have a varied cargo and not to be a single commodity terminal.

Mr. Lloyd: I am always grateful to the Minister for intervening, as he makes my job far simpler. Perhaps I may refer to the *Financial Times* coal report, which the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes has not wished to challenge. It said that the ABP port at Immingham, which we debated not long ago, will have an annual throughput of 6 million tonnes in three years. As the Minister said, it is proposed that North Killingholme should have a starting capacity of 1 to 2 million tonnes and a final capacity of 4 million tonnes. If the Minister bears with me while I explain that four plus six equals 10, he will understand that my estimate of 10 million tonnes for the two ports is not awfully wide of the mark. I shall leave him to dwell on that.

The Minister may be absolved of not understanding the arithmetic of coal. He may even be absolved of not understanding the nature of the vicious regime in South Africa. But he cannot be absolved of not understanding the transportation system serving Immingham and North Killingholme. He did not comment on the difficulties that will be created for roads and railways in the area.

I am led to understand that it is uncertain whether the coal will be carried by road or rail. There is severe doubt whether the roads can carry even 1 million tonnes of coal. The constituency Member, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, said that there would be little environmental damage as a result of the Bill. If 1 million tonnes of coal is put on the roads, that means 800 extra heavy lorries on roads in his constituency each day. The hon. Gentleman might not think that an environmental nuisance, but his constituents might think differently. If I were one of his constituents, I would be severely worried about my Member of Parliament's ability to represent me. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will consider the problems that may arise as a result of there being 800 extra heavy lorries, loaded to 32·5 tonnes, on the roads each day.

Mr. Michael Brown: We have railways, and we use them.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman tells me that he has railways—but are they capable of taking up to 10 million tonnes of coal? All the evidence that I have suggests that they are not. If the Minister had said that a detailed analysis of the railways' coal-carrying capacity was made, we might have been reassured about the system. The 800 lorries a day I mentioned would carry only 1 million tonnes. If the railways cannot cope, and the whole 10 million tonnes has to go by road, there will be an extra 8,000 lorries a day in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Is he aware of the death and accident rate on roads in that area? If he is, I should like him to give the House the figures.

Mr. Brown: I think that I can help the hon. Gentleman. In about 1982, some 5 million tonnes of British coal was exported through the port of Immingham, and it was taken there by lorries and trains. Whether coal is carried by rail or by road, just as much coal dust is likely to be dropped if the coal is going out of Immingham as when it is coming in through Immingham. Opposition Members would like nothing more than to have their coal exported through Immingham.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friends would be delighted to have coal from their areas exported. There are, however, a few little difficulties, such as the fact that British coal is put on the market at about £40 a tonne. Coal in Rotterdam from the apartheid regime in South Africa costs $40 per tonne, which is much cheaper. The opportunities for my hon. Friends and their constituents to export coal are nullified because the means of production in South Africa is slave labour.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes may be aware that there have been some significant changes in the rail system. Perhaps he would like to tell the House what has happened to the rail system in that area since the days when Immingham was a major exporting port. The rail connections are now worse than they were at that time, and the capacity to carry by rail has diminished. The capacity to carry coal by road to power stations is not feasible in all circumstances.

I shall be travelling through the hon. Gentleman's constituency on Friday. He appears to be under the impression that the A180, on which the coal is carried, is of motorway class. He is talking nonsense. It is an A road, not a motorway. He might like to know that there were 16 serious accidents on that road last year.

Mr. Brown: That shows how little the hon. Gentleman knows about my constituency. I am delighted that he is going up to Brigg and Cleethorpes on Friday, and I wish him a happy visit. I am sorry to hear that he will only be passing through the area, probably on the A180, which is of motorway standard, has dual carriageway in both directions and is the exact equivalent of a motorway, except that one can turn off at roundabouts.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) aware that 500, and sometimes up to 1,000, lorries pass through rural villages in my constituency each day? Those villages have no street lighting and no pavements and were never built for heavy lorries going to pits with which the existing rail system cannot cope. There will be a new power station at West Burton, where the railway runs through a tunnel on a one-line track. Under the existing system, it can barely

[Mr. Joseph Ashton]

cope with the movement of coal. If the development of this port goes ahead, it will be absolute murder for the people living in those villages.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is right, but perhaps he should also say that it would be murder for the constituents of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. The hon. Gentleman thinks that the dual carriageway is of motorway standard, but those people injured on that road and their families might not consider that to be so.

Mr. Michael Brown *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put, *but* MR. SPEAKER *withheld his assent, and declined then to put that Question.*

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes obviously thinks that there has been enough debate about the traffic system in his constituency, but he has scarcely participated in the debate. Some of the coal that will come through the port will go to Eggborough power station, but I am advised that that power station does not have the capacity to take that coal by rail. It will have to go by road. At present, the power station consumes about 1 million tonnes of coal each year, which would come along roads of various classes. His constituents will complain bitterly about the destruction of those roads, the damage done by those heavy lorries to the roads, the congestion on those roads and the increase in the number of accidents on those roads.

The hon. Gentleman should take that into account, as should the Minister. The Minister did not tell the House of any plans to upgrade the roads or the railway system, although he has some responsibility for making sure that the House is advised about the possibility of any such plans, about the rights and wrongs of the proposal and about the transport services involved. That is a matter of great regret.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend will know that I represent a coal mining community that has suffered greatly, especially since the end of the strike. The problem of the movement of coal in many of the villages of my constituency is quite substantial.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Liberalisation of Telecommunications

10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. John Butcher): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4634/88 on the development of the common market for telecommunications services and equipment; and supports the Government's intention to work for the early liberalisation of telecommunications markets in the European Community to the benefit of network operators, service providers, equipment manufacturers and users.

This Community initiative has stimulated considerable interest worldwide. This consultative process originated in the Commission's Green Paper on telecommunications policy, issued at the end of June 1987, with the aim, as it says, of starting a common thinking process and of satisfying the requirement for a debate within the Community of common objectives and the means to reach them. Naturally, the Commission had its own ideas about what needed to be done in respect of telecommunications in the Community. It also had ideas about how its objectives were to be achieved. Since the guiding principle of these ideas is to increase competition and to open markets in a field hitherto characterised, except in the United Kingdom, by monopoly and protectionism, the debate within the Community has been a lively one in which the Government have taken a leading part.

The Government have had two main objectives in the course of these discussions: first, to support the Commission in pressing forward rapidly with market-opening and liberalising measures; and, secondly, to guard against the danger of over-regulation, which, instead of stimulating competition, could stultify it. Our objectives reflect the advantageous position which the United Kingdom has won for itself in telecommunications within the Community by being the first member state to adopt a liberalising pro-competitive policy in this sector.

The market-opening measures adopted in the United Kingdom have resulted in a more competitive and efficient market. They mean that United Kingdom equipment manufacturers and service providers have learnt to live in the bracing environment of open competition at home, hitherto without being able to compete freely in the telecommunications markets of the Community. It follows that we have consistently and enthusiastically supported proposals by the Commission that would have the effect of giving our manufacturers a fair opportunity to sell their goods overseas, especially in Community markets. At the same time, we have been alert to any tendencies towards levelling down, where the United Kingdom has already progressed further than the Community as a whole is prepared to venture. The most obvious example is the introduction of competition into the telecommunications network itself—a policy whose benefits we continue to urge upon our partners in the Community.

Where, then, has this long and intensive consideration of the Green Paper led? The first conclusion, reached unanimously by member states, is that the Commission put the Green Paper together with a great deal of skill and expertise. The Government wholeheartedly endorse the general view that it is a comprehensive, well-thought-out and well-researched document. No one—least of all the Government—dissents from the Green Paper's guiding principle that an efficient telecommunications sector is an essential factor in the Community's economy. No one questions the Commission's opinion that for the internal market to be fully complete it must include an open market in telecommunications. Nor is there any doubt about the overriding aim, which is to provide European users with a greater variety of telecommunication services, of better quality and at lower cost. But the most important conclusion to flow from the Green Paper debate is the acceptance by all member states of the principle, on which the Government have been conducting the United Kingdom's telecommunications policy, that the route to efficiency in the telecommunications market, as in most other markets, is the freeing of market forces through the introduction of competition.

Agreement in principle has also been reached on several specific objectives, which would create in the Community as a whole market conditions in telecommunications not dissimilar to those now existing in the United Kingdom.

It is that broad agreement at the political level throughout the Community, both as regards general economic aims in the telecommunications sector and particular action designed to achieve them, that has made it possible for the Commission to submit the document that we have before us.

The Commission has recognised that the 12 member states differ widely in the structure of their telecommunications industries, which have been growing up since the 19th century, and that changes need to be introduced step by step and in a manner that takes account of these differences, and it has identified targets for future action. In listing the most important targets I shall refer also to the United Kingdom's position. First, there is separation of the regulatory and operational functions of the telecommunications authorities. We have done that. Secondly, there is the opening of the terminal equipment market to competition. We have done that. Thirdly, there is the opening of the telecommunications value added services market to competition, and subsequently definition of detailed general conditions for open network provision, which are the conditions under which competitive service providers use the basic telecommunications network. We have done that. Fourthly, there is the opening of the market for receive-only satellite antennae, as long as they are not connected to the public network. We announced in February that we shall be implementing that.

Other areas for immediate action include progressive implementation of the general principle that telecommunications tariffs should follow the trends in costs. We have delivered the effect of that because that is the result that follows from competition. There is then the extension to the telecommunications sector of rules for fair and open public procurement. British Telecom and Mercury are free to procure network and terminal equipment from any source that they think fit.

To complete a long list, there is the establishment of a European Telecommunications Standards Institute, which is affectionately known as ETSI, and full mutual recognition of type approval for terminal equipment. Those two facilities have our full support. Indeed, the United Kingdom was instrumental in the establishment of a free-standing ETSI.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The Minister has praised the freedom of BT to procure equipment from any source that it chooses. What effect does he think that

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

freedom has had on thousands of our constituents—his and mine in Coventry—who heard seven weeks ago that their jobs would come to an end because of rationalisations at GEC/Plessey Telecommunications Ltd? One of the factors was the purchase by BT of Ericsson equipment from Sweden.

Mr. Butcher: For reasons that the hon. Gentleman will understand, I, too, am familiar with the arguments that surrounded the rationalisation programme. He said "one of the factors", and I hope he will agree that trends in the manufacturing of telecommunications equipment, especially switching equipment, worldwide show that there has been demanning across western Europe, North America and Japan. The labour-intensive aspects of that form of production for that sort of profit are being greatly reduced. I know that the trade unions prayed in aid the system Y procurement, but most countries in Europe have the principle of second-sourcing. If the company management were to connive at an argument that everything was down to second-sourcing, I believe that it would not be reflecting the true position. I do not believe that it would make such an assertion, but no doubt the hon. Gentleman will develop his arguments in his contribution later this evening.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): On the logic of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), if the main function of an industry is to preserve jobs, one must surely conclude that GPT should still be assembling labour-intensive Strowger exchanges that no one wants to buy. There is surely no future for an industry in just preserving jobs for the sake of those jobs without considering what people want to buy.

Mr. Butcher: Later, I hope to develop the argument that having a communications policy that places the interests of the users first is a policy for job creation. I seek to demonstrate that telecommunications improvements in the United Kingdom add to our overall efficiency, and in so doing add to our propensity to generate jobs in an internationally competitive market. One of the sources that I shall be quoting is one of our most vehement competitors, who agrees with the statement that I have just made.

Mr. Nellist: He is probably a Tory, too.

Mr. Butcher: I doubt it.

Our already competing network operators, British Telecom and Mercury Communications, will be well placed to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by the internal market. It means also that it is wholly in our interest to assist the Commission and our partners in the Community—especially the Greek, Spanish and French presidencies, which will be in office over the next 18 months—to set the necessary Community legislation in place with the least possible delay.

A good start has been made. ETSI is in being and will produce at an increasing rate the common European standards that are the prerequisites of a truly open market. The question often asked is whether the British are involved in that process, and whether we fear that others will take advantage of it. I can tell the House that the United Kingdom chairs the institute's technical assembly, which will determine the programme and adopt the standards. I know that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) is very interested in that point.

The Commission is on the point of submitting to the Council a directive for open public procurement by the network operators in the hitherto excluded sectors. Draft proposals have already been the subject of intensive work at official level. Another Commission target for 1988 is the submission of a draft directive on the full, mutual recognition of type approval for terminal equipment. That, coupled with the availability of European standards and the introduction of competition, will result in a truly open market for attachments of every kind.

As to the introduction of competition, action has already been taken by the Commission to implement one of the immediate action lines, through the directive addressed to member states on 19 May under article 90 of the treaty of Rome, to accomplish rapid liberalisation of the Community's terminal equipment market. The Government are wholly in favour of that directive's aim, because it will enable other United Kingdom manufacturers to compete on fair terms in the domestic markets of other member states.

Direct action by the Commission, using the powers conferred upon it to enforce treaty rules, is a relatively novel procedure that has the advantage, in suitable cases, of avoiding the lengthier procedures involved in Council measures. However, the use of article 90 in that way raises legal and practical issues that call for careful consideration. I shall be interested to hear the views of hon. Members on that point and will take account of them.

After some initial heart searching, our Community partners are now responding to the need for change. In the beginning, they watched with interest what I am sure was regarded in many quarters as the British experiment. They are now minded to taste and to assimilate what is seen as a British success.

I promised the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East that I would conclude with a quotation supporting my arguments. It is from M. Gérard Longuet, who has been a vigorous and perceptive French Telecommunications Minister. In his book "Telecoms: La Conquête de nouveaux espaces"—and I assure the House that this is an accurate translation—he wrote:

> "When Japanese enterprises are contemplating the establishment of a European base it is to London that they turn, certain of being able to benefit there from communications which offer the best performance at the least cost."

Coming from a French Minister, that is praise indeed. The Japanese know, as a number of colleagues in Europe know, that there has been a transformation of telecommunications in the United Kingdom. A number of users, both domestic and business, now look on Britain's success with a great deal of envy.

10.14 pm

Mr. Roger Scott (Wigan): I want to dwell later on the proposition that the Minister has advanced tonight that Britain's telecommunications industry has had some success. I should at this stage declare my interest. I am sponsored by the National Communications Union, and before I came to the House I was a telecommunications engineer. The Minister and I crossed swords on many occasions for many hours during debates on the Telecommunications Bill, to which I shall return later.

The Minister has pointed out that some time ago the Commission drew up a Green Paper on the proposition for a European telecommunications network for 1992. The Commission published its draft policy statement on the development of the common market for telecommunications services and equipment in June last year. Tonight the House is asked to take note of the update of the Commission's intentions and opinions on an open market for telecommunications for 1992.

I note that in the foreword of that document the Commission stated that its aim was to launch a debate on European telecommunications and to attract comment from a broad spectrum of opinion. In particular, the Commission was seeking views from the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, the telecommunications administrations—those bodies which are still in public ownership in Europe—the European telecommunications and data processing manufacturing industry, the users of communications services and the trade unions.

I acknowledge that the Commission has done that because I know that the Postal, Telegraph and Telephone International, the umbrella organisation for all those unions in posts and telecommunications, particularly the European committee, has been actively involved in the discussions and the negotiations with the Commission on its policy.

I am advised that there have been several meetings with Viscount Davignon, the Commissioner responsible for telecommunications, and, on 5 May this year, a delegation from the PTTI's European committee met Mr. Jacques Delors, the President of the Commission, and reaffirmed its view, which was set out in the document presented to the Commission, that telecommunications in Europe should, wherever possible, remain in public ownership.

The PTTI committee disagrees with the Commission's fundamental policy on a number of issues. I have no doubt that the Minister has seen the PTTI submission to the Commission in which it outlines some of its fundamental opposition to some of the stances that the Commission has taken.

I understand that some progress has been made on the PTTI's position. It, like me, was worried by the Green Paper's excessive reliance on competition as the force for the development of telecommunications services, the tendency to project private competition for telecommunications administrations with inadequate regard for the need to protect the financial viability of those administrations, and their right to compete on an equal footing with others in open competition.

The Minister mentioned competition. The Government's position is to eulogise competition in British Telecom as something that should be adopted in Europe and an example that the rest of the world should follow. If we examine that contention, we find that competition has not worked very well.

The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) will have imprinted on his mind for ever those wonderful speeches by John Golding, to name but one——

Mr. Oppenheim: A lengthy embarrassment.

Mr. Stott: It is not an embarrassment to me, and I shall make a further reference to Mr. Golding a little later.

During those debates on the Telecommunications Bill in the watches of the night, we talked of what would happen if competition was brought about in the way that the Government wanted it to be brought about. I know that the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills was not particularly keen on that idea; he wanted much more competition in the system. What happened—and the *Which?* report bore this out when evidence was being taken from the consumer last November—was the epitome of all that was wrong with British Telecom. I must say that there has been a considerable improvement since then.

Last November we told the Minister—not once, not twice, but several times—what would happen. What happened was that British Telecom devoted its resources, not only financial resources, but manpower resources, to trying to fight off the competition of Mercury. That meant that the business community tended to get a better service but the residential customer got a lousy service.

I am not the only one to say that; everyone who has used British Telecom services understands that is the case. I say that more in sorrow than in anger. Members of my union, who have to face public discontent about a service that they care about, knew that if note was taken of what was said by City analysts about reductions in manpower there would be a problem in the maintenance of public call boxes and the provision of what used to be a public service. The public service ethos of the provision of a telecommunications network would no longer be there if resources, financial and manpower, were diverted to the attempt to fight off competition.

If the Minister is saying that competition in British Telecom should be adopted throughout Europe, I must counsel grave caution, because it will not work. The residential subscriber—the ordinary punter with a telephone—will get a raw deal.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that competition ultimately means choice? We can argue about how efficient British Telecom is at any one time—and that is a perfectly fair argument—but at the end of the day, if the consumer is not satisfied with BT, he can switch to Mercury. That surely is to his advantage.

Mr. Stott: Mercury is limited to what it can provide, and I did not particularly welcome its being given the opportunity to get into the trunk network. It has not provided that network; it has done nothing over the years to provide investment or infrastructure for it. The resources to develop the trunk network have been provided by the British people: the consumer, the taxpayer, the residential telephone user. But here is Mercury being given an opportunity to do what it wants and to link with the trunk network.

The hon. Gentleman said that the consumer has the choice. I shall not stand up tonight—I never have, not even during the debates on the Telecommunications Bill—and be an apologist for the old Post Office. Much of what it did was wrong. It was unimaginative. It was wrong to tell the consumer that he could have any telephone so long as it was black. Many improvements were needed, and they took place. There were initiatives which I, the union that supports me and the people I came from originally welcomed.

[Mr. Stott]

Nevertheless, we seriously question whether it is right to rely too much on competition. In Britain it has resulted in what *Which?* predicted and what we already knew.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am sympathetic to some of his criticisms. The whole point is that we never had, and still do not have, competition. We had what was called a duopoly. I hope the hon. Gentleman remembers that the Mercury licence was limited to 3 per cent. of British Telecom's total revenues. The test of an efficient and competitive service was never there. The buying of mass lines and their retailing to the public, which would provide a test of commercial viability for Mercury and British Telecom, and which we could allow even now, would have been in the interests of the consumer, but we lost that opportunity. Indeed, was not the hon. Gentleman opposed to it?

Mr. Stott: I certainly was. I am always glad to see the hon. Gentleman participate in these debates; he tilts against conventional windmills. I know that he was angry with the Government for the puny way—in his view—in which they dealt with the privatisation of British Telecom. So was I, and so were my hon. Friends.

I never imagined that European Community economic policy would be preferable to that of the British Government, but that is certainly so in the case of telecommunications. The British Government and British Telecom may eulogise about competition in the network, but the Commission thinks that the aim must be to encourage one network in each country, joined as a European whole. It is prepared to make a concession to Britain, but sees us as the odd man out. Based on my discussions and negotiations with the people concerned, I do not believe the Commission wants anyone else to follow our example. The PTTI has been encouraged on that point during the talks that it has had over the past 12 months. It was pleased with the recent acknowledgement by the Commission that telecoms must provide not only a vital commercial service, but a public service.

Those of us who were brought up and worked in this industry felt a sense of the public service ethos. The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) shakes his head, but I am proud to have worked in an industry with that ethos. I used to go to work in the morning and return in the evening feeling well satisfied that I had done something for the public good. I must tell the hon. Member for Amber Valley that those of my colleagues who remain in British Telecom do not feel that way any more. The general public has noticed that, too.

If we are to move to a common market telecommunications system by 1992—it exists in France, Germany and Italy, where there is still a semblance of public service—public service must be one of the fundamental planks in a European policy.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that unfortunately some of the engineers and old GPO employees were not quite as assiduous as he was in pursuit of their public duties? Much as one may criticise British Telecom—I am the first to criticise it for its shortcomings—it is at least possible to get a telephone installed within a month and to get jack plugs put in fairly quickly.

When I put to the hon. Gentleman in Committee the fact that to get a jack plug installed for a fax machine in the early 1980s one had to wait six months, and that some business men had been forced to bribe Telecom engineers to put such jacks in within a month, he threw up his arms in horror and said that that was a terrible accusation. A month later 15 British Telecom engineers were gaoled for accepting bribes.

Mr. Stott: I will not try to defend members of my union—if they were members—who participated in actions that were clearly illegal. The National Communications Union and the former Post Office Engineering Union would not take that view either. People ought to know their responsibilities. If the people that the hon. Gentleman mentioned did something that they should not have done, it is right that they should have to take the consequences of their actions.

The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point about the difficulty of getting certain things done. I repeat the point that I made earlier. John Golding and I and my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) were never apologists for the management structure of the Post Office or British Telecom. There was much wrong with it and there still is. I shall quote one brief example.

Contrary to common belief, there are many fields in Wigan. There are some near where I live in Wigan and I walk my dog there on most nights. A friend of mine is building a stone farmhouse and I have watched it grow from the footings to the roof. He has designed and built it in such a way that there is no surface wiring—he has gone to a great deal of expense—and I said that it would be a pity if telephone wires were showing. I suggested that he ring British Telecom and ask for the dry wiring to be done before the plasterers came in. He did that, but British Telecom did not want to know and the electrician working at the farmhouse has done it. Even today at certain levels British Telecom management does not have the commitment that such management used to have. That is a problem.

Earlier I talked about the public service ethos. In my view, and in the view of the PTTI, that means giving a telephone monopoly to the public administrations. The unions within Europe would prefer to see much more retained within the purview of the telecommunications administrations. They believe that that is essential for the massive investment that is required by the European telecommunications industry. In order to be profitable they believe that the industry, the system or network must remain within the purview of the telecommunications administrations.

Those unions would have preferred the Commission to declare for public ownership, but perhaps that is too much to ask. At least the Commission has remained neutral, and it is certainly not advocating privatisation. That is not surprising, because, if there is to be a massive increase in telecommunications and information, all the countries of Europe will have to join together to compete against the Americans and the Japanese.

John Golding, the former general secretary of the National Communications Union, to whom I pay full tribute, has worked most of his life in the industry and put a great deal into the NCU. On his suggestion, the Commission is now financing a study into the staffing consequences of the Commission's policies. British Telecom is faced with staff shortages because of daft

advice from the City, but it will also face such shortages in future. These will have to be solved if the United Kingdom is to have an efficient service. I hope that the European study of the staffing consequences of the Commission's policies will assist British Telecom in its assessment.

There are disappointments in the recommendations. We do not believe in reducing business tariffs at the expense of the domestic consumer, and in that context I take the Minister's point. Yet, in the logic of the Community's policy of having prices following costs, those two principles seem irreconcilable.

In Committee we spoke at length about cross-subsidisation. I know that there is a theoretical and political difference between the Government and the Opposition on cross-subsidisation in telecommunications. If we are to set out on this European experiment, the Commission should examine cross-subsidisation as a means of providing adequate funds for socially desirable services, such as public call offices and emergency services, as well as lower prices for residential users who are financially or otherwise disadvantaged. I urge the Commission to take note of the social impact of the proposed policies and the need for training and retraining personnel. Without those additions, the Commission's recommendations would be incomplete.

We need a common analysis of the social impact of the conditions for a smooth transition. The Commission must recognise that. In the formulation of telecommunications policies and regulations, account must be taken of the impact on jobs, and measures must be introduced to ensure job security and the creation of new jobs to replace those that disappear. That can be done. There will be job losses because of changes in technology and the very nature of the telecommunications system. However, we can also have job creation. A recent example is to be found in British Telecom. For the first time in about 10 years BT is having to recruit people to meet the needs of residential customers. That may not pay a very good dividend on the share price, but at least BT is satisfying residential consumers by providing a better service to them.

Training and retraining personnel is an integral part of any comprehensive telecommunications programme. Adequate finance must be provided for those activities as well as for training for trade union representatives to enable them to participate efficiently in local and national discussions on the introduction of new technology, regulatory and structural changes and all the other effects of the huge changes proposed in European telecommunications.

This is a "take note" debate on a series of documents. I believe that the documents are very important. The Commission has moved a long way towards understanding and accepting some of the proposals put to it by the PTTI, particularly on competition and privatisation. If the Commission understands the problem that the PTTI has underlined in its document and if we get it right, the signs are that with this new and exciting technology Europe could be in a strong position to challenge the Americans and the Japanese, to provide a universal service to all consumers and to have as its priority a fundamental belief in the public service ethos. If we do that, we shall not have wasted our time this evening.

10.39 pm

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I declare an interest as the Chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, which is at present examining the subject of information technology. My remarks tonight will be based on my personal opinion alone.

First, I warmly endorse the documents of which the Minister proposes we should take note. The liberalisation and privatisation procedures that have been promoted through the House have permitted the telecommunications explosion that we are fortunately now experiencing in this country. There can be no clearer evidence of that than the way in which London has been able to take up the open opportunity of Europe to become the centre of European financial affairs, in line with New York and Tokyo on the world scale. Without that liberalisation of communications and the parallel legislation on Big Bang from the House, London could not have taken that premier position in the European Community.

I welcome the document put forward by Commissioner Narjes, whom I had the pleasure of meeting recently. I advise my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State that it would be worth considering the time that it has taken us to get that document from Commissioner Narjes on to the Floor of the House. It has taken four months and a few days. I draw attention to that fact because the document itself, entitled "Towards a competitive Community-wide telecommunications market in 1992", gives the impression, on first reading, that there are four years within which the implementation can take place. However, as was pointed out in the 20th report of the Select Committee on European Legislation, and as is stated on page 17 of Commissioner Narjes' statement, things start buzzing on 31 December 1989—next year. In other words, we have taken four months to get on to the Floor of the House something that is only four months away.

I hope that on future occasions it will be possible for us not to lose that amount of time, because we have lost time here on something for which industry must be revved up. Industry must understand that the House, having taken note of the document, expects industry to respond to the opportunities that are there. I hope that, following those four lost months, we can now accelerate the process and that the Government will give the widest possible publicity to the opportunity. The House often talks about the problems presented by European legislation, but here is an opportunity for job creation.

I have every sympathy for the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West——

Mr. Butcher: I think that my hon. Friend means the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist).

Mr. Warren: Yes, I meant the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me, because I always have sympathy with him for having to promote such debates in the House.

I have every sympathy for the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East in the problems faced by his constituents, but I ask him to reflect on the fact that the job opportunities that his constituents have lost resulted, not from the liberalisation process that was passed through the House, but because of the long historic cosy relationship, which became self-destructive, between the British telecommunications industry in the Post Office, as it then was, and certain companies in this country—and more's

[Mr. Warren]

the pity that that happened. However, that is the reality and I want British industry to respond to it because if there had been sufficient appreciation of what was to happen in industry there would have been no need for such a situation to arise. I am sure that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East will address himself to that point when he has the opportunity to speak. I want to detain the House for only a few minutes.

I hope that industry will read what is said in the House tonight and see this as an opportunity and not as a problem. The newspapers of this country often publish all the bad news about the European Community, rather than see the opportunities that arise from this kind of legislation.

I turn now to three of my concerns about this document and the rival communications on the EEC internal market. The first is the question of equipment and the need of British companies to be able to respond to what is there. I notice that the 20th report from the Select Committee on European Legislation states that the

"Commission's proposed Directive . . . would have the effect of opening the market for telecommunications terminal equipment in other Member States of the Community as it is already open in the United Kingdom."

I trust that that will be a two-way street and that British manufacturers will charge into Europe.

Two other areas particularly concern me. The first is that the Commission must go further than is intended in the document and endorse the reality of communications, because we are talking not only about equipment, but about networks. Networks must be trans-frontier and European Community networks not limited to within member states. Satellite communications, whether on a receiver basis or a transmit and receive basis, must be across member states to the whole Community, not indigenous national systems.

Whereas we keep talking about European standards, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will seek to promote world standards that are acceptable across export markets. The biggest market opportunities for British equipment manufacturers lie in world markets rather than in EEC markets. I hope that he will give our compliments to the commissioner and say, "Let there be world standards."

Much as I enjoyed the salutary quotation by my hon. Friend the Minister of a French Minister, whom I trust has been returned at a recent election—it would be difficult if he had not—I am reminded of the attitude of my dear wife, who was a logical mathematician from Cambridge. If one asked her "Will we get these chances which the Europeans say are presented?", she would say, "If that is so, show me". That is what we should say from the House tonight. I endorse what is proposed.

10.45 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Tonight's debate follows the issue of the European Green Paper last summer on the telecommunications industry. Those who support the Common Market hope to create a homogenous European market place in electronics and telecommunications. The failure to do so to date or, in the words of the document, the "slow pace" of that progress is said to have led to the weaknesses of Europe's telecommunications industry, particularly compared with its American and Japanese rivals, with their economies of scale.

This document is about the future deregulation and liberalisation of the telecommunications market. The Minister is one of the most enthusiastic champions of that, but he is strangely mute about the effects of deregulation and liberalisation, particularly when they strike his constituents. Eight weeks ago he was up in arms about 800 job losses at GPT in Coventry and promised all sorts of initiatives in the *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, but we have had seven weeks of silence.

Mr. Butcher: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way so early in his speech. It is not my intention to turn this into a constituency debate. If his memory is accurate, he will recall that when GPT made its announcement I said that I wanted to meet representatives, and indeed I did. At that meeting senior executives gave me the clear impression that they have high ambitions for the new company and are bringing new forms of work to Coventry.

Mr. Nellist: The Minister is right about the new forms of work. My figure of 800 redundancies is net—after the introduction of new work. It gives no satisfaction to the workers at Spon street, Raglan street, Ford street and Stoke that, having met those executives seven weeks ago, the Minister has still to meet the working people's representatives—the trade unions in GPT factories—and pass on those rosy predictions which he seems to have gained from the management.

The Minister is a prime exponent of the supposed benefits of deregulation. On 23 October he made a speech in Geneva as part of United Kingdom Day at Telecom 87, which is described in his press release as

"the world's premier international telecommunications exhibition and conference held every four years."

He said:

"In the field of telecommunications, Britain has zoomed past virtually all the other European countries. We have two digital trunk networks, expanding to local level; two optical fibre systems; two national cellular radio operators",

and so the list goes on. Two of everything is probably wasteful duplication. I will believe it when somebody proposes that we should have two Prime Ministers so that we can have proper competition there as well.

The Minister continued:

"We have liberalised our regime and ended the former BT monopoly in apparatus supply. We have ensured interconnection for our two competing networks—BT's and Mercury's —. . . resulting in falling prices, rising quality and more innovative products and services than ever before."

The key words are rising quality and falling prices. That was said in October 1987.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) said, some four weeks later a survey was being done by *Which?* of some 600 subscribers to the British Telecom network. It came up with a different picture. In 1983, the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said on Second Reading of the Telecommunications Bill:

"We offer the millions of BT customers a newly enshrined set of rights and the benefits of competition and new technology."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1983; Vol. 46, c. 38.]

The *Which?* survey published this month said:

"Our research shows that so far the company has failed to achieve an overall improvement in its service after privatisation. . . . BT's record since privatisation has been a big disappointment".

My hon. Friend has said that there has been some improvement since November. I will accept that because he has said it, but I am trying to compare like with like. The Minister said in Geneva that everything was perfect. The survey of exactly the same period showed something different.

Which? found that one in 36 calls did not get through, so there had been no improvement since 1983, that noisy and faint lines, making conversation difficult, were worse since 1983, that the average waiting time for a new line had improved since 1983 but that too many were still waiting a long time for connection, and that 40 per cent. of those surveyed said their phones had been out of order at least once in the previous 18 months; I can confirm that from personal experience. That was also up on 1983.

The survey also found that the state of repair of BT's call boxes was among the worst in Europe, and that the proportion of customers rating the overall service as efficient had dropped from eight out of 10 in 1983 to seven out of 10 in 1987. Although itemised bills were the most requested improvement, progress in introducing them more widely had been at a snail's pace. One quarter of people querying their bill had difficulty in getting BT to reply; that was nearly double the proportion who had trouble in getting BT to respond in 1983.

The Consumers Association criticism came less than a month after the Minister was praising competition and also after Oftel announced that the 24,186 complaints received in 1987 were almost double the 13,660 received in 1986. Over one third were about disputed bills.

In March of this year, the Telecommunications Managers Association, representing 30 per cent. of BT's business income, said:

"There is little evidence of any improvement since our surveys of 1985 and 1986 and indeed, in some areas, a marked deterioration has occurred."

Yet after all that, on 9 June, BT announced profits of £2·29 billion, up 11 per cent. on last year, clearly showing that the profits and the dividends for shareholders were more important than the improvement of services for business or domestic consumers.

Incidentally, the city stockbroker firm, Wood Mackenzie, has estimated that, if BT is to keep its profit at the same level for the next four years, it will have to shed 70,000 jobs. I do not think that the comments from business sources, the stockbrokers or the Consumers Association bear out the remarks of the Minister in October about the "wonderful" benefits of deregulation and liberalisation.

Mr. Oppenheim: I do not think anyone could objectively claim that British Telecom's service is worse, or not significantly better, than it was in the 1970s, but to the extent that it is still unsatisfactory, which I think most hon. Members would accept, is that not partly due to the under-investment in the 1960s and the 1970s, which in turn was partly due to the cosy, almost incestuous, relationship which British Telecom had with its main suppliers, Plessey and GEC, who are the component parts of GPT, and indeed with STC, which led to overpriced equipment, late equipment, and equipment that was unexportable?

Does the hon. Member agree that it takes many years to make up for lack of investment? Against a background of many years of under-investment, British Telecom was faced with a massive increase in demand for lines, obviously in areas where the service was deteriorating. Now it is in the private sector, British Telecom is investing far more than in the bad old days when the GPO was in the public sector.

Mr. Nellist: I confess that I lost track of the hon. Member's question because of its length. However, I agree with him on one point. As a young trade unionist, I opposed the cartel of Plessey, STC and GEC which existed in the 1960s and 1970s in that cosy relationship with the Post Office, and called on my colleagues in the then Labour Government to end it by taking the three companies into public ownership, so that there could be some open planning of the producer systems as well as the user systems.

Today there is no excuse for lack of money for investment. If British Telecom can report profits of £2·3 billion, there is certainly scope for it to invest that money in ending standing charges for pensioners and those on low incomes, and providing a better service for the public services, hospitals and other domestic and business consumers.

We have to decide whether deregulation and liberalisation will produce the benefits that the Minister and Lord Young pray for. If they do, will they be for a few advanced capitalist countries in the centre of the Common Market, as opposed to what are called peripheral countries? What attitude do we take to the wild claims that have been made in the press and elsewhere about the supposed benefits to Britain of taking such a step?

On 8 April, *The Times*, under the headline, "Britain set for £55 bn communications harvest", stated:

"Britain is poised to capture the lion's share of Europe's £55 billion a year telecommunications industry if plans to create a European internal market by 1992 go ahead as scheduled, according to leading industry sources."

Where is the evidence for that? In the 1960s, Britain's share in the world's trade in telecommunications manufactured goods was 20 per cent. It is now under 5 per cent. The balance of trade between the Common Market countries and Britain has gone from bad to worse in recent years. The British experience of liberalisation has given us L. M. Ericsson and system Y, but we have yet to see any major exports of system X from GEC or Plessey.

In 1984, British exports of telecommunications hardware to the European Community amounted to £156 million. In 1987, four years later, the latest available data show that that figure had climbed to £172 million. Imports from the same source in the same period had gone up from £147 million to £194 million, meaning that the United Kingdom's balance of trade with the Common Market in telecommunications hardware had changed from an £8·5 million positive balance in 1984 to a £21·2 million deficit in 1987. Those figures, rather than illustrating the benefits that will accrue from entering the Nirvana of an expanded, deregulated and liberated market, sound warning bells as to what will happen to the hardware manufacturing industry in Britain if the plan goes ahead.

Rather than gearing up for the promises of expanded sales and production that the Minister has said are available to British firms, seven weeks ago, GPT, which was formed earlier this year from GEC and Plessey and is the prime manufacturer of telecommunications equipment in Britain, announced 1,800 redundancies. GPT is contracting its work force. Of the 1,800 redundancies, 800 are in my constituency in Coventry, South-East, 700 arise

[Mr. Nellist]

from the complete closure of the Kirkcaldy factory in Scotland and the rest affect Liverpool, Beeston and Aycliffe.

One of the central arguments of workers in Coventry, many of whom have given their lives to raising GEC's profits to enable Arnold Weinstock, its chairman, to buy his legendary £500,000-a-time racehorses, is that it is clear that the redundancies in GPT are being done on the cheap. All but a handful of the 1,800 redundancies are at former GEC plants. The old Plessey firm had a redundancy agreement four times better than GEC. Whereas GEC offered one week's pay per year of service, Plessey offered four weeks. The overwhelming majority of redundancies have been at GEC plants.

As one Transport and General Workers Union convener at Coventry said:

"the cuts are being made at the cheapest point".

That is in sharp contrast to yesterday's news in the *Evening Standard* that Sir John Clark, the chairman of Plessey, had awarded himself a £167,000 a year pay rise. You may have noticed, Madam Deputy Speaker, that 179 Labour Members have signed early-day motion 1135, which I have tabled. It supports the union's campaign of opposition to plant closures and redundancies. If this proposal becomes a reality by 1992, those redundancies will be only the beginning of job cuts in hardware manufacturing in Britain.

Despite the merger, GPT is a small fish in a big pond. It is unable to compete, especially on research and development, with firms such as Siemens in Europe or AT and T and NTT in America and Japan respectively. In my view, GPT is planning for a short-term future and for maximising its profits before 1992, when it will be exposed to the chiller winds of competition which this liberalisation will bring. GEC, the parent company, makes more profit from its cash assets of £1·5 million in its bank than it does from investing in research and development and jobs, and those profits will be enhanced by the increase in interest rates which was announced today. The future for jobs in GPT is grim for the next couple of years, as stockbrokers who have analysed it say. They predict the same number of redundancies in the next couple of years. In the longer term, the redivision of the world market in telecommunications will probably mean further mergers and rationalisations.

We have already witnessed the acquisition of ITT's European telecommunications equipment interests by Alcatel of France, the takeover of CGCT of France by Ericsson, and the merger of GEC and Plessey in the United Kingdom. During the next four or five years, if, as many columnists predict, there is a worldwide recession in the next year, the pressure will be on to make major economies of scale, so there will be further mergers and rationalisations, and job cuts will be inevitable.

My preference is not for deregulation but simply for renationalisation of BT. As I said in reply to the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), it should not stop at BT. It should include GPT, STC and Thorn-Ericsson so that some rational planning can be brought into the production and use of telecommunications equipment. My preference for control would not be for the MacGregors, the Graham Days or the Edwardeses of the past, but for working people inside and outside those industries having the majority of seats on a board of control.

It is clear that, whereas BT used to support the research and development of manufacturing companies, which gave some stability, but was involved in what was called "the ring"—that cosy cartel relationship with GEC, Plessey and STC—deregulation will bring about wholesale competition. If BT begins to go for the cheapest tenders, it is inevitable that those who tender will begin to cut longer-term plans such as those for research and development—which often takes five or seven years before it shows any profits because of lead times—and for training and retraining. In the case of GPT, the unions have demanded retraining for those workers threatened with redundancy.

Over the past 12 months, BT has been looking for a 20 per cent. reduction in its engineering staff. Research and development and engineering staff are likely to be cut further as BT seeks to encourage the private manufacturers to do the installation and servicing of the systems it produces. Deregulation and liberalisation is losing jobs, both in the service and manufacturing industries. After 1992, our experiences in Britain will be translated throughout Europe.

For me, for the past 15 years, the Common Market has been simply a chimera. We have had over 15 years of promises of benefits and of more jobs, yet the deficit in manufacturing trade with Common Market countries is now £10·2 billion, according to an answer given by a Treasury Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) in column *277* of *Hansard* of 16 June. It has been said that we pay the best part of £2 million a day for membership of the Common Market club, yet we have the lowest pensions and supplementary benefits of almost any member state, and we certainly have the lowest unemployment benefit, as a percentage of former earnings, of any member state.

I well remember, during the 1975 referendum campaign, in which I participated in support of a vote against continued membership of the Common Market, huge posters in Coventry, with Lord Jenkins' face some 10 or 12 ft across on them and the headline "Jobs for the Boys". He might have done all right——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman is not relating his remarks to the "take note" motion on the Order Paper, and I should be obliged if he would now do so.

Mr. Nellist: It is not for me to differ, but we are being asked tonight to take note of a document to enhance the development of the Common Market——

Madam Deputy Speaker: To deal with telecommunications.

Mr. Nellist: —particularly in telecommunications. The Minister's promise at the Dispatch Box was that that would provide a range of benefits for working people in this country, in which he included jobs. I am trying to show that that has never been true, and I do not believe that it is true this evening. In 1975, promises were made to my constituents in Coventry that, if we remained in the Common Market and looked to a future of deregulation and harmonisation, including the telecommunications market, according to Lord Jenkins there would be jobs for

the boys. In the preparations that GPT is making for that harmonisation programme in 1992, my constituents heard seven weeks ago the announcement of 800 redundancies. I believe that it is a perfectly legitimate point to make in the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is a perfectly legitimate point to make, but it is not legitimate to go back 10 years. The hon. Gentleman should relate that to what is happening at present.

Mr. Nellist: We entered the Common Market 16 years ago. Many of the documents that we are discussing tonight had their genesis in the 1970s, particularly those such as the Green Papers which refer to the harmonisation in industrial sectors that is due to take effect over the next 18 or 36 months, or by 1992. I contend that it is perfectly legitimate to talk about the history because, as Aneurin Bevan—the hero of both of us, Madam Deputy Speaker—once said, why should we look in the crystal ball when we can read the book? The book of the history of the Common Market has never given the citizens of Coventry any benefits from its membership, contrary to those offers that Lord Jenkins made during the referendum in 1975.

People argue that deregulation and harmonisation of the telecommunications market and the creation of a supranational market in telecommunications within Europe will benefit consumers or those who provide either the equipment or the service in Britain, but it will not provide the best service to working people, particularly because as capitalism in Britain, Europe and worldwide moves into the next downward cycle of its development, there will be even more pressure on nation states to protect their home markets and resist cross-border fertilisation, which has been put forward as one of the main benefits of the measures in this document. We have heard of American steel workers complaining about British Steel exports to America. American car workers have smashed Japanese cars, Italian and French farmers have argued about cross-border travel of agricultural products, and we shall see the same in the next three or four years in telecommunications, just as British workers complained when Ericsson Information Systems Ltd. got the contract for systemwide equipment from BT three or four years ago.

There will not be a united, unified common market in telecommunications or in any other industry. Those who describe the measures in this document as leading to that are not giving the British people the best advice they can get. If the document is noted by the House and adopted by the Common Market, employers and Governments will come together on a 12-country basis to harmonise and deregulate telecommunications, and it is for trade unions to do the same. They must harmonise their organisations across national boundaries and set up Euro shop stewards committees to protect the jobs and living standards of their members, just as those who are in favour of this deregulation—the gaffers and the employers in Europe—want to protect the profits of their shareholders.

11.11 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) has given a whole new meaning to the phrase "sending people to Coventry", and it is not inducing silence.

I have risen to speak because I am a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation, and I shall refer specifically to the powers on which my hon. Friend the Minister said he would be interested to hear comments by hon. Members. We are dealing with important prospective legislation on a matter that will have a dramatic and beneficial effect on the prospects for our telecommunications industry. With the liberalisation of terminal equipment in the value added services markets, and the separation of the regulatory and operational functions of posts, telegraphs and telecommunications administrations, the Commission proposes that the form of procedure used will effectively bypass other institutions within the Community, let alone the House. That is a serious matter.

By coincidence, I have written an article about this that will be appearing in *The Times* tomorrow. Those of us who are genuinely enthusiastic about the prospects of the EC cannot view with equanimity the use of such powers, which are bound to lead to a sense of remoteness and Byzantine complexity bypassing the elected representatives and against the express wishes of member states, as my hon. Friend could tell us, because the Government made representations to the Commission that the use of article 90(3) should not be allowed.

The Commission is persisting in this view, for reasons that have not been explained to the Select Committee, nor—I do not criticise my hon. Friend for this—by the Minister tonight. Also, if, as is proposed by the Government and other member states, the Commission proceeds by another procedure, it would be by the use of article 100A.

It is late at night and we are discussing a matter which is vital to the future of the telecommunications industry and to industry as a whole. We are in the telecommunications age. Some would argue that the future for industry and commerce generally will be increasingly affected by telecommunications, information technology and everything that goes with those developments. At 11.15 pm, in a virtually empty Chamber, we are discussing a critical issue and looking into the black hole, as it were, in considering whether the proposed liberalisation measures should pass through the Commission without any further reference—I refer to the explanatory memorandum from the Department of Trade and Industry—to the Council of Ministers itself

"or to consideration by the European Parliament or the Economic and Social Committee, but must be implemented by any Member States to which they are addressed."

There would be no further reference to the House, and that is inconceivable. In my judgment, no right-minded person should allow this procedure to continue without registering the strongest possible protest.

The problem does not end when article 100A is invoked. The Select Committee on European Legislation, in public session, is cross-examining the Treasury Solicitor in an attempt to elicit information on the misuse of article 100A, which, in simple langage, relates to the harmonisation programme for the whole of the internal market and the Single European Act.

Grave problems have been arising, and we have had evidence of the misuse of article 100A. I do not want to exaggerate, but increasingly legislation is being imposed upon the House and we are obliged to implement it under the European Communities Act 1972. I am prepared to accept that Act, because I am not an anti-European in the

[Mr. William Cash]

sense in which that term is used by many, but I ask whether it is right that the elected representatives of Britain should be bypassed on matters of direct concern to the industry, to commerce and to the prosperity of their constituents. That must be a matter of concern to us. I am saying not that it has no relevance to the European Parliament but it has a great deal of relevance to us. The issue that is before us will bypass the whole shooting match if what is proposed by the Commission goes ahead.

Under article 100A the majority procedure is used, and I shall not make a song and dance about the fact that that procedure has been introduced. I made my point when the Single European Act was passing through the House, in the course of which I said that there would be some difficulties. On the other hand, I can see some advantages in the majority procedure.

There is something called Russian roulette. I suggest that we are moving into a new world in which there is something called European roulette, in which there are 12-chamber guns. As we found in our deliberations this afternoon in the Select Committee on European Legislation, it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine how matters will turn out. With the best will in the world, we must get our scrutiny procedures right. It has been said that we have lost four months and that the scrutiny procedure is not working properly. I wish merely to say that we are moving into accelerated procedures under article 100A. Indeed, we are moving into a new world in which things will move faster than we would like. The Select Committee on European Legislation has received evidence that on occasions—these are somewhat more frequent than in the past—when it recommends that certain matters should be debated, which means that it applies a scrutiny reserve, an explanatory memorandum is issued by the Department which, in effect, states, "We are sorry, but things are moving too fast. We shall have to make the decision to adopt the proposal before the debate has taken place."

A number of questions seriously affect rulings and agreements as between the Select Committee on European Legislation and the formal channels in this House, which have recently been the subject of correspondence with the Leader of the House. I ask, in no spirit of criticism, that when important matters such as this pass through the House and through the European Community—to which I do not object in principle, because I am not anti-European—we should be fully involved in key decisions affecting our constituents.

The key word there is "involved", because we cannot leave such matters to the European Parliament alone. It is not designed for, or capable of, properly scrutinising such matters either now or in the indefinite future. The House concerns itself with scrutinising Bills line by line, yet it is prepared to pass legislation at this time of night without so much as a glance at the nuts and bolts of its content. We must consider this matter properly, not just for the sake of tradition but also to safeguard the role of the House. In a nutshell, we must represent our constituents effectively and efficiently to the best of our ability.

11.21 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) concentrated his remarks on an issue that is dear to the heart of the House in relation to the proposal that is before it. I did not intend to speak, but I want to respond to a number of the issues raised by the hon. Members for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) and for Wigan (Mr. Stott).

Mention was made of British Telecom's role in Europe. My instinct is to acknowledge the extraordinary role played by Mr. John Golding in ensuring British Telecom's monopoly in the contemporary scene. I do not know a man who has fought more strongly, bravely and courageously for his union in defending—almost in partnership with Sir George Jefferson, whom I consider to be the éminence grise in that lamentable situation—the interests of his members as he perceived them, though I believe wrongly. "Hallelujah!" they should be singing, to the man who struggled and fought for British Telecom's lamentable—I would argue—monopoly. He argued on behalf of his members in a manner which I would acknowledge with statues and monuments, but that must be a judgment for others.

The House is united in the belief that the provision of a service to consumers is what should guide our interest in telecommunications. It is there that I take issue with some of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East. I ask him to reflect, on behalf of his constituents, on the situation if there were only one shoe shop, one shirtmaker and one food shop in Coventry. One would then be hijacked in terms of prices and the provision of service. If those suppliers decided to provide a service for only four hours daily, and at a price that was not affordable, people would have to go without.

The essence of the underlying argument is that one achieves the best provision of service by competition. The regret and anxiety in the Government's arguments this evening are that we constructed a system that was not designed to do that, but which institutionalised much of what had gone before, ensuring that the measured pace by which we arrived at its provision would place us ill in the worldwide race to provide a service.

I shall contrast that with a situation with which I know the hon. Member for Wigan will be very familiar concerning Northern Telecom. It came from nowhere. Its market was nationally limited—the Canadian market—and yet, despite the inhibitions of a small market place, it has grown into an undoubted world leader. The test of being vital and viable in a competitive market has taken it from nothing to something grand. The tragedy of British Telecom is that it started as something grand and is going somewhere that is not so grand. It is not an example that we can hold out to the world.

The provision of competitive tendering in equipment was essential. It was something about which the Government were anxious. The maintenance and continuity of the service were all arguments that we rehearsed in Committee. At the end of the day the House is about the provision of service. Opposition Members will get nowhere until they believe that unless the service is delivered to the consumer it cannot be argued that to maintain the jobs of three people today is the end of the matter. It is delivering the service to the consumer that leads to the creation of the jobs that the hon. Member for

Coventry, South-East desperately and genuinely wants for his constituents. That is the route by which we believe that that can best be tackled.

I have tried to talk about technological gains. Many things inhibit the Government's objectives. We still have great opportunities ahead of us. The price restraint on BT comes to an end next year, as my hon. Friend the Minister will no doubt confirm. I genuinely do not believe that a monopoly that runs for 25 years is in our interests. We can still break up BT and that will become increasingly imperative in order to serve markets and compete in Europe and so take advantage of any directive that comes from there. If, as we look forward to the year 2000, we want to hold markets, create more jobs and take over the opportunities that Northern Telecom in a curious way pioneered for us all in order to beat the Americans or the Japanese, we must take away those restraints. My hon. Friend the Minister will well recall that in Committee we did not talk about competition. Throughout we referred to a duopoly. That is not consonant with competition.

11.26 pm

Mr. Butcher: To a certain extent, the debate has been a reunion of those who debated the competition policy issues in the Telecommunications Bill. I recall the eloquence of my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) many years ago. He has shown tonight that his views are unshakeable and that his convictions on competition policy, as it applies to the telecommunications market, are as clear as ever.

May I share with him and the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) their view of the doughtiness of Mr. John Golding? I cannot agree with my hon. Friend's conclusions that the Golding-Jefferson axis has triumphed. I have tried to demonstrate tonight, and shall continue to do so in future, that competition across the piece is alive and kicking in the telecommunications services in the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend is worried about whether the domestic user has a real choice. When there is competitiveness between the two service providers, I am sure he will agree that the final piece of the jigsaw will be in place.

I hope that my hon. Friend will be encouraged by the fact that, after making a massive investment, Mercury is now in a position to start advertising for customers from domestic subscribers outside the Greater London area. That surely is confirmation that it is serious about competing with BT in the last area in which BT has enjoyed a quasi-monopoly. Everywhere else, full-blown competition is raging.

Many points have been raised tonight, and there will not be enough time to respond to all of them. I was asked in a couple of contributions what objective the United Kingdom was seeking to achieve. Let me return to the words of the French Minister when he identified the Japanese propensity, indeed choice, to invest in the United Kingdom—often in London—because of the efficacy of our telecommunications services.

One of our objectives is to ensure that London becomes one of the three major information exchanges in the world. It is already one of the three major financial exchanges, and I believe that Tokyo, New York and London will be the three major information exchange centres. I hope the House will remember that there are now more than 3,000 value added data service and network service operators in London. Only four years ago, we did not have any that we could count.

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4634/88 on the development of the common market for telecommunications services and equipment; and supports the Government's intention to work for the early liberalisation of telecommunications markets in the European Community to the benefit of network operators, service providers, equipment manufacturers and users.

Cross-Bradford Rail Link

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

11.30 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about a section of the city in which I was born and bred, and for which, as a consequence, I have a great affection. I speak tonight not simply as a constituency representative, but as someone who has always wanted to see railways and the city develop—for railways and transport facilities generally are an important part of a city.

Bradford's railway circumstances are singularly unfortunate because of a series of historical quirks. Those historical quirks have meant a steady decline in Bradford's position as a city with railway facilities. The ASLEF branch closed recently because it is no longer a signing-on point. Leeds has become the centre. There are no locomotive depots and no freight yards, and there are inadequate freight facilities in the interchange station, which is the subject of continuing complaint by the postmaster general in Bradford. Parcels are taken from a major post office facility in the centre of Bradford as far afield as Preston to join the railway network. That cannot be reasonable or right.

As a result of those historical quirks, we have two railway stations, both termini: the Interchange, which is modern, bleak and inadequate, approximately seven miles from Leeds, and Forster square, approximately three miles from Shipley—which can be seen to have an air of faded grandeur, when it is possible to burrow behind the buildings and find out where it is. Shipley is the junction for the Leeds-Skipton railway from which there is access to Lancaster, Morecambe, and, further north, Settle and Carlisle.

The history of railway development in Bradford is essentially one of missed opportunity. If I give the Minister a brief resumé—provided that he has not already got one—it will demonstrate that the House has already in past years given approval for various sorts of railway link to join the two stations, and therefore to provide a regeneration of railway facilities, as I hope will still be possible.

Let me quote from a small booklet by Alan Whitaker, "Railways of Bradford." He pointed out:

"A change of mind by Leeds and Bradford Railway Company chairman George Hudson"—

not the most eminent railway entrepreneur——

"wrecked Bradford's first chance of a through line as early as 1846 when, after initially supporting a plan to link the Manchester and Leeds and Leeds and Bradford lines to put Bradford on a through route, he decided against it and the chance was lost.

. . . Yet another opportunity arose in the early 1880s when reconstruction of Bradford Exchange station was in an advanced state of planning. A leading local architect was hired by a group of prominent Bradford businessmen to prepare plans for a central station on a through line and the cost was put at £300,000. But, after conferring on the scheme, the three railway companies, which already had local interests . . . sent a sharp rebuff to the promoters saying that the project was unrealistic".

One of those railways—the Midland—13 years later drew up its own proposals for a Bradford through line, at an estimated cost of £2·1 million; and the scheme was authorised by the Midland Railway (West Riding Lines) Act 1898. The House was so keen to endorse Bradford's view that it gave its consent for the extension of time to promote the scheme to build the railway in 1901, 1904 and 1907. But the local authority rightly suspected that the Midland railway was dragging its feet, and so eventually produced yet another scheme. At that stage, the local authority was so keen to promote the idea that the Bradford corporation offered to deduct £8,000 a year from the Midland railway's rates bill for a period of 20 years.

The Bradford Through Lines Act received the Royal Assent on 25 July 1911. But before anything could be done, the first world war intervened in 1914, and in the post-war recession the scheme was again put to one side and forgotten.

In the 1950s, a circular route that would involve joining the stations was considered but thought too ambitious, and so not pursued.

What is the current position? The InterCity service is pathetic. Bradford is a city of almost 500,000 people. It is a major provincial city, and it deserves better. There is one through service each way each day. British Rail is not prepared to electrify the Leeds-Bradford branch, and is talking of diverting all InterCity trains to Forster square and developing Shipley as a station with a parking facility. That would mean a major development miles from the city centre, taking the heart out of the railway centre in Bradford.

Bradford local authority considered a cross-Bradford rail link during 1986, in conjunction with a proposed new court house site by the Property Services Agency. The alignment under consideration was a route extending from the interchange, under Bridge street, crossing land formerly occupied by the Exchange station, returning parallel to Vicar lane and swinging so as to cross the subway well at the junction of Hall Ings and Petergate. It would then go along Petergate by a viaduct, whose columns could be accommodated within the central reservation of Petergate. The line would then swing across the former Forster square goods yard to join the track reaching Forster Square station, thus providing a through route for the first time in the city's history.

Written representations were made to the PSA in February 1987, and a response was received in March of that year from the court house project manager, a Mr. D. Jones. The local authority sent me a letter, dated 6 October, outlining Mr. Jones' objections. He apparently objected to having a railway on the land on which the court house was to be built—the former Exchange station site—on the grounds of security. That is curious. Did he think that court house prisoners were going to leap from their confines on to the roofs of passing trains to make a dramatic escape? He did not like the idea of a railway so close to the court house.

In a parliamentary answer on 26 May the Minister said that the idea would create

"unacceptable levels of noise and vibration, . . . unsurmountable security problems, and would be visually intrusive."—[*Official Report,* 26 May 1988; Vol. 134, *c. 307.*]

I do not believe that the Property Services Agency is so incompetent that it cannot design a secure building that is reasonably insulated against noise. Railways are considerably less noisy than either a busy city centre road or a trunk road. There are ways of insulating railways. For example, rubber pads can be used on the chairs holding the rail to the sleeper. Buildings can also be insulated effectively. I do not therefore support the noise argument.

Railways are much less visually intrusive than, say, multistorey car parks which have grown with the increase in car ownership like some sort of cancer across the face of our cityscapes. I cannot think of any multistorey car parks that are exciting and appreciated by architects and citizens everywhere. The car scene is visually much less attractive than railways. In any case, the railway of the cross-Bradford link would be on only a slight gradient, so the argument about engines or diesel motive units working hard and making a great deal of noise would not apply.

The local authority and the passenger transport authority want the option of a sufficient strip of land across the court house site—round the back of it as it were—so that at some future date there will be the possibility of a cross-Bradford rail link. A man in Whitehall should not have the right to veto the local authority or the local passenger transport authority. They represent people who live and work in Bradford and who can see for themselves that a rail link would not be particularly noisy or intrusive. Certainly it would not be aesthetically jarring to the people of Bradford who would benefit greatly from such a link.

The passenger transport authority is commissioning an independent review and a technical assessment of the potential for a cross-Bradford rail link in the specification for a study to be commissioned jointly by Bradford local authority, British Rail and the passenger transport authority. That is the general position of the cross-Bradford rail link.

The Property Services Agency made it clear that if the Bradford local authority did not accede to the view of, presumably, Mr. Jones, the agency would think again about whether a court house should be built on the site. Then the question of the time to build the court house arose. The local authority, anxious to secure jobs, yielded to what some people might see as a crude form of blackmail, but I am sure that that was not intended by the Property Services Agency. However, that might be seen as the implication.

There would be enormous transport improvements if the option that I have mentioned was available to be taken up at some future date. There could be through trains from Leeds to Bradford, from Bradford to Shipley, to Skipton, Lancaster or Carlisle, or trains could run from Leeds to Bradford and then round to Leeds and on in a southerly direction to London. They could run from Leeds to Shipley and Bradford and through to Halifax and Manchester. In a note to me the passenger transport authority said:

"The construction of a cross-Bradford rail link would allow routing of train services from Leeds to Lancaster/Carlisle and from Leeds to Manchester/Blackpool via Bradford without reversal. One possible service pattern (fig. 5)"——

which the authority gives in a diagrammatic form—

"would result in improved Leeds-Bradford frequencies and links between Airedale and Calderdale without necessarily increasing train operational costs."

That means that there would be an improved train frequency without additional costs in a way that has never been possible before.

The Minister should not close his mind to the option. He should say that he recognises the importance to the passenger transport authority and to the local authority of this potential development. He should consider whether further discussions can result in an accommodation for a rail alignment.

It is Government policy to regenerate inner cities, and the link would certainly help to regenerate the heart of the city of Bradford. It would help to provide Bradford with a railway service such as it has never been able to achieve because of the wretched, if small, division between the two stations, which, as I have explained to the Minister, has been under discussion off and on for more than 140 years. If the court house project goes ahead willy-nilly, the option will be cut off for 100 years. It will not be available at any rate for the period for which a modern court house can be expected to last, which I suppose may be less than 100 years. Once the building is constructed and in operation, the option will not be open to us.

The option of the cross-Bradford rail link would place Bradford at a railway crossroads. It would stimulate rail traffic and provide a greatly improved railway service for the people of Bradford. It would not be intrusive, and the short viaduct across Petergate would blend in well with the surroundings and provide a dramatic and unusual journey through the city. Most of all, the link would stimulate rail traffic. Instead of two stations withering away at the end of two short branch lines, Bradford would once again have a railway service to match its status as one of the most important cities in Yorkshire.

I hope that the Minister will accede to my requests and tell the Property Services Agency to reconsider the matter to see whether the rail link option—which is a very important option to the city and is supported by the passenger transport authority and the local authority—can at least be retained for further examination.

11.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): We have been entertained to a fascinating history of the development of the railway in Bradford and its environs.

It is clear from the remarks of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that there is much misunderstanding over the role of the Property Services Agency in this matter. I am grateful for this opportunity to set out the respective responsibilities of the Lord Chancellor's Department and the city of Bradford. After the hon. Gentleman has heard what I have to say, I think he will accept that the PSA is not dictating anything, but that the ball is in the court of the local authority, which owns the land and decides the planning issues. It has agreed to the development of the land for an important court house and accepts that it would not be possible to have both a court house and a rail link on the site.

The Property Services Agency, as its name implies, acts as the agent for the Lord Chancellor's Department in the selection of sites for courts and in their construction. Decisions of where courts are needed, their size and the selection of a specific site in each city are essentially matters for the Lord Chancellor's Department, advised by the PSA. The cost of the court building programme falls on the public expenditure programme of my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor, and from 1 April this year the annual expenditure for the courts programme has fallen upon his Vote.

For this, as for other construction projects, the PSA is bound to obtain the view of the local authority on planning matters under the appropriate circular—in this case circular 18 of 1984. The Government have repeatedly said that they are bound by the spirit of planning

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

legislation and in the case of Crown court development there is rarely occasion to seek to set aside the views of the planning authority. I can assure the House, from my inspection of the relevant documents, that there has been the closest co-operation between the PSA and the officers of Bradford city council over planning matters.

Against that background of roles and responsibilities, let me deal with the history of this project. Bradford has been without a Crown court building since 1982, when the two court rooms in the city hall, owned by the local authority, were closed because of maintenance problems. Since then cases have been heard at Leeds, and my right hon. and noble Friend the then Lord Chancellor declared in 1983 that the Crown court would not return to Bradford until permanent modern accommodation could be provided.

Having assessed the case load in Bradford, the Lord Chancellor's Department decided that it needed a court building to house eight Crown and two county court rooms. The PSA identified six potential sites in Bradford, of which two were shortlisted. One of these was the Bradford Exchange site, which was by common consent the best, in that it fulfilled the criteria for accessibility and security, while providing a focal point for a new building of civic significance. Both it and the other shortlisted site at Vickers lane were in the ownership of Bradford city council.

The PSA and the Lord Chancellor's Department therefore opened negotiations with the city authorities over the use of the Exchange station site for courts, with the aim of purchasing it if the authority was prepared to agree to its use for courts. A deputation of members from the city council met officials of the Lord Chancellor's Department and the PSA in June 1986 to discuss aspects of the scheme, and on 13 November 1986 the PSA submitted a planning application to the council.

The Council replied on 3 February 1987 saying that, while it was favourably disposed to the development, it was aware that the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority was considering a proposal to provide a cross-Bradford rail link between the Interchange and Forster square stations, across the Exchange station site. It therefore invited the PSA to consider the effect of the PTA's proposals on the court scheme and to let it have comments.

The PSA carefully examined the proposal from a professional viewpoint. Would it be feasible and physically acceptable to have a court and a rail link on the same site? Writing to the director of planning of the city council on 4 March 1987, the PSA project manager said that the design team had concluded that it would not be possible for the rail link and the court house to share the same site. There would be problems for secure access and egress for custody vehicles, problems of general layout, and a change in the character of the site which would remove the sense of civic importance that the court house development would enhance.

In those circumstances, the project manager went on to say that it was for the council to make a clear decision to approve either the rail link or the court house development.

The hon. Gentleman asked why the PSA took the view that it did, and he referred to the answers that I gave to his parliamentary questions on 22 October 1987 and 2 November 1987. The possibility of a rail link being taken into account was not drawn to the PSA's attention until February 1987. It was not, as I said in my reply on 2 November 1987, for the PSA to give reasons for rejecting a rail link. It simply pointed out that a rail link and the court house to the standards required by the Lord Chancellor's Department could not be accommodated on the same site. In answer to the hon. Gentleman's more recent question on 23 May 1988 I explained that the construction of a rail link, close to the court house, would create problems of noise and vibration, add to the security problems and be visually intrusive.

In effect, the hon. Gentleman has asked me to elaborate on the reasons that I gave him then. First, a court house containing eight Crown and two county courts requires a site of between 2 and 2½ acres. The Exchange station site is slightly under 2½ acres, and of this a little over one quarter would be taken by the proposed railway development. If we sought to realign the agreed site boundaries to take account of the rail link, it would mean encroaching upon adjacent land identified by the local authority for future commercial development and for a civic square. If we did not realign the site boundaries, the railway would pass within 30 ft of the court room walls.

Secondly, the proposed railway route creates major access problems. It would divorce the court house site from the only realistic road access, which is from Vicar lane. Because of the slope of the ground—the hon. Gentleman will know the details of this better than I do—other roads do not give ready access, and bridges or tunnels would be impractical. A level crossing is unacceptable for security reasons—this is where security is crucial—because vehicles bringing defendants to court must be able to get in and out without impediment. Clearly, a level crossing would be an impediment.

If the access problems could be resolved and the railway link provided, the noise, vibration and visual intrusion would create problems in planning and building the courts, and impair their value in use. The design of the foundations, building frame and fabric would have to be adapted in a way that would be costly and cause delay; and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to meet the agreed standards for court design, particularly for noise levels and daylight. Even if these problems were overcome, the visual intrusion of a railway line on the same level as the court building is not hard to imagine.

Those were the PSA's reasons; the decision, though, was for Bradford. On 16 March 1987 the director of development services of Bradford city council wrote to the project manager, conveying outline planning clearance. He said that he had carried out consultations with the leadership of the council and the view had been taken by the council that the court house development should proceed as programmed, because it was appreciated that it was not a feasible proposition to think in terms of physically accommodating the rail link and the court house on the Exchange station site and adhering to the stated programme.

That is the current position. The site is to be developed for the court building and there has been close consultation with Bradford council over the design of the scheme. A new civic square will be laid out fronting the court house, which will do much to regenerate the

important central area of Bradford. Both the PSA and the Lord Chancellor's Department have been happy to co-operate with the local authority in this scheme.

The programme to which we are working is dictated by the needs of the Lord Chancellor's Department. Advance works, to prepare the square, are due to begin next year. The scope of the work and apportionment of cost are being negotiated as part of the site purchase agreement. The construction of the court house itself, on which there will be further consultations about the exterior appearance, will begin later that year or in 1990. The Lord Chancellor's Department hopes to bring the new building into use in 1992.

From that brief history the House will see that, far from being bureaucratic or authoritarian, the PSA has fully and properly carried out its responsibilities and observed both the spirit and the letter of the consultation process.

Mr. Cryer: The local authority said in its letter to me that when it had been engaged in correspondence with the PSA it had been requested to make an urgent decision, as failure to do so could jeopardise the timing of the court house project. That could be interpreted as suggesting that if it did not agree with the PSA view the court house project might be taken from Bradford. Was that the case? That was certainly the implication.

Mr. Chope: Clearly, if considerable delay was caused by arguments about whether both could be accommodated on the site, or whether the rail link should have priority over the court house, or vice versa, that would have affected whether we could proceed with the site or should look for an alternative. The hon. Gentleman goes too far in suggesting that that was more or less tantamount to blackmail or a threat. All the cards were with the local planning authority and it could have written back and said that it wanted more time, giving reasons for it. It did not do so. It unequivocally accepted the arguments of the PSA.

The choice between the rail link and the court house, or, indeed, the decision whether the two could co-exist on the one site, was a matter for Bradford city council. That choice was made and communicated in March 1987. I am confident that Bradford will not regret its choice, and that the new court house, when it is built, will prove a worthy addition to the civic architecture of the city.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 23 June 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SOUTHERN WATER AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Third Reading read.
Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.
Read the Third time, and passed.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [10 December], That the Bill be now considered.
Debate further adjourned till Thursday 30 June.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *(By Order)*

FALMOUTH CONTAINER TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE TOWN MOOR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 30 June.

NORTH KILLINGHOLME CARGO TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*
Order for resuming adjourned debate on Question [22 June], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate further adjourned till Thursday 30 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Satellite Television

1. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what machinery he proposes to ensure that programmes provided by satellite will be of a comparable standard to those provided currently by the British Broadcasting Corporation and independent television.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): The service that British Satellite Broadcasting Limited plans to launch next year will be an IBA service, and will be regulated in accordance with the 1984 Act. Satellite services relayed via cable fall to be regulated by the Cable Authority. We are considering extending the authority's remit to all non-DBS services uplinked from the United Kingdom, whether or not relayed via cable. As to services uplinked from other countries, we are pressing for effective agreements that will cover those uplinked from Europe.

Mr. Grocott: Is the Minister aware that the Home Secretary's speech last night will be greeted with dismay by everyone who believes that British public sector broadcasting is a model that is aspired to throughout the world? Can he explain the logic of a policy which, on the one hand, consistently criticises and interferes with BBC and ITV television and, on the other hand, proposes to give freedom in satellite television to the likes of Mr. Murdoch? Is it not an appalling prospect if the standards of the British press are to be the model for British broadcasting?

Mr. Renton: The speech by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary last night was excellent and I am not saying that just because he is sitting beside me. My right hon. Friend explored some of the avenues that could be opened during the 1990s as we move into a different and changing ecology in the broadcasting world. It was in that context that my right hon. Friend explored the possibility —no more than the possibility—that the IBA system and the ITV companies might be relieved of some of their public service broadcasting obligations as more satellite channels are launched in the sky. We welcome the coming of the satellite channels, because they will provide more competition and more choice for the consumer. It is a matter of pride that the first satellite will be run by a British consortium.

Mr. McCrindle: Reverting to the original question, is there not an argument in a free society that if consumers choose to pay for a particular service, the level of control that is necessary over that service is not necessarily the same as that which applies to the four channels that are universally available?

Mr. Renton: Yes, my hon. Friend has a good point. If people pay for a service, they are making a definite choice at the start that it is a service that they wish to receive. Therefore, the need to have quite as tight regulation over that service is probably diminished. Subscription, which is

what my hon. Friend was talking about, establishes a direct link between the consumer and the broadcasting authority.

Mr. Fisher: Will the Minister explain how it came about that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Lord Young, held a press conference to announce that Channel 4 and BBC 2 would be allocated space on the DBS satellite? Is the Home Secretary still in charge of Government broadcasting policy? If he is, will he reassure the House that terrestrial broadcasting of BBC 2 and Channel 4 will not cease until everyone has access to satellite broadcasting?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman believes too much of what he reads in the papers. The Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry held a joint meeting, at which I was also present, with the chairmen of the BBC, IBA and British Satellite Broadcasting on the exploratory proposition that they should consider the possibility of BBC 2 and Channel 4 going on to satellite and at the same time continuing to be broadcast terrestrially while the market for dishes is built up in this country.

The Department of Trade and Industry has a role to play in spectrum management and in frequency allocation, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that all is sweetness and light between the Home Department and the Department of Trade and Industry, both up in the sky and down here on earth.

Mr. Harris: The House will be assured by my hon. Friend's reply, but what would be the advantage to the viewer of BBC 2 and Channel 4 going to satellite in the relatively short term, given that many people will be unable to afford a dish?

Mr. Renton: That is a fair point. If BBC 2 and Channel 4 were to end up being broadcast on satellite only, that would free a good deal of frequency, which would be available for further terrestrial transmissions either nationally or regionally. If such transmission took place regionally, without universal coverage, there would be a great many more local television broadcasts.

Mr. Hattersley: How is it that the Home Secretary chooses to make controversial speeches on this subject outside this House, but chooses not to answer questions on it this afternoon? *[Interruption.]* As the Minister of State has been told how to reply to that question, will he give us a straightforward answer to the fundamental question that arises from the Coningsby club speech of last night? Are the Government considering abolishing the licence fee, or not?

Mr. Renton: If the right hon. Gentleman had read the Order Paper he would have seen that the question I am answering is limited, as it refers to programmes provided by satellite only. My right hon. Friend made it clear in his speech last night—an excellent and wide-ranging one—that he was putting forward the prospect that, at the end of the day, the BBC licence fee was "not immortal"—any more than the right hon. Gentleman is immortal as deputy leader of the Labour party. As there are more satellite channels, one of the possibilities that should be considered is whether the BBC should continue to be financed by licence fee only.

Immigration

3. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the effect of the imposition of visas on visitors to the United Kingdom from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana, and Nigeria upon the operations of the immigration service; and if he will make a statement.

5. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the effect of the imposition of visas on visitors to the United Kingdom from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana, and Nigeria upon the operations of the immigration service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The House will be pleased to know that the position at the airports has been transformed. Congestion in terminal buildings has been eased and delays reduced. That has improved conditions for passengers, for relatives and friends meeting them, and for staff. The total number of persons refused entry has dropped from about 24,000 in 1986 to just over 19,000 in 1987. Difficult casework has been much reduced. Without the visa imposition, and with a 13 per cent. increase in passenger traffic in 1987, the pressure on the principal terminals dealing with passengers from the five countries would have been impossible.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his full and reassuring answer. Has the imposition of visas been welcomed on the Indian sub-continent?

Mr. Renton: I saw our commissioner in Delhi only yesterday and he told me that, although there is some concern about the recent increase in settlement fees, Indians are pleased—now that the system is well established—that they can establish in advance of their journey whether they qualify for entry here. Those who come here often are pleased that they can get a multi-entry visa, and 90 per cent. of applications are processed within 24 hours of receipt.

Mr. Irvine: My hon. Friend will be aware of recent articles in the national press that have exposed the existence of illegal networks smuggling immigrants into this country, particularly through East Anglian ports such as Ipswich and Felixstowe. Will my hon. Friend make use of the welcome reduction of pressure on the immigration service to put still greater effort into the task of eliminating such criminal networks and detecting illegal entrants?

Mr. Renton: I assure my hon. Friend that the passage quoted in the press was a rather purple one. The figures for immigrants entering that way do not tally with figures in our immigration and nationality department.

On my hon. Friend's second point, I can give him the comfort that he seeks. More staff will be available for enforcement work, which is important. In 1987, a total of 2,200 illegal entrants were traced compared with 1,582 the previous year.

Mr. Vaz: Bearing in mind the revelations in *The Guardian* this week that Home Office officials were keeping information from the Minister about asylum seekers, what assurance can he give that the information that he has just given is accurate? Is it not the reality that hon. Members with large amounts of immigration casework are receiving information from their constituents that single relatives seeking entry are refused permission?

Does the Minister accept the spirit of the words of early-day motion 996, signed by 81 hon. Members? Will he immediately initiate a public inquiry into his chaotic Department?

Mr. Renton: I always thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind concern about my welfare. I assure him that all the information mentioned inaccurately in *The Guardian* has regularly been seen by me on a weekly basis.

On the hon. Gentleman's other point, because of the introduction of changes in the immigration rules, which the Opposition voted against earlier this year, we are now managing to deal with some of the backlog of cases in Lunar house. A great deal of work still has to be done, but it does mean that those arriving here with, for example, difficult entry cases, will be dealt with more quickly than in the past.

Mr. James Lamond: Does the Minister agree that when a visitor's visa has been refused and an appeal has been lodged, the applicant is frequently told that inquiries must be made, presumably by the Home Office? Lengthy delays occur, sometimes of more than a year. Indeed, did not the ombudsman point that out to the Minister following a case that I had referred to him and which he upheld? Will the Minister ensure that something is done to speed up inquiries in such cases?

Mr. Renton: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and that is why we introduced the rule changes earlier this year. I fail to understand why the Opposition voted against them.

Mr. Budgen: Is my hon. Friend aware that those rule changes have been accepted, and even welcomed, by the large Asian community in Wolverhampton? Will he explain why the Government still insist that the taxpayer and the ratepayer employ the race relations industry, whose principal duty seems to be to complain frequently about any Government measures on immigration or race relations?

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for his support, which is always welcome. I am never sure when I will have it, but it is nice to receive it.

The new chairman of the CRE is a well-respected figure. We keep close control of the money provided by the taxpayer for the United Kingdom immigration advisory service. It is right that there should be such a service to help with immigration cases, but I assure my hon. Friend that we keep a close eye on the budget.

Mr. Randall: How does the Minister justify having insufficient staff to enter data into the Home Office computer that produces statistics on the fate of asylum-seekers refused entry to Britain? Is it because the Government really are doing a cover-up job, as suggested by *The Guardian* this week? Or is it another example of the gross incompetence of that part of the Home Office, as has been demonstrated by the shambles at Lunar house and the crisis at the passport office?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman would know, if he had mastered his immigration brief better in the year in which he has been——

Mr. Randall: Answer the question.

Mr. Renton: I am answering it. If the hon. Gentleman will keep quiet for a second, I shall tell him about the port returns. The port returns, of which he has evidently obtained a copy, show only immediate action taken. They may well be inaccurate one week or even one day later, because of subsequent action. I suggest to the hon. Gentleman, in my most helpful way, that he obtains his information from me rather than from leaked documents reported in *The Guardian*.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

4. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Irish ambassador to discuss the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I met the ambassador on 13 June at his request. He repeated to me his Government's concern about these convictions. I made it clear that I was bound to respect the recent confirmation of the original verdict after a full hearing by the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Wall: Did the ambassador inform the Home Secretary of the widespread belief in Ireland that an Irishman accused of terrorist offences in Britain cannot expect a fair trial? Is not the Birmingham bombing case casting doubt on the whole judicial system in Britain? Will the Home Secretary find some way of ending the scandal once and for all?

Mr. Hurd: The ambassador did not express himself in that way. I do not think that he would have become an ambassador if he had. The hon. Gentleman is simply feeding prejudice by passing on such criticism. After a lot of thought, I referred the case of the Birmingham bombers back to the Court of Appeal because there was new material which it seemed to me a court of law ought to consider. The Court of Appeal considered the case again and reaffirmed the original verdict and I have to respect that.

Dame Jill Knight: There is very little point in my right hon. Friend meeting the Irish ambassador on any occasion to discuss this matter, since there is not the slightest doubt that the Birmingham bombers had a fair trial in the first place and had their case reviewed again and again. Those who suggest in their written works that other people were responsible might have the guts to come forward and identify them.

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend's second theme. If hon. Members or any other citizens have specific information on this or other cases, it is their duty to come forward and give it in the proper way to the proper people.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Mullin.

Hon. Members: Name them.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Mullin.

Mr. Mullin: Will the Home Secretary confirm that he has the power—and can choose to use it—to set up an independent review tribunal which could consider evidence inadmissible before a court of law, and that that has been done in other alleged serious miscarriages of justice?

Mr. Hurd: I have the power to set up inquiries, but in this case I took a course which seemed much more

straightforward. I referred the new material to the Court of Appeal, which then, as the hon. Gentleman knows, had the right to look at all matters and to hear all arguments all over again. The Court of Appeal held a very long hearing. The hon. Gentleman has acknowledged that it was a hearing of record length, and, I would say, thoroughness. That was the straightforward way of handling the matter, and the original verdict was reaffirmed.

Mr. Stanbrook: If the highest courts in the land are satisfied of the guilt of those men, what interest is served, except that of the IRA, in attempting to set aside their judgment?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend knows from his long experience that in many cases throughout the history of this country people have continued to disagree with verdicts. In a country such as ours that disagreement can be satisfactorily resolved only by a court of law. That is what happened in this case.

Mr. Hume: Will the Secretary of State confirm that neither the security authorities nor the prison authorities, both of which are subject to his Department, regard the people convicted of the Birmingham bombing as high-risk, high-security prisoners? That is evident in the handling of the Old Bailey hearings in comparison with other such hearings. It is also evident to anyone who has visited the men in prison. Does he agree that the fact that the prison authorities who know the men on a day-to-day basis do not regard them as dangerous tends to confirm the widespread opinion that they are innocent?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman knows better than that. He knows that the secondhand, hearsay opinion held by prison officers is neither here nor there. The matter has been referred to the only people who, in a law-abiding country, are competent to make a decision, and that is those in a court of law. It has been examined thoroughly. There has been no serious criticism of the way in which it has been done, and the House, like myself, should respect the outcome of that process.

Sir John Farr: May I ask my right hon. Friend to look at Thursday's debate on the proposed new clause 2 of the Criminal Justice Bill? He will see that a good deal of unease was expressed on both sides of the House about the validity of the Birmingham Six convictions. In view of the widespread unease expressed by former Home Secretaries and other senior Ministers, will he look again, as some of his predecessors have done, to see whether it is his duty to establish a special review into the case of the Birmingham Six?

Mr. Hurd: This morning I read the interesting and high-quality debate on the new clause to the Criminal Justice Bill. I recognise my hon. Friend's deep-seated, persistent concern with this case. As I have said before, it is normal in a free country that people should have strongly differing views about verdicts in controversial cases such as this. I repeat that I believe—nothing in the debate altered my view—that the straightforward course was followed by me and others who handled the matter. I am bound to respect the confirmation of the original verdict reached in this thorough way, and the House should do the same.

Prisoners (Statistics)

6. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted persons are currently held in English prisons; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): On 30 April this year 39,625 convicted prisoners were held in prison department establishments in England and Wales. A total of 1,650 of those prisoners were unsentenced, 1,340 were sentenced females and 8,327 were sentenced male young offenders.

Mr. Brown: If the recent parliamentary delegation to Iran is to have any chance of success, surely it is important to give some sort of concession, for example, releasing Iranian prisoners held in this country, remembering that some of them have changed their political views. Some who have been anti-Khomeini are now pro-Khomeini. Some concession is necessary. Even the Council of Europe argues for the exchange of prisoners. Why cannot the Government do that with the Iranian regime? Something has to be done if we want Terry Waite and others to go free. Now is the opportunity.

Mr. Hogg: My impression of that question is that it is wide of the one that the hon. Gentleman tabled. However, I shall make two points. First, the hon. Gentleman might care to bear in mind that there are some 755 people in prison for criminal damage—that is damaging property. I should have thought that that would make criticism from the hon. Gentleman wholly inappropriate on subjects of this sort.

On the other point, the idea that one bargains for the release of hostages is grotesque and absurd and I regret hearing it in the House.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I thank my hon. Friend for the figures he has given. Does he agree that the prisons are overcrowded and that, as a result, many policemen are being forced to look after remand prisoners in police cells? Will he please take some urgent action to consider allowing remand prisoners to be kept in hostels run by authorities other than the Home Office?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes a very serious point. We have brought about a substantial reduction in the number of prisoners held in police cells. In March the number was about 1,500, but it is currently about 750, which is a substantial reduction. We have also put in place a number of measures designed to reduce substantially the number remanded in prisons. My hon. Friend is right when he says that it is a serious problem, but we are addressing it.

Mr. Alex Carlile: While it remains the Minister's judgment that in some cases prisoners must be kept in police cells, will he take special measures to ensure that they are not remanded hundred of miles from their homes and their legal advisers? Does the Minister recognise that this is causing great personal hardship and extreme difficulty in the preparation of cases for court?

Mr. Hogg: A number of the measures that we have taken—in particular, the new camps—have reduced the problem to which the hon. and learned Member refers.

Independent Television Programme Producers

7. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to promote the greater use of independent programme producers by the British Broadcasting Corporation and Independent Television.

Mr. Renton: We have sought and received a commitment from the BBC and IBA that, subject to satisfaction on cost and quality, 25 per cent. of original television output covering a wide range of programmes will be commissioned from independent producers by the end of 1992. We attach great importance to the achievement of that target, and we shall continue to keep in touch with both broadcasters and independent producers, to satisfy ourselves about progress towards it.

Mr. Knight: Can my hon. Friend tell the House to what extent the Government's independent production initiative has helped reduce costs and increase efficiency in the television industry? Does my hon. Friend agree that, apart from the need for a fifth television channel, because the BBC is either unable or unwilling to broadcast programmes after midnight, there is an overwhelming case for directing the corporation to turn over its BBC1 and BBC2 transmitters to independent companies during late evening and early morning periods, so that a better public service may be provided?

Mr. Renton: I have no doubt that our determination that independent producers shall have reasonable access to television screens throughout the country has been one reason why companies have been active in recent months in entering into new agreements with their work forces and taking new steps to use the latest technology and equipment, thus reducing their costs. I agree with my hon. Friend that, so far, there has been more initiative shown by Channel 4 and the ITV companies in using the night hours, although the BBC is now starting a subscription service during the night for doctors.

James Thurber advised:

"Early to rise and early to bed makes a male healthy and wealthy and dead."

So far, the ITV companies are heeding that advice more than the BBC.

Mr. Cryer: When considering the use of independent film producers, will the Minister ensure that the IBA exercises its duty under the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act 1973 and stops the practice of feature films being interrupted by advertisements in a highly arbitrary manner and not when natural breaks occur? Will the Minister ensure, too, that feature films made specifically for theatrical exhibition will not be interrupted in the devastatingly arbitrary way that the IBA permits, so breaching its statutory obligation?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Member raises an interesting point. It is solely for the IBA to monitor the insertion of advertisements within feature films. The Council of Europe's draft convention suggests that feature films should be interrupted only once during the whole course of their transmission. That proposal worries British advertisers, but it is one that we shall consider and argue about in the weeks ahead.

Mr. Roger King: Is my hon. Friend aware that over the past few weeks we have been subjected by all the TV channels to a diet of England losing at football and at cricket, but that when it came to England winning at Le Mans and Jaguar's victory there for the first time in 32 years, there was no coverage because of the absence of any contractual arrangements between the media? We all look forward to independent producers who can bring success stories of that kind to our screens, which the public desperately want.

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. It is interesting to note that at present independent producers are making a bid to handle the televising of Parliament, and I hope that that will be a success story as well.

Mr. Worthington: It is clear that Britain can lead the world in this area of programme-making. Will the Minister get together with his colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry to ensure that there is a thriving programme-making facility, not just in the south-east of England, but in the rest of the United Kingdom, particularly Scotland?

Mr. Renton: I met members of the Independent Producers Association only yesterday. I assured them that we were anxious to ensure that regional production continues throughout the country—in Wales, Scotland and other parts of England—and is not just centred around WC2, with everyone taking lunch at the White Tower restaurant.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend ensure that all these so-called drama producers are told that the vast majority of people are fed up with their television sets producing four-letter words, men urinating into lavatories, and buckets of blood, all in the name of so-called realism?

Mr. Renton: Yes, Sir. It is precisely for that reason that we have set up the Broadcasting Standards Council and Sir William Rees-Mogg has taken on the difficult job of being its first chairman.

Mr. Corbett: While I welcome the greater use of independent television producers to give variety to both national and regional stations, will the Minister encourage that on radio as well? To assist in the process, will the proposed new Channel 5 and the new commercial radio stations be run on the lines of Channel 4?

Mr. Renton: When the hon. Gentleman refers to Channel 5, I take it that he is talking about television and not radio. The answer is that that will not necessarily be so. This is one of the matters that we are examining, and, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said in his speech last night, we must consider—outside the BBC—to what degree ITV channels and any new terrestrial channels should be subject to the same public service broadcasting obligations as now exist.

Crime Prevention

8. **Mr. Samberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further plans he has to involve the private sector in collaborative schemes of crime prevention following his recent initiative.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): Crime Concern, the new national organisation for crime prevention, was launched on 23 May. One of its tasks will

be to provide a national focus for private sector support for crime prevention. We shall also be expecting to see continued private sector support for individual local crime prevention projects, including some that will be established under the safer cities programme, and crime prevention panels have an important role too.

Mr. Sumberg: I welcome my hon. Friend's initiative in this important matter. Will he in turn send a message of support to the Bury police, who have recently established in my constituency the Bury crime prevention panel, which will involve the community and the private sector in police activities? Is that not the sort of action that will translate his good intentions into good deeds?

Mr. Patten: The Bury police are showing a lead, and I shall write to them this afternoon.

Mr. John Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware of the insurance schemes with low premiums for members of good neighbour and neighbourhood watch schemes, which have recently been introduced? Does he agree that such schemes provide a very good spur to membership of neighbourhood watch, and to crime prevention in general?

Mr. Patten: I welcome the actions of insurance companies that are giving a discount to householders and flat dwellers who live in the areas covered by neighbourhood watches of which they are members. I only wish that more insurance companies would do the same.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister ensure that those private sector schemes do not follow the arrangements that were set up for the collection of parked vehicles in Brighton? A tin-pot little company from the back end of Brighton was given a substantial contract and will now make a quarter of a million pounds a year collecting vehicles. That could have been done by the local police authority, and the ratepayer would have been the beneficiary. Why does the Minister not ensure that authorities keep such services in the public sector, so that the money can go to the real people, not just to a small group of people?

Mr. Patten: The private sector is more cost-efficient and cost-effective. That is why we welcome the involvement of more and more private sector companies in sponsoring crime prevention schemes.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: While the Minister is considering the role of the private sector in crime prevention, will he be having new discussions with the brewers? As the Home Secretary and the Ministers have fulfilled their side of the bargain and delivered the Licensing Bill to the brewers, will he now, although late in the day, be having discussions with the brewers about alcohol-related problems and, in particular, about their pricing policy in public houses, which artificially inflates the cost of low-alcohol and non-alcoholic drinks? Surely the events of recent weeks prove that the Government were wrong to push ahead with the Licensing Bill before tackling any of the problems of alcohol abuse.

Mr. Patten: I find it amazing that the hon. Lady seems to have overlooked the stiffening by the Licensing Bill of the provisions for the sale of alcohol. I thought that she welcomed that in the Standing Committee on the Bill. I also thought that the hon. Lady would want to join us in encouraging magistrates and licensing benches throughout the country to use the powers they already have to ensure that licenses are given only where they are appropriate.

Bail Hostels

9. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any recent representations on the provision of local public consultation on the establishment of bail hostels and similar residences for offenders in premises which do not require a change of use.

Mr. John Patten: I have received representations about the decision by the Dorset probation committee to purchase The Pines hotel, Cecil road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, for conversion to use as a bail hostel.

Mr. Atkinson: The location of bail hostels, which is bound to be a sensitive issue in any locality, will incur greater opposition only where there has been no public consultation. Will my hon. Friend, therefore, consider issuing new guidelines to the probation service pointing out that it is essential to consult the local planning authority as well as the police authority on the location of such residences?

Mr. Patten: I shall certainly consider my hon. Friend's constructive suggestion, but we have 101 probation hostels of this sort in the country and it is a very long time since we have had any complaint at all from local residents about them. However, I appreciate the concern that is felt in his constituency and will certainly consider the very constructive suggestion that he has made.

Police Forces (Restructuring)

10. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to encourage police forces to restructure their administrative systems in order that police officers' time might be used more efficiently.

Mr. Hurd: My Department has produced practical suggestions for reducing the administrative burden on operational police officers, both by streamlining procedures and by introducing specialist support units. The West Midlands police increased the operational availability of police officers by 12·5 per cent. in one sub-division by such means and are extending the process. A number of other forces, including Humberside, have also made significant gains in efficiency. The recent Audit Commission report acknowledges that this approach has "captured the imagination of almost the entire police service."

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, while it is desirable to lighten the administrative burden on police officers—which will perforce mean that they will spend more time on the beat—it will not solve entirely the problem of the 94 per cent. increase in crime on Humberside in the last 10 years, against which there has been a 1·5 per cent. increase in the police establishment? The community would like more police on Humberside. Can he hold out any hope?

Mr. Hurd: The rise in crime on Humberside has been well above the national average, which my hon. Friend will have been glad to see has been decreasing. Only part of the answer lies in increased numbers of police and, although

his figure about establishment is accurate, he will have noted that the strength of the force—the number of police and civilians available—has gone up by 235, which is just about 10 per cent.

Ms. Armstrong: Does the Home Secretary not think that the answer to his hon. Friend fits ill with the recent decision in respect of Durham county constabulary, where the county police committee saved enough money to employ 12 new officers on the beat and the right hon. Gentleman then refused permission so to use the money?

Mr. Hurd: As the hon. Lady knows, we are in the middle of a further programme of expanding the police forces in England and Wales, which are now at a record level and steadily increasing. I recently announced, on top of the 300 extra police for London, 500 extra for the non-metropolitan forces. I am in touch with my colleagues about the right number for next year.

Sunday Trading

11. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the proposed reform of Sunday trading.

Mr. Hurd: Between 1 January and 14 June we received 153 written representations broadly in favour of Sunday trading, and 110 against. Ministers have also received various deputations, some for and some against Sunday trading.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a law that allows shopkeepers to sell gin but not dried milk, pornography but not the Bible, fresh fish but not canned sardines, is illogical, indefensible, frequently breached and rarely enforced? Does he agree that it is high time the law was changed?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. I remember using similar examples two years ago when I tried to persuade the House to agree to the logical solution, which is deregulation. The House would not have it at that time. Now we are searching around to see whether opinion has changed about deregulation or whether there is some way in which we can move forward out of the intolerable position that my hon. Friend has described in a way that is acceptable to both Houses of Parliament.

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Charles Powell

Q1. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what assessment was made, when Mr. Charles Powell was seconded to her Office as her private secretary for overseas affairs, of the implications of his role and authority in that capacity for his effectiveness in any future posting on his eventual return to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): None, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: Did Mr. Powell really fail to tell the Prime Minister about the role of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in the Westland Law Officer's leaked letter before the inquiry had reported?

The Prime Minister: As I have told the hon. Gentleman many times, I have nothing to add to the many answers and statements that I have given on this matter.

Mr. Cash: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the batty question asked by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) shows that he has no clue about the qualities that are needed for such appointments? He knows perfectly well that he has no justification for the allegations he has been putting down on the Order Paper, which are a grave misuse of the procedure of the House.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Fatchett: Is it not about time that the Prime Minister came clean with my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and the House and told the whole truth about the Westland affair, particularly in the light of the journal report this week which suggested that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who was then Secretary of State for Defence, had made it abundantly clear that the Prime Minister was responsible for the leaked letter? Is it not time that the Prime Minister commented on that and told us the truth? It is her integrity that is being challenged by these proceedings and by the right hon. Gentleman's comments.

The Prime Minister: I have answered innumerable questions and given extensive replies. I have nothing further to add.

Sir Bernard Braine: When my right hon. Friend rightly drew a sharp contrast between the orderly and civilised city of Toronto——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hesitate to interrupt the Father of the House, but this is a definitive question.

Engagements

Q2. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I returned from Canada. I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the President of West Germany.

Mr. Davies: Will the Prime Minister confirm a report in *The Daily Telegraph* of yesterday that she informed the Ottawa summit that she was now of the opinion that private affluence did not necessarily solve all society's problems? If that conversion is true, will she have a word with her hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) before she makes a complete fool of herself and the Tory party by her attempts to legitimise and justify the disgraceful actions of the ticket touts at Wimbledon?

The Prime Minister: First, the summit was not in Ottawa, but in Toronto. I do not know of anyone who thinks that affluence will solve all problems. People cannot know anything about human nature if they think that. Ticket touts at Wimbledon are not a matter for me.

Sir Peter Blaker: Bearing in mind that today is the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the 10-month blockade of West Berlin by the Soviet Union, which led to the signing of the North Atlantic treaty, will my right hon. Friend

affirm that, in spite of the changes in the Soviet Union under Mr. Gorbachev, a strong NATO remains as essential as ever?

The Prime Minister: Yes. A strong NATO is our only sure defence. One of the reasons why we are able to welcome the bold actions of Mr. Gorbachev in trying to change the Soviet Union is that, whatever happens, our defence under NATO will be sure.

Dr. Owen: Will the Prime Minister support in Hanover next week the proposed study by the central bankers for a European independent central bank? Does she agree that that would be the mechanism whereby the freeing of capital flows would be a success, so that in the longer term United Kingdom domestic interest rates might come down to the OECD average?

The Prime Minister: No, not precisely that. Other things need doing, which I shall refer to in a moment. We can have a European central bank only when there is a united states of Europe under one sovereign Government, not under 12, and when all the countries have the same economic policy. That not being on the cards, I see no point in anyone studying a European central bank. There are points in having a number of central bankers and possibly Finance Ministers considering the composition of reserves and greater use of the ecu, but that is a different proposition from the one which the right hon. Gentleman has put, which would come about only with the dissolution of this House, among others.

Q3. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to read the ruling of the European Court on rates of value added tax in the United Kingdom? Is this not another example of the loss of sovereignty that is part of the price that we have to pay for membership of the EEC? In view of her concern about the need to crack down on alcohol abuse, will my right hon. Friend take note that if there is harmonisation of taxes on alcoholic drinks, 18p will come off a pint of beer, the price of a bottle of wine will drop by 25 per cent. and a bottle of whisky will be a full third cheaper? What would that do for the sobriety of the nation?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, following a statement in the House on Tuesday, that VAT judgment arose from a 1977 directive which must have gone through the House, or not have been objected to by the House, for it to become a directive. Therefore, the court was re-interpreting existing law. With regard to drink taxation, the Commission's harmonisation proposals would require the unanimous agreement of all member states and could not be imposed against the will of the United Kingdom Government. We believe that these attempts to harmonise duties are misconceived and unnecessary, and we shall oppose them.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware that after the interest rate rise yesterday Mr. John Bannan of the CBI said:

"We do not believe the present medicine will have the desired results. It will have very serious side effects."

Does the Prime Minister think that he is wrong?

The Prime Minister: The most important thing is what the Chancellor said in his Budget speech:

"Short-term interest rates remain the essential instrument of monetary policy. Within a continuous and comprehensive assessment of monetary conditions, I will continue to set interest rates at the level necessary to ensure downward pressure on inflation."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 997.]

Most industrialists agree that the worst thing for them would be a return of inflation. My right hon. Friend took steps to prevent that.

Mr. Kinnock: Clearly, the Prime Minister thinks that Mr. Banham and all who agree with him are wrong. Is it not obvious that the further increase in interest rates came because the Government have completely lost control of credit? *[Interruption.]* Having completely lost control of credit, the Prime Minister is making British industry pay the price, as usual. Why does she always do that? Is it any wonder, given those policies, that British industry has lost 20 per cent. of the international market and 30 per cent. of the British market? Why does the Prime Minister not give our producers a chance for a change?

The Prime Minister: Short-term interest rates are the essential instrument of monetary policy. If the right hon. Gentleman has no such instruments to control it, how does he ever expect to be able to keep inflation down? But then, of course, he never did. With regard to industry, may I make it absolutely clear that a 1 per cent. increase in wages costs industry four times as much as a 1 per cent. increase in interest rates. Wages went up by over 8½ per cent. last year.

Mr. Kinnock: If it is short-term interest rates that concern the Prime Minister, why have interest rates been higher for longer under her Government than under any other Government?

The Prime Minister: And inflation has been lower than the right hon. Gentleman's party ever achieved in Government.

Q4. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marshall: Yesterday in Moscow I was asked to thank the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us hear it.

Mr. Marshall: I was asked to thank the Prime Minister for the support that she has given the refusenik community. In doing so, may I ask her, in the course of her busy day—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading".]—to consider the plight of Vladimir Kislik who has been fighting for an exit visa since 1973? Does she agree that his condition is intolerable, and will she press the Russians to give him an exit visa?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for passing on those thanks. I am pleased to receive the message. Official consultations on human rights questions are taking place in Moscow today and the plight of Soviet refuseniks will, of course, be among the matters that are discussed. Our officials will be handing over a list of cases, which includes the case of Vladimir Kislik. His name was also on the list handed to Mr. Shevardnadze last year.

Despite recent improvements in emigration arrangements, many Soviet Jews are still waiting to leave. We shall not forget them and we shall continue to raise their plight.

Q5. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the repely that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Prime Minister explain this? A reply dated 9 June 1987 from her Office, on her personal notepaper, to a Mr. St. John from south London, described the system under which council tenants could have their tenancies transferred. She said that that would happen only if the majority of tenants expressed their support for it. Is she aware that the Housing Bill now before the House blatantly contradicts that commitment and allows a transfer even if the majority do not express their support? Will the Prime Minister honour her commitment of last year, reverse the U-turn and make sure that tenants' transfer is conducted under a democratic and proper system of voting?

The Prime Minister: I thought that we had arranged that it was a majority of those voting—either for tenants' co-operatives or for a possible transfer to housing associations. The hon. Gentleman will be referring to housing action trusts—*[Interruption.]* In that case, may I have another look at it? I think that we have arranged for a block to be transferred only with a majority of those voting and for those who do not wish to be transferred to remain under existing ownership.

Q6. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will my right hon. Friend accept that one of the most important rights that people have in this country is the resort to justice? The problem that arises is that if one is poor enough one may get legal aid, and if one is rich enough one may pursue a case to the end of one's pocket. However, if one is in the middle, which the great majority of people are, one has little hope or right to justice because, unless one is willing to impoverish one's family at a cost of a hundreds of thousands of pounds —as have some hon. Members—one cannot get it. Will my right hon. Friend accept, at long last, that this one great monopoly should fall, as other monopolies have fallen, because she believes that justice should be done for all?

The Prime Minister: Legal aid is widely available, often to those with incomes well above the national average. I think it is right that we should have a place where we draw the line. It would be quite wrong for everyone, automatically, regardless of means, to be able to get legal aid. A report of the review body on civil justice was published on 7 June. It has made recommendations that would make justice quicker, simpler, more cost-effective and more accessible to the public. The Lord Chancellor is at present consulting on those suggestions.

Economic Summit (Toronto)

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the economic summit held in Toronto on 19-21 June, which I attended with my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Copies of the economic and political declarations issued by the summit have been placed in the Library of the House.

The Toronto summit marked the end of the second seven-year cycle of these meetings. In contrast to the first cycle, which was characterised by short-term policies and expedients, which led only to high inflation and low growth, this second cycle of meetings followed a different approach. We concentrated on fundamentals, like sound financial policies to get inflation down, coupled with incentives to encourage enterprise and reforms to remove barriers to growth. These policies have led to sustained growth, with low inflation, higher investment and new jobs. The Toronto summit was therefore able to confirm that our countries are achieving unprecedented economic success.

Our economic discussion took place under four main headings—macroeconomic policies, trade, agriculture and the debt problems of the poorest countries.

First, on macroeconomic policies, Heads of Government committed themselves to continue the fiscal, monetary and structural policies which have brought non-inflationary growth. We shall all maintain vigilance against any resurgence of inflation. Countries with budgetary deficits will continue their efforts to reduce them. Those with large external surpluses will continue to sustain the momentum of domestic demand. We shall all continue to carry through structural reforms aimed at removing unnecessary regulations and burdens on business.

Secondly, on trade, the summit Governments renewed their commitments to resist new measures of protection and steadily to reduce the present barriers to trade. We attached major importance to strengthening the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade itself by ensuring that member states carry out their obligations, and that disputes over trade are resolved speedily, effectively and equitably. We urge the newly industrialising countries to accept more obligations in the GATT.

We committed ourselves to ensure more open markets for the exports of developing countries, many of which need trade as much as they need aid. We want to see progress on all these matters at the mid-term review meeting of the GATT negotiations in Montreal in December.

Thirdly, on agriculture, in furtherance of our agreement at the Tokyo and Venice summits, we pledged ourselves to take further steps to make the agricultural sector more responsive to the needs of the market. We agreed on an approach to international negotiations in the GATT which should steadily reduce agricultural subsidies and protection in all our countries. We hope that this will lead to decisions covering both short-term steps and longer-term objectives at the Montreal meeting.

Fourthly, debt. Our discussions concentrated on the debt problems of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa.

I pay tribute to the way in which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has taken the lead over the past 14 months in pressing for action to ease the debt service burden of those countries. His proposals, and subsequent variations by other countries, were welcomed at Toronto and we were able to agree on action to put them into effect.

First, on trade debts, we agreed that creditor countries should choose between concessionary interest rates, longer repayment periods and partial write-offs, with the details to be worked out at the Paris Club. That relief is conditional on the debtor countries agreeing a programme of reform with the International Monetary Fund. It will offer major additional benefits to the poorest countries which could build up to $500 million a year. Secondly, on aid debts, we welcomed the action that the United Kingdom and others have taken to write off old aid loans and we urged countries to give further aid to the poorest in the form of grants, as the United Kingdom already does.

Heads of Government also discussed a number of political issues which are covered in the political declaration. On East-West relations, we congratulated President Reagan on what he had accomplished, together with Mr. Gorbachev, at the recent Moscow summit. We reasserted our belief that our security will continue to depend on a combination of nuclear deterrence and adequate conventional strength. We pledged our continued support for further negotiations to reduce United States and Soviet strategic weapons, as well as to reduce the threat posed by the Warsaw pact's massive superiority in conventional forces. We urged the Soviet Union to enshrine in law the recent advances on human rights matters and to remove obstacles to emigration. We encouraged the countries of eastern Europe to open up their economies and societies.

The statement also approved important steps to improve international co-operation in the fight against drugs, including measures to deal with laundering of drug money. Heads of Government reiterated the strong stand taken at earlier summits against all forms of terrorism and hi-jacking. We appealed to all countries that are not party to the international conventions on civil aviation security to accede to those conventions.

I should like to pay tribute to the very skilled and effective chairmanship of the summit by the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. Mulroney.

The message from the Toronto summit was one of achievement and of confidence in the future, coupled with a commitment that the sound policies which have brought us success will continue and that new progress will be made on current problems. Those are the policies that the Government have consistently followed for more than nine years and, as a result, Britain has been able to give a lead in securing rising living standards and a better world.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I welcome the further steps taken by the summit leaders and their countries to co-operate in combating terrorism, in attacking the evil of international drug trafficking and in punishing those who profit by such horrific trade. I welcome the commitment at the summit to continue the efforts to improve international economic policy co-ordination. What will be the consequences of the Prime Minister's commitment in endorsing the objective of reducing spending in countries with large external deficits, particularly as Britain is now just such a country?

The statement on debt rescheduling for some of the poorest countries is evidence of progress, and I note with satisfaction that the communiqué urged countries to maintain a high grant element in their future assistance to the poorest. In the light of that, will the Prime Minister now reverse the reductions in Britain's overseas aid development programme, reductions that have cut the value of our programme in half since she came to power?

Why did the Prime Minister insist on weakening the summit statement on the Sharpeville Six by resisting the efforts of other leaders, including Mr. Mulroney, to impose real pressures on Pretoria by including the threat of sanctions against apartheid? Does that not discredit the right hon. Lady's calls for clemency?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for what he said about the points with which he agrees. It is much easier to obtain international economic policy co-ordination when all the members of the summit countries are running their economies soundly —which they are and which they have been. They are running their economies in a way that is very similar to the policy that we are pursuing.

As for the reduction in spending in countries with large external deficits, our external deficit at present is very small indeed, compared with our gross domestic product. It is one of the smallest among all countries. I am glad, nevertheless, to hear that we have in the right hon. Gentleman a convert to reducing public spending. Is that not good? Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will tell us how he intends to reduce it, or will all the reductions be on defence?

As for a high grant element in aid to the poorest countries, that is absolutely right. The number of loans that have been given could not possibly have been repaid, so it is better to be quite bold and give them that help in the form of grants. What was the last thing— *[Interruption.]* I am so sorry: South Africa. I must tell the right hon. Gentleman that no proposal for sanctions against South Africa ever came before the Heads of Government.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to have regard to the fact that this is an Opposition day and that there is to be an important debate on Wales. I shall allow questions on the Prime Minister's statement to continue until 4 o'clock and then we must move on to the business statement. Therefore, I ask hon. Members for brief questions, please.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Was there genuine concern at the summit conference about the risk of inflation and was there a general agreement to increase interest rates?

The Prime Minister: There was no general agreement to increase interest rates. My hon. Friend is aware that there are a number of instruments for keeping down inflation. One of the most important of those is interest rates; another is to keep down public spending and deficits—in preference, having a Budget surplus—as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has done. My hon. Friend will have seen a sentence in the economic communiqué that states that we must continue to be vigilant and ensure that there is no resurgence of inflation, so we are aware of the problem and we are taking steps to deal with it.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): While one welcomes any steps that improve international economic co-operation, why did the Prime Minister fail to draw attention to the historic imbalance in current accounts and to the historic yo-yoing of the exchange rates, towards the correction of which this summit appears to have done nothing? While one bears in mind the disparities between the Federal Republic of Germany and ourselves, why is the Prime Minister so hostile to the co-ordination of central bank activities, as she expressed it in her earlier answer at Question Time to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen)?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) was not asking about the co-ordination of central bank activities. I gave two examples where I thought greater co-ordination could come about. He referred to setting up a European central bank. That can be set up when there is only one Government in Europe. As for the yo-yos of inflation, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the revaluation of the yen was one of the very important events that led to the reduction of Japan's external trade balance.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the support on these Benches for the agreement reached at the summit for the continuation of the fight against illegal drug dealers? Will she confirm that the work started at the summit will include greater international co-operation over the confiscation of the assets of drug barons?

The Prime Minister: Yes, that has been very much in our minds. A new special task force has been set up and we hope that it will make strenuous efforts to trace the ill-gotten gains of those who deal in drugs. We have already signed a number of agreements, including an agreement with the United States and Canada. It is a reciprocal agreement that follows on the powers that we took under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. Under that Act we can take advantage of the powers in one another's courts to trace the money of drugs dealers with a view to confiscating it, if they have been convicted. We can also trace the many actions that have led to the laundering of drugs money, which thereby obscures where that money went. The two agreements that we have already signed will help us to achieve these aims. We are now negotiating with about 20 other countries, so we should be very much better able to take action against those who deal in this terrible traffic.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): May I follow the question of the right hon. Lady's hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) and ask, in view of the deterioration in the outlook for inflation and the importance that she clearly attaches to short-term interest rate increases as a means of countering it, why did she not at least encourage a discussion on co-ordinating interest rate increases?

The Prime Minister: The way in which we are dealing with international co-ordination is by each of us running our economies in a sound way; by each of us having as our main objective keeping inflation down; by each of us trying to reduce deficits—we have already reduced ours to nil; by keeping our spending on a thoroughly sound basis; and by structural changes, among them tax incentives for

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enterprise. Japan, for example, certainly needs to increase demand in its domestic economy. That is a structural change.

We have a framework of running our economies soundly. We all agree that the most important thing is to keep inflation down. One can use several instruments to achieve that, but one does not make the instrument the objective. The instrument is a method of reaching another objective—the objective being to keep inflation down.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): While I warmly applaud the amazingly positive contribution that the Prime Minister made to the summit in Toronto, not least on terrorism and drugs, and the example which the United Kingdom has set in dealing with inflation, does my right hon. Friend accept that some people are concerned about interest rates, not least because they penalise industry, which is, of course, a major source of wealth creation? Is she not therefore concerned that increasing interest rates in the United Kingdom could cause a problem for United Kingdom industry?

The Prime Minister: As I said at Question Time, a resurgence of inflation would cause a far bigger problem for industry. That would be the very worst thing, so the objective must be to keep inflation down.

With regard to the actual increase in costs when interest rates rise by a small amount, again, as I have said, a 1 per cent. increase in wage rates costs industry four times as much as a 1 per cent. increase in interest rates. As those who complain now have seen average increases in wages and salaries of 8·5 per cent. during the past year, it ill behoves them to complain about an interest rate increase of 0·5 per cent.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): While writing off the loans will not undo the damage that they have done to the economic and social fabric of Third-world countries, will the Prime Minister assure us that everything will be done to prevent such mistakes being repeated?

The Prime Minister: I have described what we are trying to do to help Third-world countries. It was agreed, and we are trying to ensure, that the burden is shared equally between the member countries at the summit. That will be done through the Paris Club. We shall do our level best to ensure that those countries get on a sound economic footing because that is the condition for both writing off their aid loans and for helping them with trade loans. The right hon. Gentleman will be pleased by the degree of co-operation between the Western industrialised countries and the poorest countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): May I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the section in the economic declaration on the debt of the poorest countries? What timetable does my right hon. Friend envisage for the implementation of the new measures to relieve debt? Will she confirm that, if there are additional resource requirements from the United Kingdom, they will be provided from funds which are additional to the current aid programme rather than out of it?

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend is aware, the current aid programme is increasing in real terms, although I know that he would like more. The length of time that it will take will, to some extent, depend on the recipient countries themselves because they will have to agree programmes with the IMF. There is no point in giving them extra help if they are just going to continue with the ways that have got them into a great deal of trouble. Some are agreeing their programmes, and some have already agreed them, and it will be quicker to operate with those.

We shall then try to undertake to negotiate—we are prepared to negotiate quickly in the Paris Club—and that should not take a great deal of time. However, if the methods that separate countries choose are very varied, obviously they have to make a coherent whole. It might take some months to make certain that that happens.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): Bearing in mind that the initiative to turn loans into grants was started by Dame Judith Hart, as she then was, in this House, those of us who follow this matter closely are pleased that, at last, the Government have taken it on. In the communiqué that the Prime Minister read out, she said that Third-world countries

"need trade as much as they need aid."

But the reverse is equally true. Therefore, was she not somewhat embarrassed to find that Britain's aid is at an all-time low at 0·28 per cent., which places us one from the bottom of the countries which were meeting at Toronto? I would have thought that that would have been discussed, since the leader in the *Financial Times* is highly critical of the promises yet to become deeds.

The Prime Minister: When the last Labour Government had a higher percentage of their gross national product in aid, they had, of course, a very much lower gross national product. I sometimes feel that Opposition Members would prefer a lower GNP even though that meant lower aid and lower social services. The amount involved now is a slightly lower percentage of GNP, but we are steadily increasing aid. This year's budget, excluding aid administration, is £1·3 billion, which is scheduled to increase by £70 million next year and by more the following year. Those figures represent an increase over expenditure in 1987-88 of some 4 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): While I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on her role in a most successful summit and, through her, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on his excellent initiative for solving the debt problem, does she recall that it was the failure of communication between some of the Finance Ministers of the Western countries back in October last year that led to the collapse of confidence and the great stock market crash? Will she at least reassure us that, at the Toronto summit, better communication on interest rate policy and monetary policy was maintained and that she will use her considerable influence in the future to see that that co-ordination is further strengthened?

The Prime Minister: First, I thank my right hon. Friend for what he said about the debt problem. May I acknowledge—I did not do so when answering the previous question, and I should have done—that the

Labour Government started to change from aid loans to aid grants, and also wrote off a considerable amount of debt. We are continuing that policy most successfully.

I do not believe that the October stock exchange crash was caused by a failure of communication between Governments; rather, it was the fundamentally sound policies that we had been following through previous years that enabled the world to ride that sudden loss of price. I remember that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, myself and many other people—either Heads of Government or Finance Ministers—went on television and radio to say that there was no justification for fear in the future because our policies were fundamentally sound. It was that soundness that enabled us to ride the storm. That soundness has come partly from meeting at economic summits when we have discussed such matters together and from getting all our policies on a sound basis.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): When the Prime Minister's speech writers were preparing her for the meeting, did they remind her of her remarks at Question Time on 8 December 1983 when she was rather angry with the United States because it was running what she described as

"a fantastic balance of trade deficit"—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1983; Vol. 50, c. 462.]

which caused high interest rates, which were extremely damaging to this country? She said that she was very glad indeed that this country had a surplus of £1·2 billion, which placed us in a strong position, and she forecast that the United states would be in trouble within 12 months. Did she say that all again to President Reagan, bearing in mind that the situation is very much worse now than it was five years ago?

The Prime Minister: The United States budget deficit is now falling and the trade deficit is also falling, which is good news for us all.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): During the years that my right hon. Friend has been attending summits, has she noted a growing admiration for the economic performance of, and an increased national confidence in, this country? Is she aware that throughout the world she is being given a large measure of credit for that remarkable turnround?

The Prime Minister: Yes, my right hon. Friend the present Chancellor and the former Chancellor and I are constantly congratulated on the way in which Britain's economy has turned around from being the lowest growth economy in Europe to being the highest and one of the strongest. That is because of the sound policies that we have been pursuing. I know that the Opposition do not like them, but they are sound policies and most countries are now following them.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): May I ask the Prime Minister to turn to the third of her economic topics, which has not yet been covered, that of agriculture? Can she explain where she stands as between the United States Administration, which is calling for agricultural support and protection to be rapidly phased out, and the European Community, which is rather more protective both of protection and of the social objectives of agricultural support?

The Prime Minister: We made it clear that we did not think it possible in any way to abolish all agricultural subsidies in 10 years, or by the end of this century. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman will have noted from the communiqué that negotiators are to set a long-term framework for steadily reducing those subsidies, which are great distortions to trade. Therefore, short-term steps may be taken with those long-term steps in view.

The hon. Gentleman will know that we took steps in Europe to try to deal with the agricultural problem, and that has reduced surpluses substantially. Nevertheless, he will also know that the subsidies are really very high indeed. We must measure them by the figure for the producer subsidy equivalent—which attempts to look at all kinds of protection, whether subsidies or other forms—and compare them by taking the proportion of income that farmers receive from the subsidy. This shows that, in 1986, the OECD farmer on average received 47 per cent. of his income from some sort of support; in Japan it was 75 per cent.; in the EC it was still 49 per cent.; in Canada it was 46 per cent.; and in the United States it was 35 per cent. Obviously, those figures are such that we still have quite a long way to go to reduce them to a rate that farmers can take.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): Shortly before the summit convened, the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment published a most detailed, devastating and convincing report on the so-called star wars programme. Was that subject raised at the summit? Did the President attempt to deal with those attacks on his strategic programme? Was my right hon. Friend convinced by the replies? Is there not a great danger that acceptance of 100 per cent. defence against a missile attack will lead to a massive and dangerous diversion of Western defence resources?

The Prime Minister: We did not, in fact, discuss that report, but I do not know of anyone who would think that the strategic defence initiative would or could be a 100 per cent. defence. I do not know anyone who believes that. It would be a substantial defence, just as a defence weapon has been developed against every attack weapon throughout history. I view the SDI in that light.

We also learned a great deal of new technology and science from pursuing that programme. I think that my hon. Friend will be the first to agree that being ahead on technology and scientific research is a very powerful deterrent indeed. In fact, if that had not been the case in the last war, other people might have had the atomic weapon first.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): When the right hon. Lady was discussing terrorism with President Reagan, did it cross her mind that perhaps she should have raised with President Reagan the attitude of the United States towards supporting the Contras and the other anti-democratic forces, Governments and reactionary dictatorships that the United States supports? Has it ever crossed her mind that she has a double standard in quite rightly saying that there should be freedom in the Soviet Union, but never asking President Reagan where he and his Government stand in relation to freedom in other countries where they constantly interfere in the internal affairs of people who are struggling for their rights?

The Prime Minister: I seem to remember answering a similar question from the hon. Gentleman just a few days

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ago, and pointing out clearly that we would not like to live under a Government such as that of the Sandinistas. It hardly equates with his idea of democracy, or mine.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that anyone who has seen famine in sub-Saharan Africa will warmly applaud the initiative that she and our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer have taken? Will she make it clear that creditor countries not only expect debtor nations to negotiate some of their economic policies in line with discussions with the IMF, but also spend a large proportion of their GNP on arms to prosecute border disputes and pointless civil wars against each other, all of which could be much better resolved by peaceful negotiation? A lot less of the budget in sub-Saharan Africa should go on wasting money on arms, but should be spent on people.

The Prime Minister: I understand precisely what my hon. Friend is saying. But he will be the first to know that countries such as Mozambique face a very real problem from RENAMO. Obviously, that country must have the means to resist the attacks from those people, for which they need a certain amount of training and help. We have to consider it case by case.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Is the Prime Minister aware that people in this country from all backgrounds and supporting all political parties view with great distress her statement on Third-world aid—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] But facts are chiels which winna ding. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman be brief, please?

Mr. Griffiths: The facts are there. They were given in the *Financial Times* today——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman ask a question?

Mr. Griffiths: Is the Prime Minister aware that, for the first time in history, overseas aid from the Government has dropped below 0·3 per cent.—to 0·28 per cent.? In the past year it has dropped by 2·8 per cent. in sterling terms and by 7 per cent. in volume terms, and many people from all backgrounds are concerned that the Government do not care about poverty in the Third world and are doing nothing to alleviate it.

The Prime Minister: In absolute terms, our aid programme remains substantial. It is the seventh largest among Western donors. It is of high quality, it is focused on the poorest countries and it is now growing in real terms. This year's budget is 5·7 per cent. up on last year in cash terms, and the programme is now scheduled to grow by some 4 per cent. in real terms compared with expenditure in 1987-88.

I have not found anything like the reception that the hon. Gentleman mentioned; quite the contrary. Most people are extremely pleased with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's initiative and sad that it took such a long time for other countries to take it up. Not only is it writing off the loans; it is giving substantial help to some of the trade debtors. We are doing so alongside the six other members of the summit seven. That is a very good advance, and it is far greater than anything previously achieved.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As a matter of balance, I shall call one Government Member.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the greatest challenges now facing Western leaders is the management of strategic peace in an era when the peace of deterrence may be replaced by the peace of detente? Will she accept that one result of the summit is that the risk that any perceived weakness or division on our part, leading to war is now greatly reduced and there is a much better chance that peace will be maintained as a result?

The Prime Minister: I think that there is a clear political communiqué, that we must keep up our guard. Weakness is the most dangerous and damaging thing and would put our liberty in jeopardy. We can be highly co-operative with the Soviet Union and what it is trying to do in changing its whole system and giving more personal responsibility and initiative precisely because our defence will be strong and liberty will not be in danger.

Business of the House

4.4 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week:

MONDAY 27 JUNE—Completion of remaining stages of the Housing Bill.

TUESDAY 28 JUNE—Completion of remaining stages of the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*.

WEDNESDAY 29 JUNE—Motion on the Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order.

Motion on the Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order.

THURSDAY 30 JUNE—There will be a debate on foreign affairs, on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 1 JULY—There will be a debate on the White Paper on fair employment in Northern Ireland (Cm. 380), on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 4 JULY—Estimates Day (2nd Allotted Day). There will be debates on defence (class I, vote 1), housing, England (class IX, vote 1), and local environmental and planning services, etc. England (class X, vote 1). Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

[Estimates to be considered on Monday 4 July:

Class I, vote 1 (Defence: personnel costs etc of the armed forces and civilians, stores, supplies and miscellaneous services), so far as it relates to the defence requirement for merchant shipping and civil aircraft:

Class IX, vote 1 (Housing, England), so far as it relates to the provision of bed and breakfast accommodation for the homeless;

Class X, vote 1 (Local environmental and planning services etc, England), so far as it relates to grants to local authorities for the provision of gipsy sites.]

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I thank the Lord President for his statement, and in particular for the extra day that he has conceded for debate on the Housing Bill without a guillotine and the extra day that he has conceded for debate on the Criminal Justice Bill without a guillotine. Perhaps on reflection the Leader of the House will accept that a bit more give and a bit less take by the Government would lead to more orderly debate and fewer Government Back Benchers being kept up all night.

May I also thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving us the long-promised debate on foreign affairs. Long before he promised a debate on foreign affairs, the Lord President said that he would use his best endeavours to get his hon. Friends to serve on the Scottish Affairs Select Committee. When does he expect them to do their duty? Does he think that there is no chance of Tory Members being prepared to carry out that task? Surely if the Scottish economy were doing as well as the Prime Minister and the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) claim, Tory Members would be flocking to the colours to serve on that Committee.

Will the Leader of the House tell us when we can expect an announcement about the Government's proposals to reform, and we hope curtail, the Official Secrets Act 1911? No doubt the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) will have a personal interest in that.

Finally, as a number of Opposition Members have pointed out, as the proportion of our national output devoted to overseas aid has sunk to an all-time low, can we expect an early debate on that shameful record, or, better still, a statement that British aid will be increased?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman asked me questions about housing and foreign affairs. I shall answer his questions in the order in which they were asked. First, in regard to the Housing Bill, I do not believe that there is any point in rehearsing the events of last week. I am sure that it is better to proceed without a guillotine, and I am pleased that it has been possible to reach another agreement through the usual channels that the Housing Bill should be completed at a reasonable hour on Monday.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said about the foreign affairs debate which I promised would be arranged in the near future and I am glad that I have been able to fit it in.

With regard to the Scottish Affairs Select Committee, as I said last week, I regret that the proposals that I put to the Opposition parties for the establishment of the Select Committee did not prove acceptable to them. I saw the Chairman of the Committee of Selection yesterday. I understand that he is to discuss with his colleagues whether there is any generally acceptable basis on which to set up that Select Committee.

I have said that the Government are proposing to publish a White Paper about official secrets, and that we shall be arranging a debate. I stand by what I have said on that subject.

I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman was listening to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said about overseas aid. She said that the amount of overseas aid is increasing. Perhaps that could be fitted into the foreign affairs debate next week.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): My right hon. Friend will recall that the recent statement by the Prime Minister contrasted the orderly and civilised city of Toronto with what is happening in many towns and cities in Britain. No doubt she was aware that Canada is outstanding among nations in its alcohol control policies. Should we not have a debate before the House rises for the summer recess about the growing problem in Britain and the steps that are being taken by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's departmental committee to resolve it?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the long and well-known interest of my right hon. Friend and others in these matters. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is considering the issues urgently. We shall need to look at all the problems, including the difficulties the police have had in tackling them and the contribution made by heavy drinking. On the role of alcohol, I have asked for a report to be made at the next meeting of the ministerial group on alcohol misuse, which I chair.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I would not expect the right hon. Gentleman to divulge the detail of the conversation he had with the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, but was anything said that gave him any hope that when the Chairman meets the Committee next week there will be some positive move forward in setting up the Scottish Select Committee? If that proves impossible, which would be regrettable, will he consider the proposal in early-day motion 1270 about setting up a Joint

[Mr. James Wallace]

Committee of both Houses where he could use his noble Friends in another place to fill the gaps that his hon. Friends in this House are unwilling to fill?

[That this House notes with dismay the lack of sufficient Conservative honourable Members willing to accept nomination to the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, thereby frustrating the setting up of the Committee; expresses its belief in the need for a Committee with powers to call for persons and papers to ensure effective scrutiny of the Scottish Office and Scottish public affairs; and calls on the Leader of the House urgently to initiate procedures which will lead to the early constitution of a Joint Committee of both Houses.]

Mr. Wakeham: That would not be an adequate solution. There are considerable difficulties, but I prefer to say nothing until I have heard from the Chairman of the Committee of Selection.

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): There are rumours in the press about what is happening or not happening in the Committee discussing the televising of the proceedings of the House. Will there be an official statement before the recess?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot imagine that there will be an official statement before the recess. However, that depends when the recess comes. The Committee, which I chair, has a difficult job to do. We are working hard and it is not surprising that, from time to time, there are problems to overcome. I believe that we will overcome them and report to the House in due course.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House turn his attention to a growing menace in the House —the private Bill procedure? Is he aware that that has been corrupted during the past two or three years? There used to be a system whereby it was easy to distinguish between private Bills and Government Bills. Now that distinction has become blurred with the Associated British Ports Bills, the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill and the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill. Surely it is high time that was stopped. To some extent, it would be in his interest, in terms of getting Government business through the House, to ensure that we do not clog up the private Bill system. Bills used to be geographically constrained but now affect every hon. Member. Private Bill Committees used to be manned by people who had no interest in those Bills. Yet the Bills before the House tonight involve South African coal with blood on it being imported into this country. Surely there is no hon. Member who, in some way or another, is not affected politically by that Bill. It is time it was stopped.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman's question was supposed to be helpful. As he knows, the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure is currently considering that matter and other matters to do with private Bills. I understand that it intends to publish a report before the end of the Session. It would be better to wait until the House has received the report before considering how best to proceed.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): As our noble Friend the Lord Chancellor has announced the results of the Cleveland child abuse inquiry, not in the other place but in another country, will my right hon. Friend take urgent steps to ensure that copies of the report are given to Cleveland Members of Parliament for their consideration and that a statement is made at an early opportunity?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not sure where my hon. Friend obtains his information. I can assure him that the speech given in Lisbon by my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor was delivered to the organisers of the conference some time in March, long before the Cleveland report was produced. The speech had to be there in advance so that it could be translated into Portuguese and other languages. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has said that the report to which my hon. Friend referred will be published early in July. I see no reason to bring that date forward.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Can we have a statement or debate on the shameful Government decision to reverse their proposed ban on imports of fur from animals caught in the cruel steel-jaw trap? Was that proposal reversed to smooth the Prime Minister's way in Toronto or to sell submarines? Does it not show that the Prime Minister would sell her own grandmother to further the arms race?

Mr. Wakeham: If we can strip the fuzz from the hon. Gentleman's question, which is a serious one in spite of the way in which he put it, I can tell him that my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade is considering the matter and that an announcement will be made in due course.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will my right hon. Friend consider allowing the House time to debate some of the conditions in the prison service in view of the intransigent and irresponsible behaviour of a hard core of prison officers and the difficulty that the Government appear to be having in running the prison service? Is it not time we had a debate so that we can discuss those matters at some length?

Mr. Wakeham: I appreciate my hon. Friend's rightly held concern about our prisons. As he will realise, this is a particularly busy time of year and I cannot promise a debate in the near future.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Leader of the House accept that the continuing wishy-washy statements about problems in setting up the Scottish Select Committee will be greeted with dismay by Opposition Members and those in Scotland? Is it not appalling that more than one year after the general election the Scottish Select Committee is the only Select Committee that is not up and working? Will he give a straight yes or no answer: will there be a Scottish Select Committee this Session?

Mr. Wakeham: I regret it, too, and if the Opposition parties had accepted my proposals we could have made some progress. I have told the House before—I stand by it—that there will be a debate, whether or not the Select Committee is formed.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the importance to the Yorkshire and Humberside region of rapid rail transit through the Channel tunnel when it is opened and the number of issues that have arisen that are causing doubt and concern relating to customs and immigration clearance on the

trains to locations at inland depots. Can my right hon. Friend offer an opportunity to the House to debate those important issues in time so that decisions can follow?

Mr. Wakeham: I answered a question on that subject a week or so ago. It is an important subject but this is a busy time of year and I regret that I cannot immediately find time for a debate. I shall bear it in mind.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Will the Leader of the House consider allowing a debate next week on early-day motion 792?

[That this House deplores the increasing frequency of grandparents being deprived of the right of access to, care, fostering or adoption of their grandchildren; notes with alarm the attitude of some social services employees; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to introduce early legislation to give legal rights to grandparents providing immediate right of access before children are taken into care and the right to be present or legally represented at any official hearing or inquiry regarding future access to, care, fostering and adoption of their grandchild or grandchildren.]

This is one of the rare occasions since 1922 when an early-day motion has been signed by a majority of hon. Members. Surely it deserves time for debate. If not, the Bill that I presented to the House should be supported by the Government, given that the majority of hon. Members have declared their support for it. Will he ensure that time is given for those matters to be debated or accept my proposals as a fait accompli and introduce legislation?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise the hon. Gentleman time, but I hope that these remarks may encourage him. Grandparents may already be made parties to adoption, and further rights are provided in amending legislation to be implemented this year. The Government will give careful consideration to the early-day motion's proposals when framing the child care and family services legislation for which the 1987 White Paper provides.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Did my right hon. Friend tell the House that agreement had been reached with the Opposition that the Housing Bill would be completed at a "reasonable hour on Monday"? What did he mean by the words "reasonable hour"? How confident is he that any agreement reached will be honoured?

Mr. Wakeham: I chose my words carefully because they had been agreed through the usual channels. I do not know that I should go wider, but, to me, a "reasonable hour on Monday" means on Monday.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Andrew Faulds.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): What about me?

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are so many intrusive little worms around the Chamber. To revert to a matter that was raised earlier by the hon. and gallant Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes), for whom we all have great affection——

Mr. Tony Banks: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Faulds: I am speaking for myself, and for most of my colleagues. Will the Leader of the House, as Chairman of the Select Committee on the Televising of Proceedings of the House, be prepared to consider another demonstration, much better publicised than was the previous one, at which not only the members of the Select Committee but most of the Members of the House can see what the imposition, the intrusion of lights and cameras in this Chamber will do to their comfort, to their convenience and to their conduct in the proceedings of the House? Does he not agree that it is quite disgraceful that on the majority of the Members of the House, who do not know what is going to hit them, there should be imposed this range of inconveniences without their knowing what is going to happen?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly refer the hon. Gentleman's helpful suggestion to the Select Committee, which will consider it. I am glad to see the hon. Gentleman looking so well. He was looking a little tired last week—perhaps he has had a little more sleep.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will the Leader of the House consider an early debate on the broad question of law and order? A debate would serve to remind the House, prison officers and criminals that imprisonment is meant to reform, deter and punish. During the debate we could also explore why the Home Office keeps casting its beady eye on good industrial sites for new prisons, such as in Oldham and Rochdale in my own constituency. We build North sea oil rigs the size of hotels, so why can we not put prisoners out to sea, on islands? Let prisoners understand that no longer are we prepared to tolerate misbehaviour. If we do that, we shall come to grips with law and order.

Mr. Wakeham: If my hon. Friend can keep a secret, I may tell him that there is to be a debate on the Criminal Justice Bill next Tuesday. Provided he does not make too long a speech and gets it in order, he may be able to make some of his points on that occasion.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Social Services to make an early statement next week about the non-help that is available to those people losing more than £2·50 a week in housing benefit? Bradford council's computer records identified more than 17,000 people in that city who could claim such help, but on asking the Glasgow unit for 17,000 application forms the council was told that it could be given only 1,000. Advice agencies have asked for 100 forms but have been given only one copy. The Glasgow unit is in shambolic disarray. Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State to tell the House what he is doing to ensure that all those who are eligible for help receive it?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's comments. The transitional scheme has been designed for people above income support level, because those on income support will continue receiving maximum housing benefit. If the hon. Gentleman has any particular cases in mind, he should bring them to the attention of DHSS Ministers for them to study.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on gipsies and travellers, so that the House may consider their behaviour around the country, and especially in my constituency, where large groups of them have been terrorising residents with their dogs and their behaviour—particularly at

[Mr. Harry Greenway]

Perivale hospital and Brentside high school? Something must be done on both a national and local basis, particularly in areas where sites have been properly designated and where gipsies should not camp illegally anyway.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that this is a problem—particularly in constituencies such as my hon. Friend's and my own. I cannot promise an early debate but perhaps my hon. Friend could arrange an Adjournment debate on the subject.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I ask the Leader of the House a very helpful question? Is he aware that on Monday week I shall have an Adjournment debate on the valuation of Richmond yard? Will he ensure that the Minister who answers that debate at the Dispatch Box is the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot guarantee that, but I recognise the strength of the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: He is the one who told the lies.

Mr. Wakeham: I totally reject that allegation, and I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would be the first to withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Unhappily, I was distracted, but I understand that the hon. Gentleman may have used unparliamentary language. Will he please withdraw his comment?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I will withdraw it pending the debate a week on Monday.

Mr. Speaker: Please withdraw it now, absolutely.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I withdraw it for the purposes of today's proceedings.

Mr. Wakeham: I shall do my best to ensure that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, who has excellent answers to the questions which have been raised, personally answers that debate.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): My right hon. Friend is aware that in every week's business there are two opportunities for private Members' legislation under the ten-minute Bill procedure. He will also be aware that the procedures governing the obtaining of ten-minute Bills are enshrined in tradition rather than in informal procedures. Uncertainty about the procedures involved has recently given cause for confusion, although it was averted because of the grace and tact of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard). Will my right hon. Friend avoid such problems in the future by referring the matter to the Select Committee on Procedure, and arrange for interim negotiations through the usual channels?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend raises a point that I know is a cause for concern. The matters that the Select Committee on Procedure choose to consider are for it to select according to their importance. I recognise the strength of my hon. Friend's comments and shall speak to my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary to ascertain whether anything can be done. My hon. Friend will know that there has been trouble over the years. The first occasion was when my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) got there first and secured the whole of the ten-minute Bill allocation for one year.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): The Leader of the House has been playing cat and mouse with this Chamber long enough in respect of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. What started out looking like honest endeavours are now sounding very much like weasel words. Will the right hon. Gentleman deal straight with the people of Scotland? Will he accept the momentous consequences of an admission that a governing party cannot muster five hon. Members to man a Select Committee overseeing the Government's own administration of a country that is a part of this state?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman has not long been a Member, and had he been here longer he would know that there were many times when his own party, when in government, did not set up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. My answer is straightforward: if the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends will accept the very reasonable offer I made, we can set up the Select Committee. If they do not, there will be difficulties and I shall proceed in the way I suggested.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Has my right hon. Friend any news for the House about limitations on the length of speeches, which is becoming necessary in view of the current prevalence of verbal diarrhoea on both sides of the House?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the strength of my hon. Friend's point, and I hope that I can manage to arrange a debate before the summer recess. I cannot guarantee it, but I shall do my best.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): The right hon. Gentleman's answers to my colleagues about the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs cause grave offence to me, and to many other hon. Members. The offer that he made was certainly not a fair one. The truth of the matter—and it is the truth that we should be seeking—is that the Government are either unwilling or unable to find Back Benchers to man the Select Committee.

If the right hon. Gentleman wishes to retain an honourable position on the matter, as he is unable or unwilling to put names forward to assist in the setting up of the Committee, will he at least attempt to assist financially the committee that has been set up today by the Opposition parties to fill the vacuum created by the lack of Government inspiration, or at least give us a Clerk to run the Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: I must say that the hon. Gentleman is less than fair. It was I who moved a motion two nights ago to give substantial financial assistance to the Opposition, in spite of misgivings by some of my hon. Friends. I reckon that I have played my part.

I recognise the strength of feeling about the Scottish Select Committee on both sides of the House. I have shown the way forward, and I have said that there will be a debate which will give everyone an opportunity to express points of view. That is the way in which we proceed in the House, and I believe that it is the right way to proceed.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): In view of the heavy listed programme of Government legislation this year, does my right hon. Friend not agree that the business statement for next week is an excellent one? Does he also accept that there is a heavy listed programme for the Brigg and Cleethorpes constituency? In view of that, will he consider allowing me to make a business statement to indicate progress on that legislative programme so that I can invite my hon. Friends to support the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill tonight?

Mr. Wakeham: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his ingenuity. I have announced the Government's business; private business is a matter for private Members.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will there be an early debate on the shortage of policemen on the beat, having regard to the Adjournment debate on Monday night in which the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) will be raising the question of policing in Leicestershire? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, with his customary courtesy, the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton has informed his colleagues from Leicestershire? I believe that, for once, everyone is united in concern and outrage at the growth of crime and the refusal of the Home Secretary to permit additional police as requested by the chief constable. However, it is clearly impossible for that concern to be developed in the space of a brief Adjournment debate. Can we have a major opportunity to develop it in future?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): That will come up in the debate on the Criminal Justice Bill on Tuesday.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend has pointed out that that will come up on Tuesday, but I recognise the strength of what the hon. and learned Gentleman is saying. I confirm that my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) has obtained the Adjournment debate on Monday and that the Minister will reply. I feel that that is the best way forward at present.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Will my right hon. Friend ask his right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and his right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry not to make any more statements about broadcasting policy until they have had the opportunity to read the report on the subject by the Select Committee on Home Affairs, which is to be published shortly after long and deep study? Should not a report of a Select Committee of the House, which it is known will be published shortly, receive some respect in the timing of statements of policy by Ministers?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will study the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee with great interest. I understand that my right hon. Friend is intending to publish a White Paper on broadcasting later in the year, and there will clearly be an opportunity for a debate on broadcasting matters, although it will not be in the immediate future.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The right hon. Gentleman's statements about the Scottish Select Committee can hardly be described as incredibly clear, but it is clearly incredible that on the eve of the anniversary of the Queen's Speech the Government are as yet unable to set up such a Committee because of Conservative Members' lack of willingness to take part.

Will the right hon. Gentleman say when he will give time for this important matter to be debated on the Floor of the House? Or are we to assume that he expects us to discuss Scottish affairs in next Thursday's foreign affairs debate?

Mr. Wakeham: The content of speeches is not a matter for me. I have made it clear, however, that whether or not the Scottish Select Committee is set up there will be a debate in the House. I have not announced it in today's business statement and I cannot anticipate future business statements, but I shall arrange it through the usual channels.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my right hon. Friend arrange for a Minister from the Department of Trade and Industry to come to the House to make a statement on the draft Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, or arrange for a short debate on the subject? The matter is of immense concern in many constituencies up and down the country, not least to the ad hoc committee of 21 companies located in many constituencies represented by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

This will affect employment and investment. In some instances, it could also affect the future viability of a number of companies in the fabrics sector of the textile industry. Will my right hon. Friend arrange either for a Minister to make a statement or for a short debate in the near future?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the importance of the subject, and the interest that my hon. Friend has taken in it. There is a possibility that we shall be able to do something in the near future, but I shall look into the matter with my right hon. and noble Friend and write to my hon. Friend.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say again to hon. Members that we have an important Welsh debate after this. It is only a half-day debate, and I ask hon. Members who are about to be called to be brief.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): My question arises out of Home Office questions. The House has, or should have, a degree of accountability from the Independent Broadcasting Authority. Could we have an early debate on the way in which the IBA is carrying out its duties under the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act 1973? For instance, it is allowing theatrical feature films to be chopped up by advertising, and many classic and much-cherished films are being arbitrarily broken up. They were not intended by their authors, directors or photographers to have any breaks, let alone the arbitrary "natural" breaks imposed by television. Is it not time that we had a debate on this important topic to stop the IBA from allowing the television companies to get away with breaking the law? Surely, for a law-abiding party, that is an important issue.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not even know whether the hon. Gentleman's allegations are correct. I do not imagine for a minute that the IBA has broken the law. However, the hon. Gentleman has raised a subject which he feels is important, and it is legitimate for him to raise it in the House. I wish that I could be more encouraging than to say that I hope that there will be a debate later in the year when

[Mr. Wakeham]

the White Paper on broadcasting has been published. That is the best that I can do at present, but I shall keep the matter in mind.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): May we have a debate on the threat that is posed to the ancient right of petitioning without duress, which is our citizens' most ancient tradition and right? That threat has been posed by the Minister of State, Scottish Office—the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang)—who has said that petitions against the poll tax can be used by poll tax registrars to place people on the poll tax register. That can be found in column 851 of *Hansard* for 28 March 1988. Either we should debate it, or it should be disowned in a statement from the right hon. Gentleman or from the Minister concerned.

Mr. Wakeham: I am not sure that I follow the hon. Gentleman's logic. It seems to me that citizens of this country are either liable for the community charge or they are not. I should have thought that all of us on both sides of the House would want to encourage compliance with the law, whatever our views about a particular law.

Mr. Tony Banks: May we have an early debate on the legalisation of soft drugs? Is it not a fact that the real concern about drugs is the criminality associated with the trade in the illegal use of drugs rather than the damage to health? If it were health, of course, the Government would be banning the use of alcohol, which causes far more damage to health than the use of soft drugs. So can we have that early debate, because if we can talk about decriminalising drug use surely we can do something about the criminal activity that now surrounds it?

Mr. Wakeham: I should like to be able to say that I share the hon. Gentleman's view on drugs, but I do not; I believe that there are very serious problems. But I recognise the force of some of the points that he made and I wish that I could offer him an early debate. But I cannot, although it is a very important subject.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May we have an inkling of what the Government's thinking is on their legislation on official secrecy? Connected with that, what line is the Leader of the House taking on early-day motions 1241 and 1242, which have to do with the ethics of civil servants?

[That this House notes with interest but not surprise that the former Permanent Under Secretary at the Ministry of Defence, Sir Frank Cooper, has stated in relation to the leaking of the Solicitor General's letter during the Westland affair that 'there is political secrecy and genuine secrecy' and that as regards the real malefactors in this episode 'only a percentage of the truth ever came out.'.]

[That this House notes with interest that the former Secretary of State for Defence, the Right honourable Member for Henley is reported in the St. Edward's Oxford School Chronicle as having admitted privately to pupils and masters that the source of the leak of the Solicitor General's letter during the Westland Affair was the Prime Minister; and calls upon the Right honourable Member for Henley to be as forthcoming to the House as he has been in private.]

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing to say on those early-day motions, as I have indicated many times before. With regard to official secrets, the position is that there will be a White Paper and a debate, and I have indicated probable timetables for them.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Is it not dishonest humbug for anyone to suggest that anyone other than the Government is responsible for the fact that there is no Select Committee on Scottish Affairs yet? Is the right hon. Gentleman not stringing the House along when he keeps coming back for business questions week after week and month after month telling us about more meetings with the Chairman of the Committee of Selection? Since he is talking about a deal, would he like to give us some idea of which of his hon. Friends have said that they would be willing to sit on such a Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: The nomination of hon. Members for a Select Committee is a matter for the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, not for me. The hon. Gentleman probably knows more about humbug than I do.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): May I call the attention of the Leader of the House to my early-day motion 1271 which is supported by numerous hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies?

[That this House queries the answer to Parliamentary Question number 17 given by the Secretary of State for the Environment on Wednesday 22nd June to the honourable Member for Newport East that the number of houses vacant in the town of Newport was 130 with 68 families homeless; compares this with the information publicly announced by the Chief Housing Officer of Newport Borough Council that on average for the year 1987-88 up to 31st March, 130 properties were vacant throughout the borough with 661 people declared homeless in that period and eligible for assistance under the Homeless Persons Act, 389 of that number assisted and advised, a further 272 housed or referred to housing associations, and that overall there was a 24 per cent. increase in the number of homeless in the borough in 1987-88; and calls for an early explanation and statement from the Secretary of State about the misleading figures given to the House.]

Will the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that even the Secretary of State for the Environment might welcome the opportunity to make a statement to the House concerning the answer he gave to question No. 17 yesterday on the matter of homelessness in Newport?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend accepts that he should have made it clear that the figure that he quoted of 68 households accepted as homeless related to the period January to March 1988. Since the chief housing officer has confirmed that on average there were 130 dwellings vacant in the borough during 1987-88, I stand by my hon. Friend's statement that there is no problem.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With leave of the House, I propose to put together the Questions on the seven motions on the statutory instruments—that is, items Nos. 1 to 7 on the Order Paper.

That the Local Government (Direct Labour Organisations) (Competition) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 956) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Environmental Effects (Scotland) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Environmental Assessment (Salmon Farming in Marine Waters) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Environmental Assessment (Afforestation) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Land Drainage Improvement Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Highways (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Documents Nos. 6878/86 and 7946/87 on roadworthiness testing be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

Mr. Madden: I am very sorry to raise a point of order, Mr. Speaker, and I will not detain the House, but it relates directly to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) about petitions presented to Parliament and referred to Ministers. Will you look into the situation very carefully and instruct Ministers and Departments that they should not divulge the names and addresses on such petitions to any third party?

Mr. Speaker: No names are ever disclosed by the Clerks or by Departments of the House to anyone else.

Opposition Day

[15TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Wales (Deprivation and Disadvantage)

Mr. Speaker: In view of the late start to this debate, I make a special plea for brief contributions. A large number of hon. Members wish to take part. I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.47 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the unacceptable levels of deprivation and disadvantage in Wales; condemns those Government policies which either have failed to address these problems adequately or which have exacerbated them, like the recent changes in social security and housing benefit; and expresses growing concern at the widening gap between Wales and the South East of England.

I can well understand that perhaps commentators outside Wales might wonder why we need to have a debate in this form because they have been told by press release, which is a Welsh Office form of nouveau cuisine, that we live in "booming Wales" and that our battling Secretary of State has "won" enormous increases in Government money for Wales; that we have a Japanese industrial invasion that is leading to the establishment of a "little Tokyo on the edge of Cardiff".

We have to live with the real Wales. We have to face the reality that, welcome as all the Japanese employment is —and much of it was there in the 1970s—there are still only 5,000 people working for Japanese companies. We have to recognise that booming Wales as it is seen from Worcester is still the second poorest region of the United Kingdom. We have to see a Wales in which the increased public expenditure battled for so nobly by our Secretary of State was revealed by the Treasury to be a cut of £54 million over the next three years.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Williams: I have only just started a very short debate, but all right.

Mr. Wigley: It is to help the point that he is making. Is he aware that in my own constituency in Aberavon 43 per cent. of households have an income of less than £80 a week and this winter there was 24 per cent. unemployment? That is a reflection of what we are talking about.

Mr. Williams: I am, and I shall be dealing with that sort of issue a little later. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his ingenuity in managing to get into the debate so early.

Welsh Opposition Members represent 30 of the 38 constituencies in Wales. We see another side of Wales, which the Secretary of State is somewhat reluctant to talk about; a Wales where

"Unfit . . . homes set a billion-plus poser";

a Wales in which

"Social-security changes leave 6,000 without school dinners";

a Wales that is

"The land that falls below average";

a Wales in which

"Sickness adds up to 41m lost days"

[Mr. Williams]

each year; a Wales in which a cancer survey "shows Wales at top"; a Wales in which we have what are described as "debts of despair", and people snared in the benefits poverty trap. This is the Wales that we see.

The symptoms of the north-south divide are well known to all hon. Members, and we have them all. The symptoms of deprivation are multifaceted, and we in Wales have all those too.

It is worth remembering, as we start this debate, that the circumstances that I have described prevail after nine years of a Government who have had nearly £100,000 million of resources from the North sea to help deal with social problems, if they wished to use them for that purpose.

The deprivation that we see in Wales, and which the Secretary of State prefers not to see, is represented by the increase of 28 per cent. in homelessness and by the record council house waiting list. But these are statistics, figures. We see that deprivation every weekend as faces across a desk in our surgeries in our constituencies as desperate people come to us in search of a solution to their problems. We have to explain to them that one of the reasons why they are on that waiting list is that we have had the lowest number of council houses built in Wales in the last 40 years. Only one house was built, in the last year for which there are complete records, for every five built in the last year of the Labour Administration.

We can hold out little hope. Having dropped to such appallingly low levels of construction of desperately needed houses, Wales is now told by the Government that it is to have no more council house building. People come to our surgeries and tell us that they live in one of the 400,000 houses in Wales that are in need of repair, or in one of the 70,000 houses that are unfit, or one of the 40,000 houses that lack amenities. We tell them that the Government have spent more money on house repairs, but they are spending only half as much on housing now as was being spent when they came to office.

The Government have said that the repair programme in Wales would cost £1·25 billion at 1986 prices. By a remarkable coincidence, the amount of underspend in the time between when we left office and now is also £1·25 billion. So £1·25 billion is needed for repairs, and there has been an underspend of £1·25 billion by the Government.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North) *rose*——

Mr. Williams: I would normally give way, but this is a restricted debate.

No hon. Member on either side of the House condones violence, but the Government should ask themselves why there is such deep bitterness about the fact that outsiders can come into Wales and pay more for second homes than our people can afford for their family homes.

Deprivation is also evident in the inadequate provision for health in Wales. If any area deserves priority, it is health—we have the highest sickness rates in the United Kingdom. We have the highest incidence of cancer, heart disease and chest illness, yet the Secretary of State, far from giving health priority, has abandoned the inflation-plus formula used by his predecessor and produced an even more meagre formula. It will mean that over the next three years there will be an average increase in spending of only 1 per cent. If the right hon. Gentleman had only sustained the level of spending of his predecessor, £30 million more would have been spent on health in Wales this year. That would have been enough to provide the Mid-Glamorgan hospital that is needed. Over the next three years, it would have provided £190 million more for Wales—all this if the Secretary of State had merely kept spending at his predecessor's rate of increase, which itself led to the health statistics that I gave at the start.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I am sure the right hon. Gentleman wants to be fair about the changing performance in health in Wales. If the same level of spending increases when he was last a Minister had been maintained since 1979, how many fewer patients would now be treated in hospitals in Wales?

Mr. Williams: The hon. Gentleman must know that we went through these statistics with the Secretary of State when he tried to cook the books in the Welsh Grand Committee. Under the Labour Government the annual rate of increase was 4·6 per cent.; under the Conservative Administration it has been 4·1 per cent. Under the plans the Secretary of State has for the next three years the rate will average 1 per cent. So waiting lists would have been far shorter than they are now. The right hon. Gentleman attaches no priority to health needs——

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Williams: This is a short debate and no doubt the hon. Gentleman has put his name down to speak in it. Three times when he has made personal attacks on me he has refused to observe the conventions of the House by allowing me to intervene. I do not mind attacks; we are used to them here. But the hon. Gentleman ignored the rules of the House, and I shall extend to him the same discourtesy that he extended to me.

Wales now has the lowest number of hospital beds since the National Health Service was set up 40 years ago. Last year the number of urgent cases on waiting lists fell by only 12. No doubt the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), would tell our constituents on waiting lists and on income support to give up one of their holidays to have a private operation.

Only Northern Ireland has a lower income per head than Wales. We have the highest proportion of men on low pay of all the regions in Great Britain. Half our work force is on wages below the Council of Europe decency threshold. It is not surprising, therefore, that we have the highest proportion of people on social security benefits in Britain. Week after week we see in our surgeries the disastrous effects of the changes in housing benefit and income support on people who are already in desperate need. The problem is typified by the social fund. In the midst of budgetary largesse for those who have plenty, the Government have turned to the DHSS, which was giving £18 million in grants in Wales, and allowed it to give only £3 million. They cut down on the most desperately needy and give to those least in need.

In the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), one of the worst areas of deprivation in the country, 61 per cent. of households have incomes of less than £80 per week—three out of five. Yet the social fund has been cut there by almost £500,000 this

year. It has been cut by about £500,000 in Merthyr and by £500,000 in Rhondda—the heartlands of the valleys initiative.

It is there that the people live whom the Government proclaim they want to help. The Government tell them that their need is so desperate that they will have to take out loans. At least they have something to look forward to; they are scheduled to be the worst hit victims of the Government's new purchase tax. As the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said, it would be wrong to think that deprivation is confined to a limited urban area of Wales. It is just as much a rural phenomenon. The difference in the countryside is that the deprivation is dispersed and so goes unnoticed. It is easy in the pretty countryside to forget the inadequacy of the facilities in its cottages and houses.

It is worth noting that in Wales, the land of low pay, people in the county of Gwynedd are the lowest paid of all. There is evidence of deprivation in our unemployment figures. Unemployment is still double the level it was when the Government came to office. In the past four years, ours is the only region in which employment has fallen. We still have 125,000 fewer people in work, or in self-employment, than when the Government came to office—on the Secretary of State's own figures. The figures for the past month showed that only Scotland had a lower rate of change in unemployment in the past year than Wales.

As a result, we have lost high-paid jobs, only to have them replaced by low-paid, part-time and seasonal jobs. Earnings in retailing, hotels and catering in Wales are the lowest in the United Kingdom. That led the Low Pay Unit to make an ominous observation about the future of Wales:

"Poverty that in recent years has been caused by unemployment is gradually being displaced by poverty caused by low pay."

When people find work, more and more of them are getting low-paid, part-time work. A recent report has shown that the quality of employment in Wales is falling. We are getting the low value-added, low-paid, low-skilled, part-time work which will be easily engineered out within the next decade, while the high-tech, high-paid, high value-added work is staying in England on the other side of the Severn bridge along the M4. That led one trade union leader to speak of Wales as a coolie economy.

In his statement on the valleys initiative the Secretary of State boasted about the number of jobs which would be created by regional development grants, but that is the very policy which, against our advice, he has chosen to abandon. It is an interesting commentary on what industry thinks of his changed policy that more than one third of the applications for regional development grant in the last 15 months were made in the last month before abolition. Industry made it clear that it preferred the old grant sytem to the new.

Wales is developing a coolie economy. Let us contrast that with the position in south-east England where the average pay for men is over £2,500 more than the average pay for men in Wales; for women pay in south-east England is £1,500 higher. There are more second incomes in south-east England because more women work. Pay in the south-east is rising 25 per cent. faster than pay in Wales. So it is not just that there is a gap; as we have observed before from this side of the House, it is a widening gap.

Another concealed change has taken place. It has gone largely unnoticed, yet its impact on the relative fortunes of the south of England and Wales is massive. That change has virtually obliterated the effect of regional policy. I refer to the year-by-year tax changes that have been introduced by the Government. The tax changes have been geared to help the top income earners who are paying £24,000 million less in tax than would have been paid on the 1978-79 format when the Government came to office. Over half the people who benefit live in the south-east of England. Therefore, in comparison to the small amount of money which has been devoted to industrial generation and to refurbishment in Wales, there has been a massive cash infusion of over £12,000 million into purchasing power in the south-east.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Would the right hon. Gentleman care to compare housing costs in the south-east of England with costs in Wales? Will he also say a word about the problems, special to Wales, of derelict land clearance, which do not figure in the south-east? Can he tell us what progress has been made on that in Wales?

Mr. Williams: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, but he has got it the wrong way round. Housing prices are very much demand-dictated. Because there is a finite quantity of housing, as virtually no new houses are being built, the high income reflects itself in high mortgage capacity, which reflects itself in higher prices. So there is a spiral. Indeed, in addition to the income gap between Wales and the south-east, there is an enormous capital gap so that people can hardly contemplate moving from Wales to England because of the differential in housing prices. *[Interruption.]* Muttering from a sedentary position is not constructive.

With £12,000 million extra spending power going into the south of England, it is small wonder that that area has been able to generate internal growth and internal demand in a way that we have not been able to do in Wales. Instead of the injection of purchasing power, Wales has lost £750 million in the cut in support for councils. By the end of the planning period, on the figures which the Secretary of State has given, we shall have lost £1,000 million in regional aid. While so much money has been going to the south of England, investment in Wales has been cut.

It is little wonder that we have a regional divide. The enormous cash infusion in the south of England is in addition to the natural advantage which that area has through easy access to the home counties, the London market and the EEC. That advantage will be greater when the Channel tunnel is built.

Perhaps the press will now begin to understand why Welsh Members fear for the future of Wales. This is only part of the story. My hon. Friends can give many more examples. Surely the picture of deprivation suggests that, with all the resources of the North sea available to them, the Government should have injected more resources into Wales. Might we not have expected that there would have been more when the Secretary of State boasted in *The Observer* that he received every penny he asked for? The money was there, and he got all he asked for. Contrary to the much-publicised growth in spending that he has boasted about in his press releases, we find from the Treasury figures that Government spending in Wales will fall by £54 million over the next three years.

[Mr. Williams]

So far as we can gather, even the valleys initiative will have to be paid for not by the cash-rich Government but by the communities which are represented on this side of the House. The expenditure will have to come out of the already depleted budget which the Secretary of State has for Wales. There is to be no new money; if there is any, we can be excused for not recognising it. When the statement was made, my hon. Friends and I asked the Secretary of State time after time how much new money there would be. We never got an answer. I tabled a question to the Treasury for answer on Tuesday. For some odd reason I got a holding answer and I still have not received the figure.

We are with the Secretary of State in one respect. We, too, want hope for the people of Wales, but we want real hope for all the people. We do not want a slick, hyped-up public relations mirage.

5.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"welcomes the success and achievements of Government policies and initiatives in Wales which have raised living standards, improved housing and environmental conditions and set Wales firmly on the path of economic growth and prosperity.".

When the motion was tabled, there was considerable speculation in the House about the reason for it. Was it because Opposition Members were so thrilled with the right hon. Gentleman's performance last week on the valleys initiative that they said, "We must have more of these brilliant parliamentary performances"? Or was it because the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) went to the Leader of the Opposition and said, "The awful thing is that I find it difficult when there is a lot of good news. Therefore, can you give me a Supply day when I can pour out all the bad elements"? Or was it because the right hon. Gentleman was being contacted by members of the Select Committee which was considering overseas aid, who said, "We must warn you that there is a great deal more inward investment in Wales"?

I regret to say that, when the right hon. Member for Swansea, West said that he and his colleagues represented 24 of the 38 Welsh Members, we counted and only 12 were there at the time. That was the extent of their rallying instinct to support the right hon. Gentleman. If he has problems in the future, may I suggest that he has lunch with *The Independent* rather than a debate in the House.

First, I should like to comment on the adverse effects of a speech like his on the prospects of attracting firms from the south-east and inward investment into Wales. Perhaps that is his objective. Perhaps he is rather disturbed by the growth of the Welsh economy into a free enterprise economy. In 1985, £158 million of overseas investment came into Wales; in 1986, £176 million and in 1987, £239 million.

A further piece of good news which I know will delight the right hon. Gentleman is that, whereas the figure was £239 million last year, in the first five months of this year £248 million of inward investment came into Wales. Obviously the investors had not read his speeches; they would not have ventured into the type of country he described.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about unemployment. I hope that he realises that Wales alone of the regions has had reductions in unemployment for every one of the past 24 months. Unemployment is 43,000 lower than it was two years ago. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about 1979?"] Again, the proportion of unemployed is lower than it was in 1979.

Let us compare that with the performance of the Government in which the right hon. Gentleman was a junior Minister. What were they doing to encourage diversity in the Welsh economy? They carried out their share of pit closures, as we all know. Consider the past 24 years. During 11 years of Labour Governments, 46 pits were closed. In 13 years of Tory Governments, we have closed 23 pits. They closed their share of pits but they did not do their share of creating the new factory letting that was required. In the last three years of the Labour Government 660,000 sq ft of factory flooring was let per year, on average. In the next three years 1·5 million sq ft of factories per year will be let. The figures have constantly been far higher than under the Labour Government.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West failed to mention the clearance of derelict land in his speech about the dreadful state of Wales. In the valleys and in every part of Wales, house improvements are taking place, derelict land is being cleared and new factories are going up. He did not mention any of that. In the last three years of the Labour Government 208 acres of derelict land were cleared a year. Under this Government, the figure is 730 acres a year. In the next three years, the figure will be 1,267 acres a year—a sixfold increase on the Labour Government's clearance programme.

The urban development programme has been doubled. I do not understand how the right hon. Gentleman can say how appalling it is that 430 firms applied for regional development grants in the past three months. When we announced the changes, we said categorically that one of the good effects of moving from regional development grants to regional selective assistance and the use of the Welsh Development Agency was that it would massively accelerate the flow of investment into Wales. We have had 3,300 applications, involving £2 billion of investment and 59,000 new jobs. Yet the right hon. Gentleman decries our policy and says what a rotten policy it is.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The Secretary of State would sell world war 3 as a great opportunity for the Welsh undertaking profession. Suppose that the principle is sound and that one abolishes regional development grants to flush out more applications. Would it not have been far wiser to abolish the system over five years so that the beneficial effects would have come not over three months but over five years?

Mr. Walker: We abolished on the basis that, if approval was given, there would be a further two years to put in the investment. I am delighted that a lot of firms have decided to take advantage of the arrangements. The only party that is not delighted about the economic growth of Wales is the Labour party. It is pining for the old Welsh economy that was totally dependent on two or three major nationalised companies and upon the direct labour departments of local government. The Labour party does not know how to handle the diversified free enterprise economy that is coming to Wales. Opposition Members do not want to see that change because all their old political patronage is disappearing as a result.

Comparisons have been made with the south-east of England. I do not know what has happened to that older Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes). Perhaps he has been deposed. I am sorry that we shall not hear one of his jocular contributions this afternoon. The Opposition motion mentions the south-east. Opposition Members might have applauded the whole range of major institutions—both Government and free enterprise institutions—that is now moving from the south-east to Wales.

Mr. Morgan: One.

Mr. Walker: I could mention a whole range. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that it is only one, I suppose that he will oppose the 4·5 million sq ft of office space that is to go up in Cardiff. There is the Chemical bank, the Trustee Savings bank and a whole range—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I deplore the constant comments coming at the Secretary of State from a sedentary position. What the Secretary of State has to say may be unpopular in some quarters, but he will be heard in the House.

Mr. Walker: It is only unpopular with the parliamentary Labour party. It is very popular with the people of Wales. The Company Registration Office is also involved in the move.

I thought that the height of remarkable political courage on the right hon. Gentleman's part—he was only a junior Minister in his Government—was shown when he dealt with health. We are spending 42 per cent. more in real terms on health in Wales than the last Labour Government thought was necessary. He mentioned waiting lists. Does he not remember the last 12 months of the Labour Government, when waiting lists for in-patients in Wales went up by 17·9 per cent. in a year? Does he remember what was happening to the disabled? We have had to improve benefits for the disabled in Wales by 70 per cent. in real terms.

Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman was pining for the nurses. When Labour left office, the pay of staff nurses was such that, if we had merely adjusted it for inflation, staff nurses would be getting £43 a week less than they now receive. We have 22 per cent. more general practitioners, 27 per cent. more dentists and the Health Service in Wales is treating many more in-patients and out-patients than were even envisaged by the Labour Government.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Given that the right hon. Gentleman proposes to spend so much money on health in Wales, will he tell me when we are likely to have a new hospital in the Rhondda area?

Mr. Walker: This year alone we are spending 10 per cent. more on Wales. Obviously, we shall consider carefully the applications from health authorities. With a Government who have increased real terms expenditure on health by 42 per cent., one can be much more optimistic for the future than one could be under the last Labour Government, who had a pretty dreadful record.

I have some more good news, so cheer up, folks. It affects a matter which is particularly worrying the hon. Members for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) and for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) who constantly tell us about the very bad housing conditions in the valleys. The Labour party says that it is deeply distressed about bad housing and houses without basic amenities. What did the Opposition do when they were in office? In five years they improved only 44,000 of the many houses in Wales in need of amenities. Over the past nine years, we have improved 161,000 houses. When the Labour party—which so cares about the image of Wales, poverty and bad housing—left office after five years in power, there were 133,000 houses without basic amenities. After nine years of Tory Government, that figure has reduced to 37,000. Look how happy Labour Members are about that news; look at their smiling faces! The Labour party depicts itself as the party that cares about housing, but that has not been borne out by what has happened.

Much inward investment is being made in the Welsh economy. New company registrations increased more in Wales last year than in any other region. Further, more training is being given, the Cardiff bay development is to take place, we have the valleys initiative, and the development of the A55 in north Wales has opened up the area to much activity. Over the next few years we shall have a Welsh economy that will depend not on nationalisation but the free-enterprise economy.

I hope that hon. Members will not entirely blame the right hon. Member for Swansea, West for his speech. Much of it was written by Huw Edwards, who is a lecturer in social policy at Manchester polytechnic. I am sure that he is very knowledgeable about the subject.

Over the past few years, earnings in Wales have begun to increase. I know that the right hon. Member for Swansea, West will be delighted to hear that, according to the latest available figures, the average earnings per adult in West Glamorgan are greater than those in the east or west midlands. I hope that that trend will continue. The right hon. Gentleman might also like to remind himself of the dramatic change that has taken place with earnings. Average male adult earnings in Wales in April 1979 were £97 a week, but in April 1987 they were £204 a week. It is likely, with the increases of the past year, that they are nearer £220 a week. In April 1979, after five years of glorious Socialism, average female earnings were £61 a week, but in April 1987 they were £137. The average has increased from £87 a week to £183 a week.

Whether it be in housing, health or derelict land, this Government are succeeding as never before. I hope that that will not result in any damage to the reputation of the right hon. Member for Swansea, West. I am the president of the "right hon. Member for Swansea, West must stay" campaign.

5.22 pm

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): I was interested and amused by the rising temperature of the Secretary of State's speech. I may keep the level of my speech down, although from time to time my voice has been known to be rather loud.

Where one finds bad housing, high levels of unemployment and poor health, one finds people who are deprived and disadvantaged. The result is that their standard of living suffers. Whether Conservative Members like it or not, all those conditions are found in the valleys of south Wales. If the Secretary of State ever held a surgery in Wales, he would discover those conditions for himself. Perhaps he is aware of them; if not, what is the reason for

[Mr. Donald Coleman]

the valleys initiative? I think that somebody may have been telling him that there is a need for something to be done in the valleys.

Last week the right hon. Gentleman spoke in Llandudno of his plans to make it easier for poorer council tenants to buy their homes, which we welcome. Even before I became the Member for Neath, councils in my constituency operated a policy of sales, provided they did not interfere with the right of people to be housed decently.

I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the level of owner-occupation in Wales has always been the highest in the United Kingdom. My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) recently told the House that the majority of his constituents were house owners. That is common throughout the valley constituencies.

In case the Conservative party believes that it is the promoter of something new in Wales, I must make it clear that it is not. By its past opposition to leasehold enfranchisement, it stands as a significant opponent of home ownership in Wales. Conservative Members must understand that the high level of home ownership in south Wales and its valleys was the means of escape from the tyranny of those who, in the past, found their political home and ideology in the Conservative party.

Welcome as the right hon. Gentleman's housing plans are to assist the poorer of our council tenants to buy their homes, the people of Wales would have been afforded more satisfaction if he had said in his Llandudno speech that he was concerned about the dramatic rise in homelessness that has taken place in Wales since the Government took office in 1979. The right hon. Gentleman may well counter my argument by saying that the figure for homelessness in Neath has decreased, but Lliw Valley also forms part of my constituency, and there the position shows my complaint about homelessness to be valid.

We would have liked to hear the right hon. Gentleman say that he will make use of the funds that have accrued from council house sales, and that a programme of new build by local authorities and housing associations in Wales was to be embarked on. If that were to happen, those bodies could begin to wipe out the problem of homelessness, which is rising so rapidly in Wales under this Government.

Poverty and low pay are major problems in Wales, especially in the south Wales valley communities. Government figures show that one fifth of the population in Wales has an income below or on the poverty line. Although recently there has been a decrease in unemployment in Wales, which we welcome, the problems of unemployment and low-paid jobs are still greater than in any other region of the United Kingdom.

My involvement in the work of the Council of Europe —a body that deserves more attention than it gets in the House—is known to the House. It describes the decency threshold for earnings as £135 a week, yet in Wales nearly half our work force earn less than £135 a week.

On Monday this week, *The Times* carried an article entitled "Breadwinners of Wales" by Sally Brompton, who has put her finger on the malaise in the Welsh valleys, which Conservative Members have shown by their behaviour they wish to ignore. In Wales, working women outnumber working men, a situation which has had a mixed welcome in Wales as a means of providing a livelihood. A Cardiff Business School survey shows that there are now 558,000 women in full-time or part-time employment, compared with 484,000 men in the Welsh valleys. That does not and will not create confidence among those who live in the valleys, especially as the women workers find themselves on low wages. One in four women working full time in Wales earns less than £100 a week, half the national average.

Last week, the Secretary of State announced his valleys initiative. He did a good marketing job and, in a way, it is a shame to attempt to reveal that it is not all that it seems. In *The Times* article we read:

> "Despite last week's pledge by Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Wales, to create 25,000 jobs in the valleys over the next three years, for the men who live there it is all a long way ahead. 'There's no real big employer coming to Wales, is there?' surmises 53-year-old Leslie Hall, secretary of the Ruperra Club."

It is no good the Secretary of State trying to pass off as something new, in a good marketing job, schemes which often, when looked at carefully, turn out to be nothing more than a regurgitation of schemes already announced, and sometimes completed and financed. The right hon. Gentleman must be aware—if he is not, he has much to learn about Welsh people—that many people in Wales like Mr. Leslie Hall are capable of analysing and assessing the worth of such plans and schemes.

In my constituency, the inclusion of the missing link of the A465 Aberdulais to Glyn-neath road in the three-year programme gives us nothing. My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), when he was the Minister in the Welsh Office responsible for roads, gave us the year 1990. That time scale was confirmed by the predecessor of the present Secretary of State, the noble Lord Crickhowell, during a meeting with him in the Welsh Office some three or four years ago. The scheme is mentioned in some information I have had from West Glamorgan county council. It is listed in the Welsh Office publication "Roads for Wales in the 1990s and Beyond" and is to be carried out in the mid-term period before 1990.

At periodic intervals, the Welsh Office produces a review of the trunk road programme. It produced such reviews in 1980, 1983 and 1985. In the current publication, issued in 1985 and entitled "Roads in Wales 1985", the scheme was listed in table 4 among the schemes expected to start between January 1988 and December 1990, so the A465 road announced in the glossy book is nothing new. If the Secretary of State had said that building of the road would start next year and that he would assist by making known what progress had been made, this would have been something for us to welcome and a real initiative.

Again in my constituency, no one is going to persuade the people living in the Dulais valley that a new era is dawning, with schemes such as the removal of the Onllwyn aerial ropeway. It will mean nothing to them because they knew about it years ago, long before the Secretary of State became interested in Wales. The same can be said about the health centre mentioned for Gwaun-cae-Gurwen. That idea was accepted by the West Glamorgan district health authority and the community council. It was to involve money from British Coal. All this was way back in 1983-84, when Gwaun-cae-Gurwen became part of the Neath constituency.

A new dawn for the valleys of my constituency would have come from plans for opencast mining operations more compatible for those who have to suffer from the

problems that such operations cause. The Secretary of State and his party have much more to do before there is any chance of our not pointing out to them problems that we know exist in our valleys and that sustain the charge that Wales suffers deprivation and devastation.

5.36 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): The economic and industrial transformation, of which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State spoke, is no more evident than in north-east Wales. Over the past two years, unemployment in my constituency has fallen faster than in any other constituency in the Principality—by 36·4 per cent. It has fallen not just in my constituency but in the two neighbouring constituencies of Alyn and Deeside and Wrexham. I am sorry, but not surprised, that the hon. Members for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) are not present. Perhaps they realise how weak is the Opposition's argument in support of the motion.

A crucial aspect in the decline in unemployment in my constituency is that male unemployment is falling as fast as female unemployment. Wage levels have been rising for the past two to three years. House prices are rising too, but what is so bad in that? The hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) talked about the experience at his surgeries, as did the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams).

I remember an experience at two of my surgeries about three years ago. Two constituents came to see me because they had lost their jobs. There was massive structural unemployment in Delyn, with the decline in the steel industry and the closure of Courtaulds. Both constituents had been forced to take jobs far away, one in Dumfries and the other in Weston-super-Mare. Neither had been able to sell his house because the market was non-existent. By now, the value of their houses has greatly increased and I am glad to be able to say that neither has sold up because they have returned to work in the constituency.

North-east Wales is an area on the rise, as the chief executive for Delyn borough council, John Packer, said yesterday. That economic growth is making possible the public expenditure on communications, health, housing and education. The problems which we are experiencing are those of success—shortage of land for housing and for industrial and commercial development and the shortage of certain skills among the work force.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State so rightly said, the dualling of the A55 expressway, driving that road through north Wales, is transforming the area's economy. It has made my constituency accessible to commuters travelling to Chester and the north-west—to the Wirral and other parts of Lancashire—and enabled my industrialists and business men to transport their goods more easily. That arterial road is making possible the economic miracle in north-east Wales.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales would be surprised if I did not mention the need for a link road between the A55 and the A548 to increase accessibility to the Greenfield business park and to the Delyn enterprise zone. As my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) is here, I am sure that he will be grateful when I mention also the need for a link road to the towns of Rhyl and Prestatyn to ensure that those important tourists centres are not bypassed now that north-west Wales is so much more easily accessible. These link roads are not, however, primarily matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I only wish that local authorities such as Clwyd county council would respond more speedily and effectively to the initiatives that the Welsh Office is taking.

Many housing statistics have been thrown around this evening. It might help if I referred to the experience in my constituency. I am enormously proud to represent the borough of Delyn. It has more sheltered accommodation units—1,300—than any other local authority in the Principality. That is 35 per cent. of the total number of sheltered accommodation units in Clwyd. Delyn has just introduced a care alarm system that will help many elderly people to stay in their own homes, which, in the past, they were unable to do.

There has also been a massive renovation of council houses; 300 of them have been completely renovated. A local house condition survey is being undertaken, with the object of targeting future improvement programmes. The waiting time for repairs has been cut drastically. Improved services for tenants have been introduced, including newsletters that have led to a beneficial dialogue between tenants and the borough council.

The borough council also has an ambitious scheme to replace all the doors and windows in every council house in the borough within three years with UPVC double-glazing. That may seem to some people to be a minor improvement, but it will have a dramatic downward impact on rents. UPVC double glazing will not only improve insulation but will require no maintenance for up to 30 years.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raffan: I shall gladly give way when I have finished this point. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to do that.

What is just as important is that the council has cleared the backlog of home improvements grants. I am now delighted to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Griffiths: Is the hon. Gentleman able to say how much the Delyn borough council asked for from the Welsh Office to allow this housing improvement to take place? Is he able to compare that capital allocation with the borough of Ogwr? It put in a claim for £13·5 million to be spent on housing but its total capital allocation was fractionally over £5 million. The Secretary of State for Wales says that far more money urgently needs to be allocated to improving housing in our valley communities.

Mr. Raffan: The improvement of which I spoke, the double glazing of windows and doors, was largely financed by the raising of rents. Rents had not been raised substantially for a significant period. Perhaps other councils should take a similar initiative. Why should they always look to the Welsh Office? Why do they not look to themselves? I respond with that question, which I hope will not be treated as a rhetorical one. I look forward to hearing the answer from the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths).

I refer also to the improved facilities for rural communities in my borough. The hon. Member for Bridgend will be delighted to hear that that improvement has been helped directly by the Welsh Office. As part of its

[Mr. Raffan]

drive towards strengthening traditional village life in my constituency, the borough council plans to ensure that every single village—there are more than 30 of them—will have, within three years, its own sports field, children's play area and community hall.

The Opposition have been rabbiting on about health, but when they were in office they lamentably failed to improve health care, particularly during their last year in office when waiting lists soared. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West was a member of that Government. I do not know how he has the gall to come to the House and attack this side. Why did he not resign then? He might as well resign now before he is pushed by certain members of his own party. We know what is going on. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales was in his usual generous and benign mood this afternoon because he failed to mention the real reason for this debate: that the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) went to see the Leader of the Opposition and told him what he thought about the right hon. Member for Swansea, West. The *Western Mail* said that the hon. Member for Newport, East was "thoroughly dissatisfied" with the way the Welsh portfolio was being handled.

As for health care in my constituency, the Mold community hospital is brand new and of a revolutionary design. The Japanese and the Swedes have beaten a path to its door. That new hospital cost £1·7 million. The first phase of a fully fledged community hospital in Prestatyn has been completed at a cost of £247,927. As for Holywell, that was not left out. The Government remembered Holywell hospital. It has a brand new out-patients department and its wards have been upgraded. The Government have spent £120,976 on that hospital.

I admit—one has to concede something to the Opposition because they have put forward such paltry arguments today—that Flint had to wait until the beginning of this year. Earlier this year I had a meeting with the chairman of Clwyd health authority, who told me that the hospital would have to be closed for three months to remove asbestos. I asked him to take this opportunity to upgrade the wards and the medical facilities there. Within 48 hours he came back to me and said that the authority intended to spend £60,000 on upgrading wards and medical facilities. In the event, it spent over £100,000. So Flint has been upgraded as well.

Now we have four superb cottage and community hospitals in my constituency which we did not have when the Opposition were in power. Yes, my constituency was deprived and disadvantaged when that lot were in power and did nothing. What really upsets the Opposition is that we have done far more for their political heartland in the valleys than they ever did. That is what has really got their goat and upset them so much.

I do not want to be accused of missing anything out, so let me turn to education. Clwyd has a proud record, because only 6·7 per cent. of its pupils leave school without any qualifications, the lowest percentage in Wales. I do not deny that the number of pupils who leave school without any qualifications is still far higher than it should be, but we are bringing it down. I believe that the Education Reform Bill and the establishment of a national curriculum will help to raise standards. I am sure that the Chairman of the Select Committee will not mind if I say in the broadest terms that when we were in Japan one of the lessons that the Select Committee learnt was the importance of improving education and training. I am sure that we shall have something to say about that in our next report.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State had to bear the brunt of the Opposition's gloom and doom about the GCSE. They continually described the early introduction of that exam as being disastrous, but yesterday the *Western Mail* quoted the Welsh joint education council and school heads as saying:

> "We are delighted with the impact of the new examination. . . . It has all gone very well indeed . . . has so far proven a success far greater than anyone could have predicted."

That is what those who are at the sharp end of education are saying. They are not pontificating about it in total ignorance, as the Opposition do. They say that the GCSE is a blooming good exam and is going very well.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will forgive me if I play down a little his valleys initiative. One has to concede that the Opposition have also been taking the initiatives. There was the initiative of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), who rang up Mr. Chris Moncrieff at 1 am. We wish that that initiative had succeeded in depriving us of the Leader of the Opposition. There was also the initiative of the hon. Member for Newport, East who went to see his leader and said, to quote from the *Western Mail* —I am sure it is accurate; I always believe everything that is in the *Western Mail*—how "thoroughly dissatisfied" he was with the way the Welsh portfolio was being handled. It was quite clear who he was getting at. We all know who he meant, but I shall not embarrass him by mentioning his name.

There has been a sad contrast in recent days between the vision of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, the imaginative scale of his valleys initiative, and the petty small-minded sniping with which it has been met by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West. When the right hon. Gentleman was elevated to the position that he now holds as Shadow Secretary of State, we had hopes that he would replace the mediocrity of the performance of his predecessor on the Labour Front Bench with an opposition altogether sharper, more acute and more responsible. However, far from the right hon. Gentleman rising to that challenge, he has sunk beneath it. He has lost the respect of the Government side of the House and lost the support of his own. It would be no deprivation to Wales and no disadvantage to his own party if he were swept aside when the autumn comes.

5.50 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): It is time to inject a certain amount of objectivity into this debate. However, the amount of time allocated to the debate is a disgrace because we need more time to discuss Welsh problems.

Wales as a whole—industrial Wales and rural Wales —is undoubtedly deprived, but it is right to acknowledge that the Secretary of State is at least trying to do something about it. My leader, prior to the general election, my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), stated that the Secretary of State—any Secretary of State—must utilise to the full the facilities and the functions that are available to him. They are the Welsh Office and the bodies responsible for industry—the Welsh Development Agency, Mid-Wales Development, the

Wales tourist board, the Welsh water authority and the other bodies that cover education, health, housing and agriculture. The present Secretary of State is trying to do that. He is clearly an interventionist in the Welsh economy. Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen must recognise the fact that they could be faced with an out and out monetarist who, in the common parlance of Kensington at the moment, would be as dry as dust. They might get an even dustier answer than the one that they got this afternoon from the present Secretary of State.

Therefore, I welcome the valleys initiative and especially the inclusion in it of Ystradgynlais in my constituency. However, I offer a word of caution. Although there is a promise in the valleys initiative of 25,000 jobs and of £500 million of public money, that must be set against what has happened in south Wales during the past 15 years. In 1973, 107,000 people were employed in the coal and steel industries, whereas in 1988 only 32,000 people are employed in coal and steel in south Wales. That is a drop of 75,000 people. Is the Secretary of State's cock-shy satisfactory in trying to create 25,000 jobs because that number represents only one third of the jobs that have been lost in the past 15 years? I do not believe that that is a good enough cock-shy. It is not enough to replace just one third of the jobs lost. The Secretary of State should look at that again and redraft his initiative into a more ambitious plan.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman said that he welcomed the valleys initiative. Why?

Mr. Livsey: I welcome the valleys initiative because it at least recognises that there is a problem and makes the rest of Britain aware of it. I am not saying that the problem has been addressed adequately or properly, but at least the initiative is a step in the right direction. We would be churlish not to acknowledge that.

Unemployment and low pay suggest that we have lost a great deal of quality in our male employment, especially in mining and steel. With the loss of jobs in collieries which have closed recently, such as Abernant and Lady Windsor, miners who, in some instances, have earned a decent wage of up to £150 a week, can do so no longer. At the age of 35, or younger, many miners are losing their jobs. Those jobs are being replaced by work done by women and, although one welcomes female labour, it is paid at only roughly half the rate of male labour, and that is a disgrace. That major problem must be addressed in Wales because, though female labour is increasing, it is poorly paid, and that is unsatisfactory.

I draw the notice of the Welsh Office to the fact that the GDP per head in Wales is the lowest in Britain. It is £3,922 per person as against £5,335 in the south-east of England. Those figures come from the third periodic report of the EEC. The GDP of Wales is 88 per cent. of the EEC average. Until it equals the EEC average, none of us should rest.

In Wales, half the work force earns less than the amount that the EEC has decreed as being the decency threshold—that is £139 per week. Wales has a higher proportion of low pay among men than any other region of Britain, and one quarter of Welsh women earn less than £100 per week. There is much low pay in the NHS in Wales, especially among ancillary workers. Some NHS ancillary workers in my constituency earn only £60 per week.

I draw the House's attention to the plight of mid-Wales, which is the lowest paid area of the lowest paid region of Britain. The figures produced by the Cardiff Business School have already been given and I draw to the attention of the House the conclusion of the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) that at present, in Wales, more women than men are in work. We should ponder that fact.

Obviously, I welcome the EEC's integrated operations award for mid-Wales and Mid-Wales Development of £108 million. However, that is a drop in the ocean compared with the needs of rural Wales. I regard it as only a starting point. We must look at the overall employment situation and the deprivation resulting from it. There are 56,000 people on short-term employment schemes and 211,000 in part-time employment. In total about 400,000 people are on short-term schemes, unemployed or in part-time work.

The situation was illustrated in an article in *The Times* of 20 June, which referred to the case of Mr. and Mrs. Mills. Mr. Mills lost his job and Mrs. Mills is now the family breadwinner. That account should be read by every hon. Member because it is symptomatic of what is happening in Wales at present. We need higher quality and better-paid jobs. We do not want screwdriver operations; we want high-quality jobs. We need more skills training and further education for all our 16 to 19-year-olds.

There has been a slump in agriculture in Wales. Many farm incomes are now £6,000 per annum, which is very low. If one relates that to the creamery closures that have taken place in Felinfach, Ceredigion, and Anglesey, one realises that we are facing severe problems. The slump in rural Wales must be set against the £40 million of farm capital grants that have been lost in Wales in the past two years.

However, I believe that it is in housing that the most serious deprivation occurs. Hon. Members have already referred to the problems in urban housing. I should like to draw the House's attention to the crisis in rural housing. One reads in today's *Western Mail* that in Wales as a whole 56,000 council houses have been sold since 1979, and only 10,000 have been built. That is a shortfall in the rented sector of 46,000 council houses. In my constituency of Brecon and Radnor, one third of our council houses have been sold and that is reflected in towns such as Brecon and Hay. Half the council houses in Crickhowell have been sold. Many of those houses are now being sold for the second time, to wealthy people from the south-east. They can pick up a council house for £30,000 and, having sold a two-bedroomed house in the south-east for £150,000, they are still left with £120,000.

How can young people in my constituency, many of them earning between £70 and £80 per week, possibly afford to buy a house of their own? The council housing stock is now so reduced that it is impossible to find a council house to rent. There are 1,000 people on the housing waiting list in Brecknock alone. Those people want to rent a house, but they cannot find one. It is a serious state of affairs.

The Secretary of State should put a limit on the various abuses that are taking place. We have the yuppification of the second home syndrome and the woopification of the early retirers, who are coming into Wales and making bonanza purchases. Those two abuses are undermining the local housing sector. I believe that there should be a limit on the percentage of second homes available in any Welsh district council area. A crash programme of council house

[Mr. Livsey]

and housing association building must take place to house local people. The rented sector should be restored so that there are more houses available for rent. That means that another 50,000 houses must be built to compensate for those that have been sold. I am not against the sale of council houses, but they must be replaced by a new stock of rented housing to meet the demand.

The Welsh Office must launch a major investigation into what is happening to rural housing. It must consider how low-paid local people can find a house to buy or rent. That is a major problem which must be addressed or the Welsh language and our rural communities will be undermined.

The Secretary of State is trying his best, through a public relations exercise, to put over a fine picture, but he has a long way to go. His PR is good, but his achievements in the next three years will have to prove as good as that PR before I am fully convinced by his strategy.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. At the start of this debate Mr. Speaker appealed for short speeches. Unless speeches are dramatically cut from now on a lot of hon. Members will be extremely disappointed.

6.2 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I shall take note of your injunction, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I shall sit down in five minutes.

I listened with great interest to the opening speech of the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). I travel across south Wales to reach my constituency in west Wales and I pass through Newport, Cardiff, Bridgend, Port Talbot, Swansea and Carmarthen. That gives me an opportunity to see what is happening to the Welsh economy. I do not recognise for one moment the picture of gloom, doom and despair that is so often painted by the official spokesman for the Opposition and other Labour Members. They will not open their eyes to see the new factories that are being built. They do not appreciate the new investment from the Welsh Development Agency or the investment from local authorities. They do not appreciate the investment that is coming in from England, Japan and Germany that is changing the whole base of the Welsh economy. The old days, when Wales depended upon steel and coal, have gone and it now has a much wider economic base. I should have thought that Opposition Members would welcome that, because it means that we will get out of the cycle of structural unemployment that has affected Wales for the past 60 years.

I welcome the valleys initiative that my right hon. Friend has introduced, which is a courageous policy. It is a unique initiative that combines, for the first time, public and private investment to tackle the problems of the valleys. Opposition Members representing the valleys criticise a Conservative Secretary of State, but Labour Government after Labour Government did nothing about the dereliction in the valleys. My right hon. Friend has had the courage to invest in an area where, in the short term, there are no political votes to be gained by the Conservative party—although in the long term I am sure there will be. I find it extraordinary that Labour Members criticise my right hon. Friend for his courage.

When we debated the valleys initiative, I read the report in *Hansard* of the speech by the official Opposition spokesman, the right hon. Member for Swansea, West. He painted a miserable picture and I am not surprised that he is now facing problems within his party. There are so many splits among the 24 Opposition Members for Wales that I find it extraordinary that they have any time to think about anything other than their own internal divisions and dissensions.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the fact that, two weeks ago, £108 million was provided by the European regional development fund for the counties of Powys, Dyfed and Gwynedd. It is estimated by Dyfed county council—the council for my constituency—that that money will create 8,000 new jobs. The press release issued by my council stated:

"Also at the request of the three councils, the Secretary of State for Wales, Mr. Peter Walker, intervened and visited Brussels to pursue the application."

That is a measure of the work that has been done by the Welsh Office to support the initiatives that are necessary not only for the valleys, but for the rural areas, such as my constituency.

Last week a number of us who are members of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs went to Japan and Korea to discuss with business men why they chose to invest in Wales, which is attracting overseas businesses in their hundreds. Wales accounts for 5 per cent. of the population, but 20 per cent. of all inward investment comes to Wales. We were told that foreign businesses come to Wales because of the component supplies that we are able to provide. They come to Wales because of the tax regime, which is conducive to companies and which allows companies to make profits.

They come to Wales because of good labour relations. Mr. Norman Willis of the Trades Union Congress should note that one of the most important things that those businesses want is the single-union agreements that the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union has introduced. I warn the TUC that, if its intention is to destroy jobs, it should carry on with its internecine warfare against the electricians, and possibly against the engineers.

The Welsh economy contains the recipe for success. It depresses me that, time and time again, Labour Members, instead of talking up the prospects of Wales, instead of fighting for jobs, talk Wales down. They are miserable and depressing about Wales. The motion that we are discussing has more to do with the poverty of creative thinking within the Labour party than it has to do with the realities of life in Wales.

6.7 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Because of the shortage of time, I shall not follow the nonsense spoken by the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). We have spent many years fighting for our communities and talking them up. We have gone wherever we needed to go to get money for our communities. The Secretary of State will be aware that that is why we made contributions and suggestions about his valleys initiative and that is why we have every reason and every right to assess how successful he has been.

I have not been churlish and I have welcomed individual items that have resulted directly from the right hon. Gentleman's efforts. I welcomed the Pentrebach-Dowlais road scheme, which was helped by the right hon. Gentleman's valleys initiative. We are right, however, to complain when the right hon. Gentleman claims credit for things that he has had nothing to do with. The Pant junior school has not been completed and is still not occupied because of cuts in the county council's education capital programme that were undertaken by the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor. If those cuts had not occurred, that school would have been built four years ago. The right hon. Gentleman cannot blame us for not welcoming such cuts. The £40 million that the brewers have spent is nothing to do with him, nor is the money that has been spent by British Telecom. That money had been spent before he arrived on the scene.

Why has the right hon. Gentleman missed out two vital factors? He is aware of the representations that many of us have made to unlock home repair grants. In my constituency there are 2,000 people who have been waiting since 1984 for that money. If the right hon. Gentleman got all the money he wanted from the Cabinet, why did he not allocate money for home repair grants? Many of our elderly owner-occupiers have been waiting for that money since 1984. When he comes to reply, I hope that he will tell us why he has not unlocked that money.

Why did he not get any money for our desperate Health Service? The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) spoke of the new community hospital. I give him a modest warning—in my constituency the brand-new unit for the elderly critically ill that was opened in April last year by the Queen Mother was closed in January because of lack of money to sustain it. His constituency might have a new hospital, but will it remain open? We failed to keep our unit open, because the Government did not allocate sufficient money.

In the few moments available to me I want to discuss something of immediate concern to my constituents. During the past week or so in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, people came to see me—not on my initiative—for advice on how to fill in a form called "Housing benefit new rules". The completed form is sent to a special unit in Glasgow to ensure that the applicant loses only £2·50 a week in housing benefit. Who is entitled to fill in the form? I know because I am helping some of my constituents to do it, and the form actually describes those eligible very well. It states:

"You may be able to get transitional payments if one of these descriptions apply to you:
you are bringing up a child
or you are a widow who gets Widow's Pension
or you are 60 or over, or your partner is 60 or over
or you are a long-term sick or disabled person."

Those are the people who will lose a minimum of £2·50 a week in housing benefit.

What stand did the Secretary of State take in the Cabinet when those nonsensical proposals for the elderly and the poor were made? There is great concern about the rules, which have been introduced. While the Government are giving £2 billion to those at the top end of the taxpayer ladder, benefit is being taken from the poor and the elderly.

When the Minister replies, will he say why the elderly, the long-term sick and the disabled have to pay a minimum of an additional £2·50 a week in rent? I heard the Secretary of State for Social Services say that the dependency culture must be destroyed and that people must be made to be more independent. Does that mean that a 60-year-old or a long-term sick or disabled person must work part-time—perhaps scrubbing our schools? Will the Government withdraw benefit if those people do not return to the labour market? It is not a question of there being a dependency culture—those people have worked all their lives and many of them have fulfilled their service to the community.

How is the dependency culture destroyed and independence encouraged by taking £2·50 a week from such people? Where was the right hon. Gentleman when those nonsensical proposals were put to the Cabinet? Why did he not defend the people of our communities? He has described his valleys initiative as a programme for the people. How can it be that elderly and poor people have to pay an extra £2·50 while others receive enormous tax benefits? That is not the sort of society that we want, but unfortunately it is the sort of society that we represent.

At the 1987 general election, my majority rose by 6,000. Some people say that it is the traditional vote, and it is—yet 75 per cent. of the electorate voted for me, most of whom were taxpayers benefiting from the Government's tax policies. However, they rightly said that they would prefer that the money was spent on health, housing, their elderly parents, better education and better social services. That is the case that the Labour party put to the electorate and on which I gained the support of my constituents.

The phrase used for the scheme is "transitional protection". It is a good description of the Secretary of State. He was supposed to be our transitional protection against Thatcherism. I am sorry to say that he is failing.

6.14 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Time is short, but I want to read a letter from a constituent. He typifies the problems that people in the valleys face and the sort of letters that I receive from those suffering badly under the Government's policies. My constituent wrote:

"Since September 1980 I have been redundant. I receive no redundancy payment. I looked for work . . . far afield. But to no avail. I am now nearly 61 years of age and have given up hope. My health has, because of this I am sure, suffered, and I have been treated for anxiety for a long time. But I don't think I'll ever be cured.

For a number of years I have been receiving invalidity and supplementary benefit and for approx. the last year I have been receiving £51·94 a week. This has now been dropped to £50·68. The DHSS say this is because the mortgage interest rate has dropped since last December. When I pointed out to them that for years the interest rate had been up and down like a yo-yo without affecting the allowances I was informed that they had been instructed to alter everybodies mortgage allowance every time the interest rate changed. This I find hard to believe, to put into practice I mean.

The result of the drop of £1·26 in my weekly benefit means that it is going to be difficult for me to exist.

My house is small, two down and one up. The water rates have gone up from £65·59 to £86·62. The house rates from £69·54 to £73·83. Even if I get a rebate on this amount, I will still have to pay 20 per cent. as you know. With Gas and Electricity at the present rate and most of my other commitments, my weekly payments, most of them that is, have gone up to £43·11 and they drop my money. Instead of being left with £10 to buy food and other home bills which always crop up, I am left with £7·57. How can one buy food on this amount. I do not eat meat. I can't afford it. A small tin of tuna, 57p is made to last three days and frozen kippers with frozen vegetables the rest of the week.

I had been giving myself a treat of fish and chips £1·10 on Saturdays that will now have to go. I don't know what to give

[Mrs. Ann Clwyd]

up next. I sold my car and my motor-bike years ago, and gave up drinking and smoking when I became redundant. I no longer have a social life and have virtually become a hermit.

I have recently had repair work carried out on my gas fire, which will cost about £60. The only way I will be able to pay this is by Barclaycard. Between my house and the Barclaycard without any further use of the card I will owe them at the moment £760. I will be paying back until I am 70.

I can see no point in appealing to the DHSS. Because with the dealings I have had with them over the matter of the mortgage, both at the office and on the phone, I feel that it will be a waste of time.

I know that you are busy but if you can help me or advise me please do so urgently, as I am desperate.

I'm sorry about the writing. I assure you I could write better a few years ago, but my nerves are really bad."

That man, and many others like him, are typical of those who live in our valley communities and are affected by Government policies. In my constituency more than 60 per cent. of people live on a gross annual income of less than £4,000. I found that difficult to believe when I first saw the figures, but they are in official statistics. That is the extent of poverty in the Cynon valley and also in many other valley communities.

The Secretary of State visited the Cynon valley when he was first appointed, and he showed considerable interest in and sympathy for the plight of many people. I have repeated time and again the statistics for the Cynon valley. For example, more than half the privately owned houses are unfit for human habitation and there are very high levels of unemployment—28 per cent. for males. Those figures have remained more or less static during the past nine years.

There is very little change or hope for change in the current situation. The health statistics are well known to the Secretary of State, as are all the statistics. When he came to Wales and talked to people, they believed that he would do something about the situation and offer them some hope for the future. Although I welcome some parts of his valleys initiative, there is also a deep feeling of disappointment because he promised so much and has delivered so little. I am not being churlish; that is a fact of life.

Mr. Peter Walker: Will the hon. Lady name one promise that I made and have not kept?

Mrs. Clwyd: The Secretary of State gave the impression that the Government would do something about unfit housing. More than half the private housing in Mid-Glamorgan is unfit for human habitation. The Secretary of State has given the valleys initiative an extra £8 million for housing. The Cynon Valley council estimates that it will cost at least £64 million to put right that unfit housing. I do not think that that is an adequate response after the promise that he made.

Mr. Walker: I have seen the remark by the chief executive of the local authority saying that £8 million was not enough. As a result, the next day I put out a press handout to explain that the £8 million was an additional amount for this year alone on what had already been granted and that, over the three years of the valleys initiative, £430 million will be spent on housing.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Secretary of State explain how long it will take for Cynon Valley to right its unfit private housing under the progrmme which he has announced? He has not answered the question that my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) has asked him time and again: how much new money has he announced in the valleys initiative?

Mr. Walker: Thirty-two thousand houses will be improved. As the hon. Lady knows, I took the initiative of ensuring that the Welsh Office went to her local authority to help a great deal to work out a housing strategy for the three years.

Mrs. Clywd: I am afraid that the Secretary of State has still not answered the question: how long will it take for the Cynon Valley, with all its unfit housing and with a bill of £64 million, to put that housing right?

Mr. Walker: It will be far quicker than under the minor programme of the last Labour Government.

Mrs. Clwyd: By our estimates, on the present level of Government expenditure it will take at least 50 years. I realise that the right hon. Gentleman is not prepared to put a figure on it. I quite understand why.

Mr. Rogers: The Secretary of State says that 32,000 houses will be improved, but in my constituency of Rhondda 18,000 houses are waiting for improvement grants now.

Mrs. Clwyd: People on low incomes do not have the money to improve their houses. The Secretary of State seems not to be able to understand that. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. One debate at a time in the Chamber, please.

Mrs. Clwyd: In 1986, 64 per cent. of people in my constituency said that they had no savings. The Government's reaction is to withdraw tax relief on home improvement loans. The Under-Secretary of State for Wales, in a letter to me a few weeks ago, stated:

"there has been much abuse which has needed to be curtailed."

But he could give no evidence of the alleged abuse in the valleys. Was the Minister saying that my constituents with poor housing, low incomes and no savings are applying for home improvement grants to take holidays or to buy furniture instead of installing an indoor toilet? I can tell the Minister that there is no evidence of any abuse in Wales. The Chancellor's statement was based on abuse in the south-east of England and it is not proper that people in Wales should be tarred with the same brush.

The Secretary of State said that his programme was bigger and better than anything that the Labour party had done. It is nine years since the last Labour Government, nine years of neglect and procrastination, during which time the Government have allowed the situation to deteriorate. In 1987, only Scotland and the south-west of England had average earnings lower than those of Wales. In 1978-79, wages in Wales were higher than in Britain generally. Even the Government are forced to do something about that.

While we welcome part of the valleys initiative, the Secretary of State must accept that it is far more packaging than content. It is a collection of current and proposed activities. It is not a strategy; essentially, it is more of the same.

Local authorities are pushed into the background to play a role only in education, housing and transport but not in economic development, tourism and social services.

I hope that the Secretary of State will correct me if I am wrong, but I think that Mid Glamorgan will get £1·15 million of the £500 million that he mentioned. There is no evidence that any more money has been won from the Treasury. Instead, it has been shifted around from other Welsh public expenditure.

Mr. Peter Walker: I confirm that the hon. Lady's figure is totally and completely wrong.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Secretary of State correct me?

Mr. Walker: A high proportion of the £500 million will go to Mid Glamorgan.

Mrs. Clwyd: Even when there are increases to councils, they are tied to clauses which increase the power of the Welsh Office and not that of local government.

The Secretary of State made great play with jobs. I have a right to question him closely about jobs as 28 per cent. of men in my constituency are still unemployed. It is worth commenting on the programme's claims about job creation and economic regeneration. The programme estimates that unemployment will fall by 25,000 to 30,000 as a result of the proposed actions. But by the programme's admission, and as my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West pointed out, almost all those jobs will come from applications for regional development grants submitted in 1987 and the first quarter of 1988 which are expected to create 23,460 jobs through investment worth £620 million. Clearly, that is the main plank of the Government's job creation plans. The Government are abolishing RDG in favour of a discretionary scheme. If RDG provides almost all the new jobs expected, presumably the other proposals will have no impact at all, or the estimate is a conservative and easily achievable aim.

Finally, while an additional 25,000 to 30,000 jobs will be extremely welcome, that goes only some way towards alleviating the massive unemploymnt problems. In April 1988, 28,272 people were registered as unemployed in Mid-Glamorgan. That is a rate of 16·4 per cent. and is the fourth highest county unemployment rate in Britain. The recent improvements in unemployment in the west of Wales have not been experienced in Mid-Glamorgan, where unemployment is increasing. The Government should be truthful when they make claims about reducing unemployment.

In April 1986, unemployment in Mid-Glamorgan was 10 per cent. of the Welsh rate. In April 1988, it was 27 per cent. above the Welsh rate. That is the extent of deprivation in the valley communities and that is why we are angry, disappointed and frustrated with the Secretary of State's proposals, which do not go far enough. He hyped them up and he must now expect a very strong reaction to that hype. I described it as a hot air balloon. The hot air balloon came down to land and there was very little inside it.

6.29 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I join my right hon. and hon. Friends in questioning the need or relevance of the Opposition motion. It is hard to find a topical relevance. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) did not tell us why we were debating it. Perhaps the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) will explain why we are doing so. I shall not attempt to offer an explanation.

We could have debated the Health Service in Wales. I know that various hon. Members have referred to it, but it is not specifically referred to in the motion. I had the temerity to try to draw the right hon. Member for Swansea, West on that subject. I asked him how many fewer patients would be treated in hospitals in Wales if we had the same spending, with only an increase for inflation, as we had under the Government in which he was a Minister. He did not give us an answer. I shall offer the answer instead. Almost 200,000 fewer patients would be treated each year in hospitals in Wales if we were to return to the spending levels of the Labour party. To be specific, an additional 99,000 in-patients and 88,000 out-patients are being treated now and Government spending is 42 per cent. up in real terms since 1979. Of course, I did not get that admission from a member of the only Government ever to cut spending on the Health Service.

I welcome the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State just before the spring bank holiday recess about the setting up of a further two new kidney dialysis treatment units in Wales. One of them will be in my constituency in the University hospital of Wales and the other will be in Merthyr. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said that he believed in welcoming additions, but he did not mention that unit. I have an interest in kidney treatment and it is important to welcome those two new units, not least because when the Government took office Wales had the worst record for kidney treatment in the United Kingdom. Now we have the best record in the United Kingdom and virtually the best in Europe.

The motion could have been about the valleys initiative. It has been referred to, but there is no mention of it in the motion. I was not here last week and I had to look at *Hansard* to find the questions asked of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he made his statement about the valleys initiative. Unfortunately, the same questions came from Opposition Members. They were negative and full of the same synthetic bitterness, depression, gloom and doom. Incidentally, I could find no reference to the statement in the *Western Mail*. Perhaps, with no disrespect to my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), that reflects the standard of some of the questions in the absence of those of us who were on Welsh Select Committee business.

In every sense that was a major statement, envisaging £1·5 billion being spent over the next three years. Outside the House it has been warmly welcomed. It has been welcomed in the newspaper articles and editorials I have read. Those articles give the impression that the people of Wales and their newspapers recognise the need for the most positive approach towards my right hon. Friend's statement.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Has it occurred to my hon. Friend that one reason why there is so much glumness about the valleys initiative from Opposition Members is that, if the conditions in their constituencies improve, they could become vulnerable? There are no fewer than 11 seats in Wales that are vulnerable to a swing of less than 2·5 per cent. or 2,500 votes for the Conservatives.

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend makes his point so well that I will not take it any further.

When the Welsh Select Committee was in Japan last week we met Yuasa Batteries, which is already in Wales. The head of that company posed a question to the Select Committee—it is usually the other way round. He wanted to know how the British economic miracle could be applied to Japan. That is the perception abroad, very much in contrast to the way in which the right hon. Member for Swansea, West tried cynically to dispose of what he denied was booming Wales. The right hon. Gentleman tried to claim that Wales has one of the lowest incomes per head in the United Kingdom. After all this time, we know from looking at international comparisons of figures that such bald comparisons are pretty nigh meaningless. At the very least we need to take into account the buying power. When the buying power of people in Wales is taken into account, we see that the income level is above average for the United Kingdom. Again, that is conveniently missed by Opposition Members.

None of us can be completely satisfied with the progress that has been made under the Government. However, I am entitled to be at least equally worried about the perception that is being created by the Opposition as they try to claim that they speak for the majority in Wales. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West was worried that the new jobs in Wales would be "engineered out" within the next decade. He said that he feared for the future of Wales. My fear is that the image that the Labour party is projecting abroad is the most conducive to us being described as the "coolie economy", the phrase used by the right hon. Gentleman. Any foreign investor listening to what the right hon. Gentleman said would be interested only in establishing a screwdriver plant in Wales. There would be no interest in placing anything more substantial there.

Am I being unfair to the Labour party? Perhaps I should be criticising only the right hon. Member for Swansea, West. I notice that as other Opposition Members mouth the same phrases they have smiles on their faces. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West gives the impression that he believes what he says. Our Japanese investors and potential investors must surely feel that the kamikaze approach of the Labour party can only be worthy of a far higher cause than theirs.

More investment is coming to Wales, not just from Japan but from Korea. I have the impression of a common spirit among business people in Wales towards doing business with Japan and of a common approach that we share with the Japanese and other leading economies. I believe firmly that business men from Wales and the United Kingdom can hold their heads high as they seek to do business in any part of the world. We have achieved that spirit and we must overcome any remaining psychological barriers about difficulties involved in doing business with Japan. We are not interested only in further investment from Japan. We want an increasing slice of the Japanese market, which is one of the fastest increasing markets. Only by retaining the necessary spirit will we achieve an increased share of that market.

Unless we can compete for our fair share of the Japanese market—one of the foremost markets in the world and which may become the foremost market—we shall upset our share of the rest of the world market and the rest of our domestic market. We need the right spirit to achieve that.

I will not repeat the unemployment statistics that have already been given. I am privileged to represent the constituency of Cardiff, North. For a long time we have had the lowest unemployment rate in Wales. It is still too high. There are still more than 2,000 too many people unemployed in my constituency. We are not self-satisfied about having the lowest unemployment rate. More new jobs have been created in Cardiff, North since 1983 than the total number of people unemployed in 1983. If our new jobs had gone solely to residents of Cardiff, North, we would have eliminated unemployment. Of course that did not happen. We are not selfish about job creation. We see ourselves as having a role to create employment not just for Cardiff, but for the valleys and south Wales. That is typical of the new spirit abroad in Cardiff.

It is only from the approach that we display in Cardiff, North that the necessary prosperity can spread throughout Wales. Only a Conservative Secretary of State would come forward with the necessary comprehensive intitiative for the regeneration of the political heartland of the Labour party.

6.39 pm

Mr. Martin Jones (Clywd, South-West): We are told how well we are doing in Wales under this Government and are showered with the usual plethora of statistics proving upward trends. We are told that unemployment is down, but that is due in no small part to extensive massaging of the figures, borne out by the number of my constituents who cannot claim unemployment benefit but must claim other benefits, training scheme allowances, and so on.

We still do not have in Wales the number of people in work who were employed in 1979. The Secretary of State says that he intends to remove Socialism from Wales. I do not believe that he will, because of the good sense of the Welsh. In any event, he has not said whether he intends to replace Socialism with Thatcherism or with Walkerism. Either will mean the majority of Welsh people being worse off and a small minority—mostly English—being better off.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Mr. Paul Flynn.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a matter of some concern to me, as the leader of a party that has three Members in Wales and 8 per cent. of the popular vote, that I am not able to take part in this debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Flynn.

6.40 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Our reason for selecting this subject for debate has hardly been mentioned. It is that never before in this century has the gap between the poor and the rich widened so much and so quickly as in the past two years. There are many people outside the House waiting for news of the debate, and who will rightly be angered by the self-indulgent, synthetic and snide remarks of Conservative Members, and their deliberate attempt to ignore the serious nature of the debate.

Many things have happened and will continue to happen in Wales. There has been a substantial

improvement in unemployment levels, although it is difficult to discern because of the now routine fiddles and distortions, which have been evident for several years. Of course we should try to be optimistic. All of us in public life have a duty to build confidence and optimism in the Welsh economy, and my party has generously praised all those responsible for improving it.

However, there is no use exaggerating the improvement and pretending that there has been a boom. Sadly, it may be not a boom but a bubble—rather like the south sea bubble. Commentators have pointed to the fragility of the improvement. It does not help that we have a Secretary of State for Wales who has attracted a great deal of attention to himself—much of it not critical. In his task of reshaping the Welsh economy, it does not help if he vastly exaggerates job prospects, and if there are claims of instant regeneration or overnight miracles by a braggart politician using Wales as a rung in his own career ladder.

A report published by the Cardiff Business School a fortnight ago commented:

"It is still too early to consider that recent events in Wales represent a turning point and a shift towards a basically stronger economy. We still feel the fundamental weaknesses remain. Employment in Wales has declined significantly since 1979 and the performance of the Welsh economy in this respect is poorer than any other region. As a result the likelihood of becoming unemployed in Wales is higher than in any other standard region, whereas the probability of ceasing to be employed is the fourth highest of the twelve standard regions."

Good things are happening, but there is no use believing a public relations hype that goes far over the top.

Wales is deprived and disadvantaged. There may be a little ripple of improvement from the valleys initiative, and of course it contains many good local authority plans. However, as has been said, there is a great danger that the initiative will put all the goods in the shop window, leaving the store room empty. There is more to it even than that. The Secretary of State has taken all the goods from all the windows in town, and he has put them in his own shop window. It is likely that if anybody in the valleys paints his front door in the next few years, the Secretary of State will come along with a sticker proclaiming "Sponsored by the valleys initiative".

Following the social security changes in Wales over the past few months, many people have found their lives impoverished. A total of 350,000 households will be hit, with living standards falling as the combined result of those changes and the "loadsamoney" Budget. The ripple of improvement created by the initiative will be washed away by the tidal wave of hard Thatcherite legislation that is moving towards Wales. Why would the Secretary of State not answer my question about the poll tax? Why did the Prime Minister refuse to tell the BBC interviewer from Llandudno what will be the effect of the poll tax in Wales, and especially in the valleys?

The valleys will be hardest hit by every one of the Government's proposals. We have all heard about clause 28 of the Local Government Bill, but other clauses will cut a swathe of unemployment and reduce wage levels in precious local government jobs. The Housing Bill will also hit the valleys by increasing rents. All of the hard Thatcherite legislation will hit the valleys very seriously. There are no glossy publications and no hype about those matters.

All we have seen is the mean and muddled housing benefit changes affecting nearly 400,000 Welsh households. Islwyn borough council has published figures showing that 73 per cent. of the recipients of housing benefit—who are anyway the worst off in society—will be losers in a scheme that was supposed to simplify benefit. It is so simple that recipients must claim some money from the local authority, some from the DHSS, and some from Glasgow. There is now such chaos that the Cardiff office responsible for administering those changes has been closed to the general public for two weeks, while that at Newport has closed for a week.

Hon. Members say that the amount of reduced benefit involved is only £2·50 after the transitional payments have been made—and even they are a form of deferred robbery, because claimants will miss out on changes in inflation. However, if £2·50 represents one tenth of a recipient's disposable income, its loss is a severe blow. That affects not just one or two recipients but hundreds of thousands of people throughout Wales. No glossy publication heralds that situation.

Wales is deprived and disadvantaged by low pay, by a neglected Health Service, by unemployment being twice the level it is elsewhere, and by the alien free-for-all to which the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) referred—the cheque book colonisation that is spreading from north Wales to every other part of Wales. The precious wedges of council housing in villages that give them a balanced community will now be up for grabs by the Porsche-owning yuppies from south Wales. There will be an extension of the cultural invasion from which the north and west have suffered for many years. We suffer from deprivation, and from the disadvantage of having a poor economy while being next door to a very rich neighbour.

I repeat that never before this century has the gap between the poor and the rich widened so much and so quickly. There is probably little point in repeating the question that was put last week and again today, and which has been put by the press to the Secretary of State, but we live in hope that he will answer it. Where is the new money, and how much new money will there be for the valleys initiative? I could quote many cases of hardship, of people suffering from the changes in housing benefit and social security, but I will give the House just one example, of a constituent who has expressed anger to me. She is a disabled pensioner and one of those the Government targeted to gain, but she, like so many others, is really a loser. Mrs. Dorothy Grear of the Bettws centre in Newport writes:

"The new system is unfair. Even those with a bit of works pension are losing. There are thousands of unhappy pensioners all over the country. Living here on a large council estate, I am right in amongst it. I hear the grumbles, I hear the worry, I hear the despair."

When will the Government hear it?

6.49 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): There are two views of Wales, one expressed rather pessimistically in the motion and the other expressed more hopefully in the amendment. Both views have been put forward in the debate.

Much of what has been said is attributable, as I think hon. Members will agree, to the Low Pay Unit report. Some of the LPU's findings for Wales are based on Great

[Mr. Wyn Roberts]

Britain estimates and appear to be at variance with the published figures. For example, we know that in 1979 there were 172,000 recipients of supplementary benefit in Wales, but LPU refers to 289,000 dependent on supplementary benefit in that year.

While I am in a correcting mood, let me say that the hon. Members for Neath (Mr. Coleman) and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) referred to the Cardiff Business School report stating that more females than males are now in work in Wales. That is not the case. The latest data show that in December 1987 478,000 males were in employment, while the female total was 392,000. I shall not pursue the evidence.

There is of course a brighter side, which I feel obliged to draw to the attention of the House. Hon. Members will be interested to know that average adult full-time wages in Wales, at constant April 1987 prices, are now more than £19 a week higher than when we came into office. Between 1986 and 1987, average gross weekly earnings for adults working full-time rose by 7·7 per cent. in Wales, compared with 7·8 per cent. in England and 6·4 per cent. in Scotland. Earnings in west and Mid-Glamorgan rose by 8·7 per cent, the same percentage increase as in the south-east of England. Of the regions of England, only Greater London exceeded the increase in Wales.

Of course wages are higher in the south-east, but, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out, so is the cost of living. The average household in the south-east spends far more on housing than the average household in Wales—just over £40 a week, compared with £25 in Wales. We have the lowest domestic rates of any region in the United Kingdom, with the exception of Northern Ireland.

I was surprised to hear some comments on spending on the National Health Service. I remind hon. Members on both sides of the House that in the final year of the last Labour Administration the weekly spend on the NHS in Wales was £16·3 million at 1988-89 prices, whereas we are planning to spend £23·2 million each week in 1988-89. Expenditure on the NHS in Wales in 1978-79 was some £5·85 per person per week, whereas our plans provide for expenditure in this financial year of £8·25 per person per week.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn) *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman has not been here, and I shall certainly not give way to him. I have very little time.

I am surprised that so many Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Neath, should attack us on our housing record. After all, as my right hon. Friend says, Labour left us with 133,000 houses lacking basic amenities, and we have had to reduce the number to 37,000—just below 5 per cent. of our housing stock. I was also surprised that the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) referred to an increase in homelessness. The number of places accepted by local authorities fell by 11 per cent. last year to just under 5,300. I might say that the solution is not simply building more council houses; it is partly to do with making better use of existing stock.

Opposition Members must make up their minds about the valleys initiative. Do they now realise that it is only the parliamentary Labour party that does not like the initiative and has failed to welcome it? Do they not want the record factory building programme of 1·25 million sq ft, at a cost of £40 million? Do they not want a record derelict land clearance programme of 2,500 acres for the valleys? Do they not want a record level of urban programme allocations? That is £15 million this year for the valleys alone—I hope that the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) is listening to this—compared with £11·7 million, at today's prices, for the whole of Wales in the last year of the Labour Government.

Do Opposition Members really not want our plans to improve 32,000 homes and provide over 10,000 new ones? The truth is that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) said, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is doing something for the valleys, for the heartlands of the Labour party, which they did not dare—did not have the courage—to do themselves.

It is typical of the Opposition to have chosen to concentrate on disadvantage and deprivation in Wales. It is, I believe, an outward sign of their inner gloom and doom. I thought that the eschatological gloom and doom —the "end of Wales is at hand" approach—belonged exclusively to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) when he was on the Opposition Front Bench. Even the Leader of the Opposition became so depressed that he retired the hon. Gentleman to the happy hunting grounds of the Back Benches. But the gloom-and-doom approach is still with us, and the right hon. Member for Swansea, West and the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) are simply new prophets of the old terminal message. I suppose that the end of their world is at hand —the old world where masses of people were employed in nationalised industries, dependent on state subsidies to keep them going, or in the high-spending public sector, where employment could be sustained at the cost of ever higher inflation. All that is changing, and the Opposition are completely at a loss for policies.

Some of the brighter Opposition Members are trying to reconcile themselves to the change, and to adapt Labour policies to the new Britain of economic growth and falling unemployment. I am surprised that there are no Welsh Members among this avant-garde. They are members of the old guard to a man. Who do they really think will benefit from the dismal picture of Wales that they conjure up? Certainly not the people of Wales, who stand to lose investment and development to other parts of the United Kingdom where people are more hopeful about their future prospects. Nor do I think that the Opposition themselves stand to gain much. People simply do not like to hear endlessly how miserable they should be, especially when they are not.

I have given the House a choice between the Opposition's motion and the Government's amendment. I believe that the majority of people of Wales would prefer the amendment, and with unemployment falling for the 24th month in succession, including that in Mid-Glamorgan, and with job prospects still extremely good, Wales is indeed firmly set on the path of economic growth and prosperity. I commend the amendment to the House.

6.59 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): As I was not called earlier in the debate, I am now taking the opportunity to say in half a second what I would have said.

We have heard two constrasting views of Wales in the debate. Both views are right, but both views are wrong. The real future for Wales is to be a modern European economy which will develop on the basis of the skills and activity of its own people. To do that, it must have effective political control over its resources. Clearly, in this House, Wales does not even have a voice.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 192, Noes 267.

Division No. 376] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*

Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'hgm H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Richard Ryder.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on Amendments) and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the success and achievements of Government policies and initiatives in Wales which have raised living standards, improved housing and environmental conditions and set Wales firmly on the path of economic growth and prosperity.

Mr. Wigley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, arising out of the last debate. I put it to you that it is wholly unreasonable and unacceptable that all four parties that represent Wales in the House should not have at least five minutes to put their viewpoints in a debate that has to do solely with Welsh affairs. This matter has been raised before and there have been difficulties about it. In the past there has been agreement between the usual channels and the Chair that representatives of all parties would be allowed to speak. May we have an assurance now that what happened in the last debate will never be allowed to happen again?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I well understand the hon. Gentleman's disappointment. A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House could not participate in this very short debate. I can only express sympathy with all who were not called. It would have been so much easier if those who were called had made briefer speeches.

I should also make it clear that Mr. Speaker exercises his discretion to the best of his ability. He never makes any commitment before any debate begins to any individual hon. Member or party.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I entirely understand your difficulties, and I understand that the Speaker cannot make such a commitment. In view of the difficulty created for you and Mr. Speaker, is not the solution for the Government to provide time in which to debate Wales's difficulties? After all, they created them. The Labour party provided time today and the Government should follow its good example. If they had the interests of Wales at heart, they would take notice of these comments and provide time in the near future for a full debate in which everyone can take part.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We should now get on with the next business.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall, of course, listen to the hon. Lady, but I must say to her and to the House that we are now trespassing on the time that has been allocated for the consideration of private Bills.

Mrs. Ewing: Would it not be possible to distinguish between hon. Members and parties? Surely minority parties have a right to be heard. That differentiation should be taken into account by the two larger parties, which are perhaps more concerned with safeguarding their own rights than with listening to the viewpoints of others.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand the hon. Lady's point. I assure her that anyone who occupies the Chair has to listen to complaints by hon. Members on both sides, including Government supporters, who feel that they should have been called when unfortunately time did not allow. The Chair does its best in such circumstances.

There is a motion on the Order Paper for 10-minute speeches. At the moment, the Chair has not the power to limit speeches. If the House so decides, it will be easier to call more hon. Members from both sides in major debates.

Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill

(By Order)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [11 May], That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed.

7.20 pm

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): I was coming near the end of my remarks when the debate was adjourned. The House will recall that the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) described the Bill as the destruction of the coal industry. There was a great deal of support on both sides of the House for that view.

The *Financial Times* international coal report spells out what should be the obituary of the Bill, which should not get a Second Reading. The Bill is a bad buy. I do not want to go into great detail on the *Financial Times* report but I wish to make one quotation which is relevant to the debate:

> "Much British deep-mined coal can compete well with imports in 1990—but by 1995 the mines should be competing so well as to restrict imports to the periphery of the power station market . . . By 1995 any saving made by an all-out import policy in 1990 would have disappeared and the electricity supply industry would be paying millions of pounds more for imported coal than by buying British . . . There is a severe risk that many deep mines which could compete with imported coal in 1995 will be closed by 1990 if the Government encourage an early free-for-all on imports."

Of course the Bill is about imports. That quotation from the *Financial Times* coal report should be the obituary of the Bill.

Earlier in my speech I said that the Bill was defective. The information which we have got since I said that to some extent makes a mockery of the private Bill procedure. I doubt whether any planning authority would have allowed the application to go ahead. I am not privy to the information, but I understand that Calor Gas has provided information which was not available to the House last time, or was perhaps misunderstood. One important point it makes is that we are talking not about 300 tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas but about 100,000 tonnes.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): It was my comments which led to the erroneous information. I am not an expert on LPG. The possibility of 300 tonnes going up in flames alarms me, but if 100,000 tonnes were to go up in flames it would devastate the whole of Humberside and the surrounding area. I put the point to my hon. Friend so that he may press the sponsor of the Bill. The Health and Safety Executive has let it be known that it is unhappy about the development, as is Calor Gas. In the weeks that have gone by since the last debate, has the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) been in touch with the Health and Safety Executive? Can he reassure the House or has the debate moved no further? We should reject the Bill simply because of the danger inherent in the storage of that amount of gas.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I suppose you have heard the exchanges in the last few minutes. It appears that we spent a couple of hours a few weeks ago debating a Bill which involved the storage of 300 tonnes of Calor gas. My hon.

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) has just revealed that 100,000 tonnes are involved. I want to know whether the Examiners or anyone else——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman may make the point in his speech if he is called.

Mr. Skinner: My point of order is that the Bill should be withdrawn. It is not the Bill which was brought before us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Bill is in order; otherwise we would not be discussing it. The hon. Member may make his point if he is called.

Mr. Eadie: I am grateful for the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd). I am also grateful for the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). The point is material to the discussion on the Bill. I endorse everything that my hon. Friends have said. I note that there is no response from the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown).

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that this is even more serious because one of the largest chemical explosions that ever occurred in the United Kingdom was at Flixborough in the constituency of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown)? The hon. Member's predecessor repeatedly raised in the House the danger of vapour explosions such as the one that ripped through Flixborough, causing loss of life, injury and damage for miles around. Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that the hon. Member for the self-same area is promoting a Bill which could have similar consequences to, if not greater consequences than, those of Flixborough?

Mr. Eadie: My hon. Friend may recall that I have already said that I know of no planning authority—Conservative, Labour or Liberal—which would have allowed this defective Bill to go forward. It is an abuse of our procedures that the Bill should be before us. I do not want to make a long speech, although I am tempted to do so.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The hon. Gentleman doubts whether any planning authority would give permission for such a development. He may be reassured to know that the Labour-controlled county council of Humberside raises no objection to the proposal of the promoters, nor does the borough council in which the development is to take place.

Mr. Eadie: The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is playing the role of the Artful Dodger. The detailed proposals are not with the authority. It would be different if the detailed proposals, as spelt out in the Bill, were before the authority. I know from 20 years of local government experience that no planning authority——

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the sponsor of the Bill suddenly to rise from his seat and leave the Chamber when my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) is answering a point that he made?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House would be best advised to get on with the debate.

Mr. Eadie: The hon. Gentleman may have a good reason for leaving the Chamber. It may appear to be discourteous but I do not feel offended in any way.

As I said, I want to make a brief speech——

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Are not the individuals who have promoted the Bill in consultation with the local authorities? Are not they discussing it in detail? It is not that the authorities have not objected. They have agreed to consult on the issue.

Mr. Eadie: I want to place on record the objections raised by Calor Gas. I referred in a previous speech to the liquidation of capital already invested. I related my remarks mainly to the mining, railway and power plant manufacturing industries. According to my figures, the cavern cost £25 million to build. I find it difficult to think in terms of writing off that amount of capital.

The main concern of Calor is that it stores vast quantities of liquid petroleum gas and, as a result, the site has to be notified to the Health and Safety Executive in accordance with the provisions of the Notification of Installations Handling Hazardous Substances Regulations 1982. As the development falls within a distance of 400m of the site boundary, Calor is concerned about the lack of consultation. That may in part answer the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood).

In quoting Calor's objections, I must identify the hon. Member who is the sponsor of the Bill:

"Despite the assurances by Michael Brown MP that they are pressing the Health and Safety Executive for a definite statement to reassure Calor that it will not lose its consent as a result of the ABP's activities, after repeated reminders by Calor no guidance has yet been given by the Health and Safety Executive. Calor are very concerned that the advice likely to come from the Health and Safety Executive may have a serious detrimental effect upon the future operation and development of the facilities."

Secondly, Calor is worried about the presence of other ships docking, loading and unloading at the proposed new jetty as they will be in close proximity to the existing liquid petroleum gas jetty. The stern bow of an LPG tanker could be as little as 50m away from the proposed jetty head. The Bill is defective in that respect. It may affect shipping programmes and place restrictions on Calor's operations For example, the HSE may prohibit a ship from using the LPG jetty while another ship is loading at the proposed new jetty.

Thirdly, the Bill does not give Calor any ability to use larger tankers and limits them to only one berth. The Bill would effectively limit any future expansion plans. It is absurd to write off £25 million of capital—quite apart from the dangers that we have already discussed.

Fourthly, the existence of another jetty would increase the number of vessels in the vicinity of the liquid petroleum gas jetty. However, there is no provision in the Bill to install harbour surveillance radar.

Finally, if the Bill is passed and the result is that Calor's facilities are closed down, it would not be possible to find an alternative cavern storage facility in the United Kingdom with the right quality of chalk, in the right location and at the right depth.

As I said, I know of no planning authority that would have approved such a proposition.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): My hon. Friend's remarks will clearly be of great concern not only to people who live in close proximity to the site but to those in several areas. Does my hon. Friend agree that the way in which the Bill is being dealt with denies the residents of the area and the constituents of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) the right to go to a public inquiry and express in person their fears about the Bill?

Mr. Eadie: I fully endorse that. I think that it is absolutely monstrous that the mother of Parliaments should do that. That is why I have suggested that the Bill is defective.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Would my hon. Friend agree that we are not qualified to reach a decision on the Bill? Only the local authority is qualified to consider representations from Calor and from all those affected in the area. This is especially important as the development would affect tides and the ecology of the whole area.

Mr. Eadie: I take my hon. Friend's point. However, many of us are very well qualified to discuss what would happen if there were an explosion. I worked in the mining industry for 30 years. I have some technical engineering qualifications and I know the danger of having a bomb a few metres away. I am qualified to say that that is a hazard. I very much regret that people will not have an opportunity to examine the matter in detail.

Mr. Cryer: There is a potentially sinister aspect to the Bill. In the Health and Safety Executive there are qualified people who could examine the proposals and those people ought to provide a report to the House before we embark upon the Bill. As my hon. Friend knows, however, the HSE is short staffed because of the Government's refusal to provide additional funds. We know that these so-called private Bills are actually hybrid Bills; they represent Government policy, and the Government are abusing the procedures of the House by giving them organised support. The Government may well be saying with a nod and a wink to the HSE, "Say nothing and do nothing until the Bill gets through."

Mr. Tony Lloyd: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. In our first debate, the Minister told the House that the HSE would not be involved until after the installation came into operation. He said that the HSE had no locus standi. He said that the Bill was not of interest to the HSE. However, the HSE will have the problem of deciding whether the Calor installation should be allowed to continue once the new installation is built. That is why the Health and Safety Executive is not involved. Whether there have been nods and winks, I do not know. I know that it has not so far said publicly whether it accepts the Bill. Perhaps the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes will tell us.

Mr. Eadie: I shall bring my remarks to a close. I was prepared to make a very long speech but as it is my birthday, I shall not.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I wish the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) many happy returns of the day. On his birthday, it may comfort him to learn that my brother is the deputy leader of the Conservative council on Humberside. I have told him that I shall oppose the Bill until the end.

Mr. Eadie: The House respects the hon. Gentleman's integrity. Anybody who doubts the stand that the hon. Gentleman is taking should read the speech that he made on 11 May.

I think that I have advanced all the arguments that can be made against the Bill receiving a Second Reading. I have shown we shall be liquidating not millions but billions of pounds of capital if the Bill is passed. I have mentioned the safety hazards and shown how the private Bill procedures of the House are faulty. I have expressed concern that the Minister should recommend that such a defective Bill should be given a Second Reading.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has touched on a number of matters. History will probably record that if this time bomb goes up many people on Humberside will not see any more birthdays. Many people will weep crocodile tears and talk about the need for inquiries. They will ask, "Why was the Bill passed with a provision for a 100,000 tonnes capacity of Calor gas? What happened in Parliament? What were that lot doing down there?" There was an inquiry for Sizewell and we did not complain about that, but this site is being developed without a public inquiry. Post-Flixborough, we are talking about major industrial hazards, but Parliament is allowing this corrupt and bent procedure to continue on a Conservative two or three-line Whip——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is enough for an intervention.

Mr. Eadie: My hon. Friend has made the final point that I was about to make. Bearing in mind all the points that have been made, the House would be foolish and, to some extent, irresponsible to give the Bill a Second Reading. I hope that the House will reject the Bill.

7.42 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I wish the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) a happy birthday. The points that he made about hazards and safety were dealt with at length by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown).

I do not want the hon. Member for Midlothian to labour under a misapprehension. He thinks that there should have been a public inquiry, but if anyone decides to construct works in tidal waters he must obtain the authority of Parliament.

The one part of the Bill to which the hon. Member for Midlothian did not address himself was that which relates to my constituency. Many people forget that there are three parts to the Bill. The work to be undertaken at King's Lynn comprises a quay of solid construction, which will cost roughly £1 million, work on a wall—continuous sheet piling with anchors—costing £3 million and dredging. The total amount to be spent at King's Lynn is £4 million. Many hon. Members have ignored that part of the Bill, but I shall explain why they should pass it.

Mr. Illsley: Has it occurred to the hon. Gentleman that the reason why Labour Members have not mentioned King's Lynn is that there is less objection to the proposals for the hon. Gentleman's constituency? Does he think that it would have been better if the promoters of the Bill had brought forward a separate Bill dealing only with King's Lynn rather than tagging it on to the end of a Bill dealing with Immingham terminal?

Mr. Bellingham: I do not think that the objections that have been made to the part of the Bill relating to Immingham are sustainable. Why not allow the Bill to be dealt with in Committee and give petitioners a chance to put their case to the Committee? Surely that would be a democratic way of proceeding. We are talking as though this is the first Bill of its kind to have arisen for many years, but dozens of such Bills have been considered in Committee and petitioners have had their democratic right to put their objections.

Mr. Barron: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that we have little objection to the King's Lynn proposals or to those for Port Talbot because of the improvements that they will make and their job-creation opportunities? The hon. Gentleman must realise that the King's Lynn and Port Talbot provisions have been included in the Bill so that there can be a payroll vote to get what is not a private Bill passed. The hon. Gentleman is being used to push through a Bill to which there is a major objection.

Mr. Bellingham: I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman says about a payroll vote. Every Conservative Member has the option of voting; there is a free vote on the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes dealt effectively and comprehensively with the part of the Bill relating to Immingham, and I support all that he said on 11 May.

The port of King's Lynn has grown considerably over the past few years. Last year its cargo throughput was 1·2 million tonnes, which was a record. Since the construction of the enclosed docks in the last century, there has been a restriction on the type and size of vessel that can enter the port. It is a tidal port and, given the restrictions imposed by the enclosed docks, the longest vessel that can enter it is 120 m, the maximum beam is 13·8 m and the draft maximum is 5·5 m.

There has been tremendous growth in the local economy because of the improvement in communications to East Anglia. We are pressing for better roads, more dual carriageways into this part of Norfolk and for railway electrification. The Minister knows well that we have been pressing for improved roads and he has been extremely helpful. About a year ago, his Department gave the go-ahead for a major new £7·5 million scheme for a flyover and dual carriageway into King's Lynn on the A10. That will cause more growth and development in King's Lynn, and the growth in port traffic will continue to increase. The restriction on the size of vessel is curbing that growth. If these works go ahead, the size of vessel able to enter the port will increase considerably from the present limit of 3,000 tonnes. The river can accommodate vessels of at least 140m in length.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The third part of the Bill relates to the extension of the dredging works to the entrance to Port Talbot harbour. All those who have the best interests of the steel industry in south Wales at heart very much want that to go ahead. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it would have been more sensible for Associated British Ports to link the King's Lynn and Port Talbot provisions with the Associated British Ports (Barrow) Bill and not with a controversial Bill? Does he not think that there is something extremely mysterious in the fact that the Associated British Ports (Barrow) Bill, which is non-controversial, is standing alone, while the Port Talbot and King's Lynn provisions, which are non-controversial, are linked with the Immingham terminal provisions, which could not be more controversial?

Mr. Bellingham: The hon. Gentleman has made a forceful point. If I accepted his criticism and his fears about the Immingham part of the Bill, I should agree, but I do not. I support the case made so forcefully by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes and supported by many Conservative Members.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): There are many who do not.

Mr. Bellingham: I accept that there are some who do not support the Bill, and they have the right to vote against it.

The port in my constituency has been expanding quickly. Various types of cargo go through the port—vehicles, containers, timber, steel, fertilisers, animal feed and solid fuels. Some coal is imported through King's Lynn, but it is only a small part of the cargo.

Just as there will be more facilities for importing coal, there will be facilities for exporting it. I hope that hon. Members do not forget that not long ago a great deal of British coal was exported. I look forward, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, to the day when more coal is exported.

Mr. Hood: How can we export coal when the Government are effectively closing down the British coal industry? The Bill provides a way to bring in blood coal from South Africa, Colombia and elsewhere. The mainland industry is being destroyed, so we shall not be able to export coal.

Mr. Bellingham: Labour Members feel passionately about this subject because they represent constituencies that have many mining jobs and where mining is the life blood of those areas. I do not, however, accept their pessimism that Britain will never again be a coal exporter. The world coal market can change quickly. I remain fairly optimistic that there will come a day when we shall need facilities to export coal.

The Bill enlarges the capacity of the port of King's Lynn by bringing in a new dimension—the riverside quay—which will mean that larger vessels can come into the port. That will sustain the growth of King's Lynn. The number of jobs will increase. There will be jobs in constructing the quay.

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bellingham: I shall press on—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] The hon. Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) will have a chance to address the House later, so I shall not give way.

The local area's prosperity will increase. I estimate that, in five years, at least another 100 jobs will be directly created in the King's Lynn docks and perhaps another 100 or 200 jobs will be indirectly created by the increased growth and prosperity.

Mr. Patchett *rose*——

Mr. Bellingham: I shall give way on that point.

Mr. Patchett: The hon. Gentleman has gone on at great length about the size and capacity of vessels. In a speech to the Institution of Mining Engineers, the Secretary of State for Energy declared that only the limitation of handling facilities cut imports. Is not that the real reason for the cry about "crocodile tears"?

Mr. Bellingham: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's point. I am addressing my remarks to that part of the Bill that affects my constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes has made a powerful case for the part of the Bill that affects his constituency. If the Bill is not passed, the Opposition will effectively play a part in destroying jobs in my constituency. Norfolk is regarded as part of the prosperous south-east. I remind the Opposition that just recently unemployment in King's Lynn had increased to nearly 18 per cent., but it is now under 9 per cent. We are pushing ahead and creating more jobs. This development in the Bill is part and parcel of the growing local economy. The key to the Bill is the creation of new jobs and of prosperity.

The Bill is wholeheartedly supported by the local branch of the Transport and General Workers Union, which has told me that it will create jobs locally. Those workers greatly resent Opposition efforts to stop the Bill going into Committee, where petitioners and other objectors would have ample opportunity to put their objections. Surely the way forward is to give the Bill a Second Reading, let it go into Committee and let people with valid and, arguably, sustainable objections to put them, rather than for the Opposition to try to sabotage the Bill by voting against it, thereby destroying jobs in my constituency and others.

7.55 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I am worried about the threat to the coal mining industry. I should like first, however, to comment on Calor Gas, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) referred. In the 11 May debate, the concerns of Calor Gas were acknowledged by hon. Members, including the Minister. Assurances were given by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown)—they were cited today by my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) but he had no response from the hon. Gentleman—who said that the promoters were

"pressing the Health and Safety Executive for a definitive statement to reassure Calor that it will not lose its consent as a result of ABP's activities."—[*Official Report*, 11 May 1988; Vol. 133, c. 400.]

Why, after nearly six weeks and despite reminders to the Bill's promoters, has no advice been given by the HSE? Is it because the advice may have a detrimental effect on the operations and future development of Calor's facilities? The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes seems to be well informed and involved with the company, so surely he is able to give some answers, or at least can nip out and get them.

If the Bill's promoters were truly concerned about safety, especially in relation to Calor's LPG jetty, surely surveillance radar should be installed before building commences. Calor is worried, rightly, about the presence of other ships docking, loading and unloading at the proposed new jetty, as those vessels will be very close. Is the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes aware that the stern or bow of a vessel docking at the proposed new jetty could be as little as 50m from the Calor LPG jetty and/or a gas tanker discharging? Does he realise what could happen? There could be a worse disaster than Flixborough. The hon. Gentleman is the Bill's sponsor and he should have some answers.

Mr. Hood: Does my hon. Friend, like me, find it strange that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) threatened to resign his seat only a few years ago, when objecting to Nirex storing nuclear waste, and was worried about the safety of his constituents, yet he now promotes a Bill that could result in hundreds, if not thousands, of his constituents being blown up? Does not my hon. Friend think that the free trip to South Africa for the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes has influenced his enthusiasm for this measure?

Mr. Lofthouse: I fully agree with my hon. Friend.

On 11 May, the Minister said that the HSE was not able to deal with the proposals in the Bill, but could deal only with the risk item, which is Calor's LPG storage facility. The HSE would only be able to pass judgment once the Bill became law. If that does not sound like shutting the barn door after the horse has bolted, I do not know what does. It is not on. If the Bill receives a Second Reading, I hope that the genuine concern that has been expressed tonight will be given serious consideration by the Committee.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): The Bill states that the duty of Associated British Ports is to pay due regard to efficiency, economy and safety. Does my hon. Friend consider that ABP has paid due regard to safety?

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for hon. Members to be taking briefings from people in the Strangers Gallery?

Hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair has quite a job keeping in order those who are in the Chamber. Those who are outside the Chamber have nothing to do with me, thank goodness.

Mr. Lofthouse: If I may reply to the question put to me by my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh), the promoters should be concerned about safety and the Bill should contain a provision to that effect. If large vessels are turning within 50m of a plant of this nature, that must be dangerous. That is why I should have thought that the Health and Safety Executive——

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) has just raised a point of order regarding the people who are sitting in the box under the Strangers' Gallery—people whom you do not recognise—passing material to hon. Members who are connected with the sponsorship of the Bill. Let us get it straight. There have been occasions when it has been made clear by the occupant of the Chair that those people whom you cannot see in the box should not write notes during the proceedings. They are prohibited from taking part in the proceedings at all times. They are not to be confused with those people who sit in another box and provide the Government with information. It may be that those outside the House will think that that is a bit cockeyed, but that is what this place is like. The Government can be given information but the Opposition cannot be given any

[Mr. Skinner]

information. I suggest that what is good enough for the Opposition should apply at all times, particularly if it happens to be Tories who are working for South Africa.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already said that I am responsible for what happens in the Chamber. Any hon. Member is entitled to take advice, but if that advice comes from somebody who is outside the Chamber it should be as unobtrusive as possible.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. These are not genuine points of order. A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to take part in the debate. Points of order merely delay the proceedings and make it almost impossible for me to call every hon. Member who wishes to speak.

Mr. Cryer: But there is a rule. The box under the Strangers Gallery is part of the public access to the Strangers Gallery. That is to make everybody feel at home when they reach that place. There is a rule that people in the Strangers Gallery, whether upstairs or in the box under the Gallery, are not allowed to write notes about the proceedings, or anything else. If people are seen to be writing in the box, the rule is that they should be seized by the attendants and removed. This is a genuine point of order. You implied that people could write notes and pass advice to hon. Members, but that is not the case. I asked Mr. Speaker a question about this matter. It was on the Order Paper. He made it clear to me that the rule still applies and that there has been no change.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. That is why I said that any advice that is received by hon. Members on both sides of the House—it happens at regular intervals—should be unobtrusive. I should feel more at home now if we continued with the debate.

Mr. Lofthouse: I was saying that I was greatly surprised, bearing in mind the safety hazard, that after six weeks the Health and Safety Executive had not yet investigated this matter.

Mr. Michael Brown: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) rightly suggested that it is important that the House should be fully acquainted with as many facts as possible. I want to give him some information. He rightly said that Calor is a petitioner. It is also a major customer of Associated British Ports. I assure him that Associated British Ports does not want to upset one of its best customers. The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) was correct to draw attention to the fact that there are concerns. That is precisely what the Committee stage would deal with. I assure him that Associated British Ports does not want to upset some of its best customers, Calor and Conoco.

Mr. Lofthouse: I am grateful for that information, but it does not take us very far. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman could tell us why the Health and Safety Executive has not yet been involved. The danger is real, and that question ought to be answered. We are debating the Bill without being given information about that matter. One wonders whether there is an ulterior motive for not providing that information to us.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has a sublime belief in the importance of Standing Committees. I sat on the Standing Committee of a Bill for three months, as did many other hon. Members who are in the Chamber. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes said that we ought to allow the Bill to proceed to its Committee stage. In heaven's name, hardly a comma is altered in Committee under this Government. They rush everything through. This is clearly a Government-backed Bill and we shall not have a chance to change anything. The Government's majority is always used against us.

I do not know who the people who are sitting in the box under the Gallery represent, but we are trying to get rid of a Bill which is vicious, which favours Botha in South Africa and is trying to smash the mining industry in this country by elevating Botha and South Africa to a position that we know they should never occupy. I do not believe that the Standing Committee will be able to rectify anything in the Bill. It should be thrown out.

Mr. Lofthouse: I agree with my hon. Friend.

There will be devastating effects on the coal mining industry if ports are built to import foreign coal, to the disadvantage of our mining industry. The sponsor of the Bill is a member of the Select Committee on Energy which is investigating the privatisation of the electricity industry and its probable effect on the coal industry. The hon. Gentleman ought to tell the House whether he discussed the Bill with private coal mine owners, both in this country and South Africa. The hon. Gentleman is not listening to what I am saying and does not appear to be concerned about answering this question. I must inform the House —I am not giving any secrets away or betraying the confidence of the Select Committee, because the information has been widely published—that when the Select Committee first considered what subjects it should investigate, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes bitterly opposed an investigation by the Select Committee of the privatisation of electricity. He did that after receiving strong representations to do so from the Secretary of State for Energy. That is what I understand. However, unfortunately on that particular morning one of his hon. Friends forgot to come to the Committee and Opposition Members were in the majority. Therefore, we took evidence and investigated the privatisation of the electricity supply industry and its effect on the coal industry.

Like several of his hon. Friends, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is familiar with South Africa's ability to export coal. As has been said many times, he went on an all-expenses-paid trip to South Africa earlier this year. However, the hon. Gentleman's time there would have been better served in putting pressure on the South African authorities to improve their safety standards. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in one mining incident alone, at Kinross, 177 people died? The number of lives lost in that single accident exceeds the combined fatal accidents reported in British mines in the past five years.

The Secretary of State acknowledged the lack of port handling facilities in a speech on 13 May. In his evidence to the Select Committee on Energy on 9 March 1988, he

gave as a defence the view that British Coal would not be affected by imports. In response to the questions put to him, he replied:

"we do not have the facilities in this country, they have never been developed, for handling large quantities of coal. They could not be developed quickly. The word "quickly" was omitted from a statement I made the other day. Of course they could be developed, but they could not be developed quickly. Therefore even if we could buy on the spot market the sort of quantities that are needed at the marginal price, and I doubt that, we could not actually get it into this country."

The Bill is an attempt to establish facilities quickly so that we can import coal at the expense of our mining industry.

Mr. Skinner: Before my hon. Friend leaves that point, I draw his attention to another important matter. We are running a balance of payments deficit this year of about £10,000 million. There is a real crisis because invisibles have been run down from £700 million per month to £400 million per month, which will add to the problem. There will be a balance of payments crisis, but we have a Government whose supporters promote Bills such as this with a view to importing South African coal from Rotterdam which will have Dutch labels stuck on it. We are going to have a balance of payments problem and every tonne that is imported will increase the problem. Every barrel of oil that is lost in the ensuing years will make the problem worse, yet we have a Prime Minister who talks about economic boom times being ahead. The Bill must be stopped because it will add to the problems that we already have.

Mr. Lofthouse: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend.

I understand that the proposed support will be capable of handling 100,000-tonne coal carriers or 30 million tonnes of new capacity. That 30 million tonne figure is a magic figure which has been talked about for a long time. It should solve the Secretary of State for Energy's problem and inject the so-called competition to which he referred in the Select Committee. If the Secretary of State's plans for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry are to succeed, he needs that. However, it is worth reminding the House that Britain and the European Community have rightly approved limited sanctions against the South African coal industry. Despite behind-the-scenes lobbying by those hon. Members who visited South Africa, they have not managed to persuade the Government to withdraw those sanctions.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lofthouse: In a moment.

Despite those limited sanctions, Britain imports 200,000 tonnes of South African coal each year from Rotterdam. It is disguised as Dutch coal. Does the sponsor of the Bill, if he is listening—he is again treating the House with total disregard—deny that? If not, I hope that he will join me in condemning the breaking of sanctions through the back door. Does he agree with breaking sanctions and importing South African coal? Did he have discussions about that when he went to South Africa? I have now asked him that three times. I shall give way to him if he would like me to.

Mr. Michael Brown: My position is quite straightforward. I am against sanctions.

Mr. Lester *rose*——

Mr. Lofthouse: I shall give way in a second.

The more answers we receive like that, the more we are led to suspect that, whatever the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes has stated in the Register of Members' Interests, he might have an interest in South Africa at some time in the future. I give way now to the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester).

Mr. Lester: The only reason I ask the hon. Gentleman to give way is that, although South Africa and sanctions are important issues, surely he agrees that the principal problem—the low price of international coal—is caused by Australian and Chinese coal? Although the question of South Africa is raised constantly—I support sanctions and want to see them work—there is also the problem of Chinese, Colombian and Australian coal being dumped on the market at far less than cost.

Mr. Lofthouse: I very much appreciate and understand that point and will come to it later. Wherever coal is imported from, it is a threat to the British coal industry.

There has been widespread speculation in the press that the City is preparing itself for a South African input into the sale of the electricity supply industry. We should treat South African investment in United Kingdom power stations with the contempt that it deserves. Again, did the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes and his colleagues have discussions, either in this country or on their visit to South Africa, about the interests, if any, of South African coal companies in purchasing shares in the privatisation of the electricity supply industry?

Mr. Tony Lloyd: As my hon. Friend knows, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) was invited to make his position clear last night about an article in the *Daily Mail* in which that paper's industrial correspondent had stated that the hon. Gentleman was one of the hon. Members who were encouraging the South African coal industry to purchase shares in the privatised Central Electricity Generating Board. I invited the hon. Gentleman to make his position clear last night and to deny that allegation if necessary, or the House would draw its own conclusions. The hon. Gentleman let the House draw its own conclusions.

Mr. Lofthouse: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point.

If the Bill became law, the House would effectively have signed the British coal industry's death warrant. I wish to have no part in that. I beg for and rely on support from many distinguished people with great experience of the industry, and on in-depth research. Recently, the Institute for Fiscal Studies produced a report which no one could say was deliberately produced on behalf of those with mining interests. I do not want to bore the House too much, but the report outlines the problems that could face British Coal if imports amounted to the magic figure of 30 million tonnes that is talked about so often. Indeed, it is now considered that the figure could be in excess of that. Page 93 of the report states:

"The most important consequence of privatisation, outside the electricity supply industry is likely to be its effect on coal . . . The interdependence of electricity and coal is likely to survive privatisation, but the present price structure may not. The question is whether market forces will continue to point to a reduction in the share of the ESI's fuel input that

[Mr. Lofthouse]

comes from British Coal and, if so, whether the response of a privatised industry to market signals will differ from that of the nationalised ESI."

That report expresses the same worries as those expressed by people with mining interests, who have suffered in the past four years as mining communities have been completely wiped out and no alternative employment put in place.

The report continues:

"The major exporters are all looking to expand output. New producers, notably Indonesia and Venezuela, will have entered the market. And overshadowing everything is the prospect of a major expansion of US supply stimulated by the super-competitive dollar."

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Is my hon. Friend aware that of the 18 pits that have survived in Nottinghamshire, 13 would be at risk if the Bill and other associated Bills go through? That would mean a loss of 12,000 jobs directly to the industry and a loss of between 30,000 and 40,000 indirectly.

Mr. Lofthouse: Recently the Coalfields Communities Campaign published a report. It is a non-political organisation—its title may not suggest that, but I assure the House that it is. In its report it said that if 30 million tonnes of coal were imported it would result in 50,000 jobs being lost in the industry. The report also states that, by 1992, we would have only 48 collieries and 45,000 men in the mining industry who would be producing between 73 million and 80 million tonnes. If that happens, we will be faced with a completely different situation from that in 1984. Since 1984, a total of 80,000 men have been lost to the industry and the mining communities have suffered hardship, but that is not as bad as what we are facing now.

One must concede that, after the strike, a reasonable redundancy repayment scheme was made available. Most of those who took advantage of it were aged 50 and over. Today, the average age of the work force is 34. If 50,000 of that work force go, there will be no weekly pension payment to cushion the blow as there was under the old redundancy payments scheme. Surely no Government can allow that to happen without providing alternative employment.

Although Sir Robert Haslam did not agree with everything in the Coalfields Communities Campaign report, he said that it was a good report and that he agreed with a large part of it. He did not accept the figures that it had produced, but he has publicly expressed the need for some protection for British Coal. He said that if British Coal was not allowed to negotiate contracts with the CEGB prior to privatisation and it was thrown out to rely on market forces, there would be a free for all. Figures have been published in a British Coal press release to support that argument.

If the intention is short-term economic gains and if we leave ourselves open to foreign competitors simply because, in the short term, cheaper coal is available from overseas—much of that coal is subsidised by foreign Governments and mined by slave labour—our pits will close rapidly. It does not need an economist to tell us—a primary school kid could do so—that once we cannot meet national demand from our collieries, international competitors will not keep coal at its present price. We all know what will happen then.

At a recent sitting of the Select Committee on Energy, Lord Marshall was pressed about the consequences of electricity privatisation on coal. Although he would not commit himself fully, he said that 99 per cent.—I believe that was the figure—of the CEGB fuel requirements are met by British Coal. He did not believe that that would continue to be the percentage unless there was some form of protection for British Coal supplies. That was the evidence from an expert witness.

It is appropriate to refer the House to the Energy Select Committee report on the coal industry, which was published last year. I am pleased that the Chairman is present to listen to what that Committee said.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): Is my hon. Friend aware that should the Bill be successful, the developments contained in it, along with similar developments for Liverpool and Southampton, will lead to the demise of five of the remaining six colleries in the north-east coal board area? We are seeing a manifestation of greed, the like of which I have never witnessed. It is greed to maximise profit at the expense of an industry that is producing more than it has ever done before. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is an absolute scandal that we have had to endure the hypocrisy that we have heard from the sponsors of the Bill?

Mr. Meale: Considering the chest beating that took place on the Conservative Benches during the miners strike, and considering the evidence that my hon. Friend has provided, does he agree that if any Conservative Member walks through the Lobby in support of the Bill, it will be a slap in the face for every miner in Nottinghamshire?

Mr. Lofthouse: Yes indeed.

I am a strong supporter of the Select Committee procedures. I have long complained that the Government do not take enough notice of those Committees or of the action that they recommend. I sometimes wonder whether a lot of our work is not in vain. The information received in the reports is always handy because a Select Committee has the opportunity to take evidence from witnesses with first-hand knowledge of a subject.

The report of the Select Committee on Energy published last year was not unanimous—part of it was a minority report. However, the Committee had reached a unanimous decision on——

Mr. Michael Brown *rose in his place, and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

The House proceeded to a Division——

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

Mr. Allen McKay *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. While we spin backwards across the whole of the privatisation of the electricity industry, the mining industry and the nuclear industry—all of which should be given more time—I wonder whether, on a private Bill such as this, those who have a particular interest in it and would have voted for or against it will be debarred from sitting on any Committee that will judge it, should the House agree that the Bill should be committed to a Committee. I would like your ruling on that, Madam Deputy Speaker, before making any decision on which way to vote.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman must have raised this point of order, as other hon. Members have, on numerous occasions. All those who have any interest in a Bill must, of course, always declare their interest. We are now in the middle of a Division. If there are any other points of order, it would be better for the Chair to hear them after the Divisions.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo *(seated and covered):* Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not the case that during such a short debate, with so few speakers, not one Conservative Member who wished to speak against the Bill has been given the opportunity to do so? It is quite wrong and most undemocratic that a closure should be granted at this time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have been very sensitive to this debate and to the entire passage of the legislation through the House.

The House having divided: Ayes 115, Noes 65.

Division No. 377] **[8.29 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'l's)*
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Hill and
Mr. David Davis.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Clay, Bob
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Faulds, Andrew
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Illsley, Eric
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Robinson, Geoffrey
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Strang, Gavin
Wall, Pat
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Kevin Barron.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 110, Noes 63.

Division No. 378] **[8.41 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'l's)*
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Durant, Tony
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*

Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Hill and
Mr. David Davis.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Clay, Bob
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Eadie, Alexander
Faulds, Andrew
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Illsley, Eric
Knowles, Michael
Lamond, James
Lawrence, Ivan
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Meale, Alan
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Robinson, Geoffrey
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Strang, Gavin
Wall, Pat
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Kevin Barron.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed.

Associated British Ports (Barrow) Bill

(By Order)

Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Franks.]*

The House divided: Ayes 95, Noes 35.

Division No. 379] **[8.55 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Rt Hon John
Durant, Tony
Favell, Tony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Monro, Sir Hector
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Hill and
Mr. David Davis.

NOES

Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Clay, Bob
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Eadie, Alexander
Flannery, Martin
Golding, Mrs Llin
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Illsley, Eric
Lamond, James
Lawrence, Ivan
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Meale, Alan
Mullin, Chris
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Redmond, Martin
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*

Strang, Gavin
Wall, Pat
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Michael Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Building Societies

9.5 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): I beg to move,

That the draft Building Societies (Commercial Assets and Services) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 19th May, be approved.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to discuss the draft Building Societies (Limits on Commercial Assets) Order 1988.

Mr. Lilley: The Building Societies Act 1986 spelt out societies' powers in schedule 8. The schedule gave a precise list of the new services that societies could undertake, but as it turned out most societies wanted to use the powers in slightly different ways from that envisaged in the schedule. Societies were therefore constantly frustrated by legal technicalities. Market conditions were also changing very rapidly, and societies had begun to make representations for extensions in their powers in a number of respects.

I announced a review of the schedule in October last year. The main conclusions were announced in my answer on 2 February 1988 to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). Following detailed discussions with the Building Societies Association, those conclusions have been given legal form in the orders.

The orders will do two things. First, they will turn schedule 8 inside out. Instead of—as at present—banning everything except narrowly specified powers, it will permit societies to do anything within broadly defined areas except what is specifically prohibited. That will provide a more sensible and flexible regulatory environment in which societies can operate. Secondly, the orders will implement a wide-ranging extension of societies' powers to provide financial and housing-related services.

The Act was intended to provide scope for gradually extending the range of powers available to societies. However, it has become clear from societies' early experience of the Act that this step-by-step process is not really appropriate. Societies need to know the broad scope of their powers for some years ahead to make sensible long-term commercial plans. Different societies will want to exercise different powers, and each individual society will probably want to diversify into only a small number of new areas. So I concluded that the right approach was to open up a wide range of new powers now, while limiting the speed with which any individual society could diversify into new areas.

This restraint will be exercised in two ways: first through supervision of business plans by the Building Societies Commission, and secondly by easing only gradually over five years the overall limits on societies' holdings of non-traditional assets. Consequently, individual societies will be able to exploit the new powers only at a prudent pace.

There will still be restrictions on what societies can do. They will continue to provide services in the main to the personal sector rather than to companies, but the proposed measures will enable them to compete more effectively in their primary markets. Subject to certain limited restrictions, societies will be able to own or take an equity stake in a life assurance company, to take a limited stake in a general insurance company, to own or take an

[Mr. Lilley]

equity stake in a stockbroker and to undertake fund management—including management of unit trusts generally, rather than just for the provision of pensions.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): In so far as building societies continue to operate as intermediaries, or even if they get involved in becoming insurance companies, what is the position regarding conditional lending? Some building societies in the past have been prepared to advance mortgages to prospective borrowers only on condition that some insurances be effected through the agency of the building society. Is anything in the orders set to confirm the position or, indeed, to reverse it?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend has taken a close interest in this aspect of the matter for a long while. He will be pleased to know that the Director General of Fair Trading has said that he proposes to take an interest in the question of conditionality of services provided by building societies and, I believe, banks. So that will be covered. It will not, however, be covered by the orders that I am introducing tonight.

The other service that will be introduced is the provision of the full range of personal banking services that customers now expect.

Turning to the actual orders, the main one—the draft Building Societies Commercial Assets and Services Order—will replace schedule 8 of the Act with a completely new schedule. This new order will provide the following six broad service powers: banking services; investment services; insurance services; trusteeship; executorship; and land services.

A society will be able to provide any service within these categories unless it is specifically ruled out or restricted by other parts of the schedule. To undertake this wider range of business, societies may need to acquire new forms of asset. Schedule 1 to the draft order therefore contains provisions which will enable societies to acquire mortgage-backed securities and similar instruments; to undertake leasing and hire purchase; more readily to provide temporary bridging finance for house purchase; and to repurchase the residue of a securitised pool of their mortgages. This last measure will enable societies to participate in the secondary mortgage market.

Following on from this review of schedule 8, the Building Societies Commission will shortly consult societies and other interested bodies about making an order to permit societies to own or take an equity stake in companies involved in the acquisition of mortgages from other lenders.

The asset limits which constrain the rate at which societies can diversify will remain unchanged for the present, but it is proposed to increase these limits gradually in the future to provide societies with the scope they need to offer this wider range of services. The draft Building Societies (Limits on Commercial Assets Order), which is also before the House, proposes a gradual increase in these limits between 1990 and 1993 to the maximum extent possible within the primary legislation.

Two further orders are required to implement the conclusions of the schedule 8 review. These will be made by the Building Societies Commission, with Treasury consent, and come into force simultaneously with the rest of the package. The Designation of Qualifying Bodies Order will allow societies to invest in or support new subsidiaries. The Limits on Lending Order will, as previously announced, increase the limit on a society's unsecured lending to individuals to £10,000. These negative orders cannot be made until the orders which we are debating tonight are approved. But drafts were placed in the House Library last month, along with a summary note of the intended provisions of all four orders, so that hon. Members could be aware of the whole package.

These proposals will create a more sensible framework for societies and provide them with a clear basis for their future planning. Societies will have the freedom to develop and compete across a wide range of financial services and to provide a much more flexible and better service to their customers. If these orders are approved, I would not expect any need for such a comprehensive package of secondary legislation on this scale for some years.

I commend these orders to the House.

9.12 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The orders bring about fundamental changes to schedule 8 of the Building Societies Act 1986. They take virtually to the limit permissible under the Act the powers available to societies. They give increased flexibility and freedom and enable societies to offer a wider range of services to their customers.

It is perhaps worth recording a small note of sadness at seeing the old, trusted, familiar, heart-of-the-high-street face of the building society movement changing so dramatically as it has over the past few years. The orders accelerate that change. The trusty, stable, secure image of the building society movement, as part of the housing movement above all, is being modified rapidly before our eyes. We hope that the building societies will never become just any old financial institutions, like all the others. So we do have one or two regrets at the changes which are before us. We recognise, however, that the world is changing and that the building society movement has to change and adapt or it will lose out to less-scrupulous predators.

Before the October crash last year the building society movement was already losing out. Its market share of home lending had fallen below 50 per cent. It is now back up to about 70 per cent., but the movement faces fierce competition from banks and specialist lenders such as the Mortgage Corporation. Such lenders have readier access than the building societies to money on the wholesale market. Since October all that has become less of a problem because of the massive influx of funds into the building societies. Over the past four months they have averaged an inflow of funds of about £1 billion a month.

The movement remains large and is becoming larger. The largest 15 societies together hold about 40 million investment accounts and have about 6·25 million borrowers. We recognise the need for societies to be able to compete. Dramatic changes have been occurring and the orders will hasten more of them.

We shall not oppose the orders. Many of the measures are sensible and inevitable. It is right, for example, that societies should be able to offer proper bridging loans to people buying houses with building society mortgages. The involvement in the insurance business is a logical extension of much that has already been happening. However, we are concerned about the building societies

offering customers too monopolistic a financial service. We, too, are concerned about the issue of conditional lending that was raised by the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle), and we welcome the information given us by the Economic Secretary that the Office of Fair Trading will look into that practice.

We sound a note of caution about the proposals on unsecured lending. We know that the Economic Secretary has not gone as far as the building societies wanted in that respect, and we are glad of that. The Government are right to be cautious. The level of unsecured consumer credit is rising too fast. In May, the volume of retail sales was 8·2 per cent. higher than a year before. Any thriving economy needs a healthy supply of credit, but it should not be lent at usurious rates of interest, as too often happens now. The same applies to the connected problem of rising levels of unsecured personal indebtedness. We hope that the Government will keep a watchful, cautious eye on what happens and on how cautiously the societies operate their unsecured lending powers.

We warmly welcome one positive change of recent years that has been enhanced by the orders—the issuing of current accounts and the direct competition for domestic business with the clearing banks. That does nothing but good for the consumer. The building societies have led the way in paying interest on accounts, in issuing higher-limit cheque cards and in increasing the use of high-technology banking systems. In all those respects, some building societies are beating the banks hollow, and a good thing too. It is about time some of our clearing banks earned the massive profits they have been making from domestic customers. The National Westminster bank, for instance, made a profit on its domestic business last year of £1 billion. It is about time we saw some improvements in service to justify that sort of profit.

We have one other powerful reason for supporting the orders. They make it less attractive to building societies to convert from mutuality to public limited companies. We are deeply sceptical about the rush by one society, the Abbey National, to convert and about the consideration being given to conversion by others. Certainly we welcome the change of mind that the orders and the expansion of powers under schedule 8 have brought about in some quarters.

I was interested to read in *The Observer* of 22 May, almost alongside a flattering photograph of the Economic Secretary, a quotation from the managing director of the Cheltenham and Gloucester building society, who had said last October that conversion was almost inevitable. However, in the light of the altered schedule 8 powers, he says:

"For a society of our size there are relatively few things that we want to do that we can't do as a building society."

That will be true for the great majority of building societies.

Our opposition to flotation is based on several principles. First, at present a society has a duty to operate in the interests of its members, investors and borrowers alike. After flotation, the interests of shareholders will be paramount, overriding all other interests. That cannot, in logic, be good for borrowers or for investors.

Secondly, building societies are remarkable and valuable financial institutions because they borrow short and lend long. That central feature of their financial operation is likely to be damaged by conversion. Thirdly, five years after conversion a plc can be taken over by anyone. Who then will protect the housing interests of borrowers?

Fourthly, after conversion, borrowers may find their mortgages being bought and sold over their heads without their being consulted. That is already happening in the operations of the Mortgage Corporation. I should be grateful for the Economic Secretary's advice on whether such an operation will be made easier for existing building societies under the orders.

Fifthly, we regret that no facility is built into the procedures for flotation for opponents to put their case to members at the society's expense. We hope that the Building Societies Commission will make it clear at the outset that it will use its powers to block conversion if proper facilities and funds are not made available to ensure that the opposition case to flotation is put to members at the same time as the directors' support for flotation.

Because of the orders, we have to ask what is gained when a mutual building society transforms into a plc, except the ability for the directors to gain executive share options. Could that perhaps be not a million miles away from the mind of the Abbey National directors? Doubtless, however, there will be other opportunities to air our concern about flotation in greater detail. The argument that clinches for us the need to reform schedule 8 is that it gives societies the flexibility they need without the new unnecessary process of conversion.

Building societies are a valuable and vital part of our national life. They are mutual societies, owned by their members and acting in the interests of their members, and primarily in the business of lending money for home ownership and providing security for small savers. Long may they continue to do so.

9.24 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I welcome the orders and the increased scope that they will give to the activities of building societies. The orders will play a valuable part in increasing the general level of competition, which can only have long-term—and short-term—benefits for the consumers of their services.

I have every confidence that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has scrutinised these matters with his usual meticulous assiduity. I want to bring to his attention one or two points about which I have some concern. First, the explanatory note to the Building Societies (Commercial Assets and Services) Order—I am confining my remarks to that order—states:

"Article 5 varies Schedule 8 to the Act by replacing it with a new Schedule"

which is schedule 5. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary said earlier that schedule 5 replaced schedule 8 to the Act.

However, paragraph 15 says:

"parts of Schedule 8 (powers to provide services) to the Act are hereby varied so as to have effect as set out in Schedule 5 below."

That seems to imply that schedule 8 is not replaced in its entirety but is varied in part by schedule 5. However, the parts of schedule 8 to the Building Societies Act 1986 do not coincide with the parts of schedule 5 to the order. Many services set out in schedule 8 are not referred to in the order.

[Mr. John Butterfill]

Paragraph 1 of schedule 8, for example, refers to surveys and valuations of land and conveyancing services. I know that conveyancing services are dealt with in schedule 21 to the Building Societies Act 1986. One can see immediately that the two are not synonymous. I should be grateful for clarification. It is not clear to me or to some other hon. Members to what extent schedule 5 replaces schedule 8 and to what extent parts of schedule 8 will remain unchanged by the order.

My next question relates to the extension of the activities permitted under the order. It is a very broad and wide-ranging extension of powers into a number of activities in which building societies—at least in most cases—do not have an enormous amount of experience, such as banking services, unsecured lending, personal equity plans, collective investment schemes, the holding of investments and the establishment of pension schemes.

All those are very worthwhile extensions of the building societies' activities, and I have no objections in principle to those extensions. However, I am concerned that they should be properly regulated and I am especially concerned about investments, in view of some of the recent unfortunate circumstances relating to investments. We should be absolutely sure that regulation is as tight as possible. I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will be able to assure me that the regulatory body set up by the Building Societies Association to monitor those activities will be equivalent to the other bodies that the Securities and Investments Board will be regulating under the Financial Services Act 1986 and that every possible scrutiny will be given to this particularly sensitive area.

I have a further concern about valuations. The House will recollect that there have been a number of scandals and alleged fraudulent activities relating to valuations carried out by building societies, especially when they have been connected with estate agency. I believe that this has been commented on recently by the ombudsman.

Mr. McCrindle: My hon. Friend is addressing himself to the question of surveys and valuations. Will he turn his attention to the first report of the building society ombudsman, who was set up by the Building Societies Act 1986, in which he draws attention to his lack of powers to investigate the many complaints about building society valuations? Will my hon. Friend refer to that report and to the desirability of embracing valuations within the ambit of the building society ombudsman?

Mr. Butterfill: The question of valuations has caused considerable public concern. I hope that additional powers will be given to the building society ombudsman.

I have some worries about what is permitted under the order. Under paragraph 5 of part III of schedule 5 there is a restriction on any employee of a building society, a subsidiary or associated body of which is carrying on estate agency work, whose duties include making reports on valuations or performing any other service for the subsidiary—the estate agency—or other associated body.

Clearly it would be wrong for building societies that might have two financial interests in the same transaction—especially the earning of estate agency commission—to be involved in such a conflict of interest. I should like the matter to be taken further, to include structural surveys and other matters that may be germane to whether the sale takes place. The ability to influence a sale or a purchaser on behalf of somebody providing finance could seriously prejudice the public interest and create unacceptable conflicts of interest for the employee concerned.

Given the incidence of fraud in this sector, I am more concerned that paragraph 5 of part III of schedule 5 is qualified by part IV, which deals with general powers. It gives a building society the power to arrange the performance of anything that it is not permitted to do under the preceding parts of the Bill. That commits building societies to getting other people to do things for them. One can foresee two building societies acting in collusion, with one estate agency arranging matters for the other. That is a danger from which the general public should be protected. They may not be adequately protected by the order.

The penalties in paragraph 6 of part IV of schedule 5 may not be adequate to deal with the possibility of particularly unpleasant fraud. The penalty is

"a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale."

I assume that that refers to the Criminal Penalties etc. (Increase) Order 1984. The maximum penalty under level 4 is £1,000. That may not be adequate, given that frauds have run into millions of pounds. Perhaps we should carefully consider whether that level of penalty is adequate.

I should like the margins by those selling foreign currency to be carefully monitored in general. Changing money has become an activity in which some people are not giving good value to the general public. I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will give a general assurance that he will keep a careful eye on that aspect in relation not only to building societies but to all those who change money.

9.35 pm

Mr. Lilley: I am pleased that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has welcomed the broad thrust of the orders and most of their component parts. His motivation is slightly different from that of the Government, but there is some overlap and a community of regard for the building society movement and the importance of updating it and giving it the freedom to compete and provide services for its customers.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury asked me to reply on two particular points. He asked whether the process of conversion or anything in the schedule would make it easier for mortgages to be sold over the head of the borrower once conversion had taken place. I assure him that members' agreement would still be needed under the normal rules that operate, so there would be no adverse change.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the risk of takeover five years after conversion. The converted building society would then be no more or less likely to be taken over than any other bank of similar size and ownership structure. As a bank authorised under the Banking Act 1979—once converted, in effect a building society becomes a bank—the agreement of the Bank of England will be needed for anyone to control more than 15 per cent. of the voting rights.

The hon. Gentleman gave as his main reason for supporting the commercial assets and services order which transforms schedule 8 the fact that it would make it less attractive for building societies to convert. I should make

the Government's position clear. The Government are neutral on whether any society should remain a mutual building society or should seek to convert. We have endeavoured, therefore, to remove unnatural obstacles and artificial incentives to conversion.

In the Budget, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced the removal of a number of tax obstacles, and this will come up before long in the Finance Bill. This measure removes an artificial incentive to convert. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury was right to say that some societies that felt impelled to consider conversion simply to escape from the straitjacket of the old schedule 8 now no longer felt the need to do so.

Once one has removed the artificial obstacles and inducements to convert, it is up to the members, because the members of a building society are its owners and must make the decision. The hon. Gentleman was correct to say that they should do so on the basis of full and proper information. It will be required, as the Building Societies Commission has made clear, that building societies inform their members fully and not just put facts representing and reflecting only one side of the case. I am not aware of any intention to go as far as the hon. Gentleman suggests and to require them to finance the distribution of views put forward by those opposing conversion.

In an intervention during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) referred to the building societies ombudsman. I have already announced that we intend to review his powers and we hope to have the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar and others on how wide they should be.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West said that he is worried about whether the parliamentary draftsmen have exercised sufficient skill successfully to replace schedule 8 of the order with schedule 5. I have complete faith in the powers of the parliamentary draftsman. Article 5 says:

"The parts of Schedule 8 to the Act are hereby varied so as to have effect as set out in Schedule 5 below."

Schedule 5 is subtitled:

"The parts of schedule 8 to the Building Societies Act 1986, as varied by this order."

The original four parts of schedule 8 are to be replaced by the new four parts of schedule 5. We need not worry about anything having been lost or retained unintentionally, but within those parts different aspects have been shifted around. Matters relating to surveys and valuations are now included under the title "Land services". Personal equity plans and unit trusts are included under the heading "Investment services". Money transmission and arranging credit are included under the heading "Banking services". It is all there somewhere.

Mr. Butterfill: I am sure that the ingenuity of the parliamentary draftsman is such that he must be right, but I can find no reference in schedule 5 to surveys and valuations in the section headed "Land services".

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is a page or two ahead of me. Subparagraphs (a) to (i) of the section headed "Land services" include that information. I am not a sufficiently fast reader to check that it is all there, but if it is not there it is somewhere else. If necessary, I shall write to my hon. Friend and follow up these points.

My hon. Friend referred to the fact that this is a very broad extension of powers at the same time as we are reorganising the structure of the schedule. He expressed concern that building societies may be inexperienced in many of these areas. That is true. However, it could become a self-perpetuating process. The only way for building societies to gain experience is to permit them to do so, but it is important that they should be properly supervised during that process. I think that my hon. Friend emphasised that point. We believe that, by and large, most building societies will wish to diversity into only one or two new areas at a time and to gain experience in them. If they were foolish enough to try to diversify right across the board and to take on more than they could possibly swallow, they would be prevented by the existing supervisory arrangements. The Building Societies Commission is required to vet their business plans. I do not imagine that it would accept a business plan that was not prudent and sound.

I agree that problems have arisen over investment advice. I assure my hon. Friend that, under the arrangements that obtain, investment advice supervision will be equivalent to and as tight as that in other areas that come under the aegis of the Securities and Investments Board.

I understand the point about valuations and, although it may not be correct, we can clarify that in subsequent correspondence. My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West is concerned that building society employees may, although they are forbidden to work for the estate agent subsidiary of that building society, be nonetheless permitted to work directly for the client. I understand that that is prohibited by the fact that building societies are allowed to carry on their estate agency services only through subsidiaries and not through their direct employees.

Collusion between building societies to cross-transfer their valuations is exceedingly unlikely and I will investigate the measures that exist to prevent it. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing that to my attention and, although I suspect that it is hypothetical, it is always important to investigate such things.

I shall look into the question whether penalties are sufficient. They are intended to match the offence.

On margins on foreign exchange dealing, we do not envisage building societies becoming major players in the foreign exchange markets. The provisions are to allow them to provide a service to customers who may want to obtain some foreign exchange for going on holiday, and so on. There is no direct control on margins on that. As in anything else, ultimately it is competition that is needed. By allowing more people to compete in the market, there will be more pressures to bring down the margins, and that is the important thing.

I hope that I have dealt with all the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West and by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury who spoke for the Opposition. If I have not, or if on inspection any points need further elaboration, I shall write to them. Meanwhile, I commend the orders to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Building Societies (Commercial Assets and Services) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 19th May, be approved.

BUILDING SOCIETIES

Resolved,

That the draft Building Societies (Limits on Commercial Assets) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 19th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

PUBLIC HEALTH

Resolved,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) Amendment Order 1988, (S.I., 1988, No. 964), dated 31st May 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 1st June, be approved.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

St. Christopher's Hospice, Sydenham

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

9.46 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): In about six weeks, Her Majesty the Queen will visit St. Christopher's hospice in my constituency, which is celebrating its 21st birthday. Many people who have visited the hospice, which primarily looks after people who are terminally ill with cancer, have testified to the remarkable spirit—one might almost say the remarkable soul—of the hospice. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in the past 21 years St. Christopher's has become an inspiration and an example to the rapidly growing hospice movement both in this country and overseas.

The driving force behind St. Christopher's has been Dame Cicely Saunders, who celebrated her 70th birthday yesterday. I have described her in the past as a jolly saint. It is her humour, energy and faith which have inspired the place. However, it is not, of course, a one-woman show. At the moment St. Christopher's has a staff of 114 nurses who take care of the 62 beds, do the home support work and carry out much of the teaching. St. Christopher's is a teaching centre. That is why we are having this Adjournment debate.

A few weeks ago my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services announced a substantial pay award for nurses, which would cost the National Health Service £800 million in a full year. It was to be fully funded by the Exchequer. There was much rejoicing and a considerable amount of heat went out of the controversy about the National Health Service, at least temporarily. Shortly after the announcement was made I rushed round to see the Secretary of State and the Minister for Health and said, "Please do not forget the impact that the pay award will have on voluntary hospices." I am afraid, however, that the hospice movement was not included in the category that can expect full extra funding to meet the cost of the nurses' pay review.

Let us put the matter into perspective. There are 124 hospices with 2,000 beds and there are many more home care teams. National Health Service support for those 124 hospices varies from zero to 100 per cent. The pay review will cost those hospices an extra £6 million a year. The NHS provides, on average, 27 per cent. of the funds of each hospice, and St. Christopher's hospice comes pretty close to the national average. Last year St. Christopher's spent £3·33 million and received £1,052,000 from the NHS through the south-east Thames region. St. Christopher's reckons that the cost of the pay award will be £408,000, or exactly four tenths of its existing support from public funds. It is not surprising that that figure should be so high. The three most common groups of nurses employed at St. Christopher's are ward sisters, staff nurses and nursing auxiliaries. The average pay of a ward sister at St. Christopher's, with London weighting, is increasing by no less than £3,007 from £11,430 to £14,437. A staff nurse's salary will go up by £2,277 a year and a nursing auxiliary's pay will go up by £1,862 to a fraction under £8,000 a year.

What is the likely impact of that substantial increase in expenditure? St. Christopher's wisely budgeted for the increase in nurses' salaries, but obviously it could not foresee the extent of the increase that was to come. It had set aside £160,000 for extra pay, which would have been

gathered in by further energetic fund-raising efforts. A long-awaited day centre will have to be postponed because the work would cost an extra £150,000. Perhaps the south-east region could be prevailed upon to increase its slice of support, which now stands at almost exactly £1 million, by perhaps £100,000 or so. If that does not happen, we are faced with the ugly prospect that, within a few weeks of the Queen visiting St. Christopher's, some beds may have to close.

What should happen? Naturally I believe that the Government should meet in full the nurses' pay award for voluntary hospices. I know that my right hon. Friend has great personal enthusiasm and sympathy for the hospice movement and I salute him for that. I am sure that he would like to be helpful. However, I expect that he will tell me that there is no extra money.

I must raise a sceptical eyebrow. The regrading process has not yet been completed and, until that happens, health authorities cannot tell with precision how much they may need or will receive. Within the global £800 million NHS settlement, I believe that there is an extra £6 million sloshing around somewhere. I note also that during recent months the DHSS has found £6 million or more for an AIDS publicity campaign which, in my opinion, is badly targeted and a faintly offensive waste of public money.

During recent weeks, to our dismay, the European Court has thrust National Health Service money into the Treasury by requiring it to extend VAT to certain areas, especially the optical sector.

I reiterate my hope that the level of financing of voluntary hospices will be considered within the NHS review. In the early days of its noble career, St. Christopher's received rather more than 50 per cent. of its income from the NHS; now it receives less than one third. I believe that 50 per cent. support is at the right level for an establishment that gives so much help to the NHS and to the people of this country.

9.57 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) for his kind words about me, and I reciprocate, with considerable fervour, by paying tribute to the assiduous way in which, over the years, he has supported the hospice movement in general and, not least, St. Christopher's in particular. It is barely 15 or 16 months since my hon. Friend last initiated an Adjournment debate about St. Christopher's, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) replied.

As my hon. Friend said, I have a strong interest in these matters and, indeed, have some connection with hospices in and around my area—especially the St. Helena hospice in Colchester, which I visited recently, and the prospective hospice in Chelmsford that is nearing completion. I wish all those concerned with the hospice very well indeed.

It is also pleasing to join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to Dame Cicely Saunders. I had not registered the fact that it was her 70th birthday yesterday, but now that I have that additional piece of intelligence, I hope that my hon. Friend will take my belated congratulations and good wishes to her. As my hon. Friend knows, she studied at St. Joseph's hospice in Hackney, where she developed drug regimes for pain and symptom control before she went on to found St. Christopher's hospice in Sydenham in 1967. It is fair to say that she is considerd by many people, and, in my view, rightly so, as the founder of the modern hospice movement. Not only has her work been copied around the world, but it has, literally, changed the face of death for large numbers of people.

St. Christopher's is by no means the only charitable organisation providing care for cancer patients. There are many other voluntary hospices; my hon. Friend has given the numbers around the country, and I have referred to one existing and one prospective hospice in my constituency.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Mr. Newton: For a moment I thought that I had gone out of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I thought that if what I have said was out of order, the rest of my speech is sunk completely. I am glad to know that it was simply the usual procedures of the House producing that otherwise extraordinary interruption.

I should refer also to Marie Curie Cancer Care which runs 11 homes in the United Kingdom and provides day and night nursing for cancer patients in their own homes. The Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund is becoming increasingly well known. It works very closely with the NHS and has provided the capital costs of a number of hospice projects which it has then handed over to the NHS to run. That organisation also helps the NHS with the cost of Macmillan nurses, and plays a major and important role in developing education for doctors and nurses in care of the dying.

It would be fair to say, not least as a further tribute to the work of Dame Cicely Saunders, that the combined total of the effort by the voluntary charitable sector and the NHS probably makes this country the world leader in providing much-needed care for a very important group of patients.

I wish to make one or two general observations before coming to the more specific points raised by my hon. Friend. I want to emphasise that terminal care in Britain is no longer provided exclusively by the voluntary sector, as it was for a time. The Government are firmly committed to providing a full range of good care services for people who are dying from any illness. Our initiative started in 1980, when we set up a working group of the standing sub-committee on cancer to consider the organisation of terminal care services for cancer. That working group was chaired by Professor Eric Wilkes, another widely known and respected personality in the hospice movement, who has done so much to develop it.

The working group's report stated:

"Terminal care is not a matter of new buildings or expensive equipment. It depends primarily on enlightened professional attitudes. Our objective now should be to ensure that every dying patient has access to professional staff who can provide the appropriate care."

The group's recommendation was:

"The way forward is to encourage the dissemination of the principles of terminal care throughout the health service and to develop an integrated system of care with emphasis on co-ordination between the primary care sector, the hospital sector and the hospice movement."

That report was circulated throughout the Health Service.

The Government then decided that it would be useful to bring together people from the NHS and voluntary groups to discuss how each can maximise its contribution to terminal care.

[Mr. Newton]

With that in mind, we organised with the National Association of Health Authorities a major conference in December 1985, which was opened by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. My predecessor but one, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, opened the conference by saying:

"I would like to see every health authority drawing up comprehensive plans for providing services for those facing death. This means looking carefully at the range and type of specialist care which is needed in their district and, where possible, working with local and national voluntary groups to provide the necessary services."

By the time the conference took place, my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe), was the Minister responsible. In his address to the conference he said that the Health Service should make a most careful assessment of the services the voluntary sector is providing and can provide in the future, and that where the voluntary sector was fulfilling part of the need health authorities should make an adequate contribution to the costs involved.

Another speaker at the conference, one of our regional general managers, outlined practical ways in which regional and district health authorities could help the hospice movement. One suggestion was the provision of a more secure financial foundation.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham will be aware, that was followed by collaboration between the Department and the National Association of Health Authorities on a guide for health authorities on good practice in care of the dying. That was issued to health authorities in January 1987. By that time, I had become Minister for Health and it was my privilege to launch that publication, in which there is a chapter of guidance for health authorities on funding terminal care services.

We sought to buttress and support that in February 1987, with a Department of Health and Social Security circular on terminal care—HC(87)4—which asked health authorities to examine their current plans for terminally ill patients and to plan to fill any gaps, where possible in conjunction with the voluntary sector. We have asked health authorities to describe their plans for terminal care in their planning statements, which we expect to receive next month. I assure my hon. Friend that we shall be examining those with care to see whether further action will be necessary.

I have emphasised that because it sets the scene and I hope that it illustrates the effort we have already put in and the commitment that we can claim to have shown to provision for terminal care, based on greater collaboration between the NHS and the voluntary sector. I am glad to say that many health authorities are providing terminal care services of their own and are working well with the voluntary sector.

My hon. Friend is entitled to say, in a rather old-fashioned phrase, which he did not use, that fine words butter no parsnips. Good relations are important but, faced with increasing revenue costs and the problem of competing with many other worthy charities to raise money from the general public, the security of some guaranteed statutory funding for hospices would be welcome.

Hospices are essentially providing a local service, and it is right for the health authority concerned, or a number of health authorities where that is appropriate, to decide the correct level of funding for a hospice or any other voluntary services in support of local health services, according to their judgment as to the right pattern in that locality. It would not be right for us to attempt to second-guess that judgment from the centre. If we did, we would face considerable difficulties.

My next point picks up something said by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham and echoes something that I have said in the House in recent weeks. It seems clear that if the Government were to fund hospices in the same way as they fund health authorities—there was an element of that in what my hon. Friend was suggesting about the way in which the consequences of the recent pay award should be funded—the risk, at the very least, is that the voluntary hospice movement would lose that special voluntary factor which makes it so special and which has been such an important part of its contribution.

Having said that, I acknowledge that, although many health authorities already help hospices financially in one way or another, there are many in the hospice movement who believe that some health authorities do not give them enough. I repeat: we have told health authorities that they should be providing the full range of terminal care services, in-patient beds and home care and day care services, and that where a voluntary group such as a hospice is already providing some of those services locally the health authority should agree with it a contribution to its cost. We have asked health authorities to provide us with information about those arrangements in the planning statements that we expect next month.

It is difficult for me to go further than to repeat that statement of Government policy in my speech tonight. However, I promise my hon. Friend that we shall carefully consider the information we receive from health authorities and will assess the need for any further steps we might appropriately take in the light of the provision which health authorities tell us they are making in terms of hospice support.

I acknowledge the point made by my hon. Friend, that the nurses' pay award could affect many homes run by charities, concerned not only with terminal care but with a whole range of problems, disabilities and medical conditions, where nursing staff need to be employed. I hope that health authorities will be particularly conscious of the impact of nurses' pay on hospices' revenue costs, where there tend to be higher than usual nurse-patient ratios. I trust that health authorities will bear that point in mind when considering the provision they make from the money available to them for 1988-89 as a whole, including —as was emphasised by my hon. Friend—the very large additional sums which have been made available to health authorities for the nurses' pay award.

My hon. Friend said that, last year, St. Christopher's received a little over £1 million from the National Health Service and that of that the South East Thames regional health authority donated more than £900,000 towards the hospice's running costs. I am not sure that my hon. Friend acknowledges that in the present financial year, 1988-89, the region has already increased its allocation by 4·5 per cent. to take account of inflation, which is the same as the inflation element in the region's extra allocation from central Government. That is in itself a significant contribution to the costs of the pay award, in the same way as the 4·5 per cent. inflation element has been treated as a significant contribution to the costs of the nurses' pay

award to the National Health Service as a whole. The Government have made money available to meet that part of the bill that is above that percentage.

I am glad to tell my hon. Friend, who expressed some hopes about this, that my clear understanding is that, over and above the extra 4·5 per cent. that the South East Thames regional health authority has already agreed to provide, it plans to make available this year extra money to help cover the cost of the nurses' pay award. I am not in a position tonight to put any figure on that because that must be for the regional health authority to decide. However, I have its authority to say that it plans to make an additional allocation. I hope that that encourages my hon. Friend in his efforts on behalf of the hospice.

Apart from the substantial help that St. Christopher's receives from the South East Thames regional health authority, it receives assistance from a number of health districts in the South West Thames region, most of which try to relate their funding of the hospice to the costs it incurs in treating patients referred to it by that health authority. I frankly acknowledge that, having looked at the figures, I can see some scope for—how shall I put it?—further discussion between the hospice and some of those health districts about whether their contributions adequately reflect the costs incurred. It would be unwise of me to go beyond that from the Dispatch Box tonight, but I will say that I believe that the South-East Thames region has set a good example, which I hope will be followed by other health authorities concerned with the hospice. I also hope that they will consider the matter carefully in the light of what my hon. Friend has said.

There are a number of other points that I could touch on, and a number of other difficulties that hospices have experienced in some of their financial affairs—in relation, for example, to the cost of drugs, and their dealings with the income support part of the social security system. I hope that some of the work that we are doing will enable us in due course to take steps that will be of additional help to hospices. There is, however, nothing that I can announce tonight. I think that those concerned with the hospice movement know that these are difficult and complex matters, which take time to consider and which need to be considered in a wider context—for example, that of the Griffiths review of community care and its application to income support.

I shall not speculate on any of that tonight; I shall conclude my speech by returning to the central theme which my hon. Friend has raised, and to which I have sought to respond as helpfully as I can. It is our firm policy that health authorities should take full account of the contribution made by hospices to the important aspect of providing our people with health care. While we do not feel it right to go down some of the paths that my hon. Friend has invited me to tread tonight, we strongly wish to urge on health authorities the need to take account of all the factors affecting hospices in considering the amount of financial help that they give. Not least, we urge them to take account of the sort of problems to which my hon. Friend has referred—together with the additional money that the Government have made available for the nurses' pay award this year—in considering how they should respond to those needs, not only in my hon. Friend's constituency but in all the other locations where hospices flourish up and down the country, when considering the pattern of their policy for the remainder of the year.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 24 June 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Policing (London)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn. —*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

9.35 am

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The last time the House debated the policing of London was in July 1986. Last year, the general election came in the way and there was no debate. I am glad to return to these debates in circumstances which are, at least in some respects, more hopeful than those of two years ago.

Policing in 1988 is a hard job. It always has been, and it always will be. Every day of the year, we expect our police officers to face the different consequences of human failure, anger, violence, jealousy and greed. They are backed by the uncertain protection of their uniform and their own human qualities, and we ask police officers to protect us from the daily calamities of our existence. Nothing of that has changed since 1986.

The events of 1986 still cast their shadow. The pictures from Wapping illustrated just what modern policing demands of its officers. Men and women are expected at one moment to be Dixons of Dock Green, and at the next to don protective gear against a barrage of missiles, yet remain restrained and disciplined. Hon. Members will know that the actions of some officers are being investigated by the Police Complaints Authority because of allegations made at Wapping. I cannot comment on cases under investigation, and I do not wish to give the impression that any malpractice—if it turns out that there was any—is excusable, but I emphasise that the pressure faced by Metropolitan police officers then and today should be remembered by all those of us who, often unthinkingly, enjoy their protection.

It is right to be cautious about recorded crime statistics, but it is possible for necessary caution to become unnecessary fatalism. It is too easy to treat rises in recorded crime as signs of some inevitable deterioration, while dismissing falls as quirks in the data. The figures fluctuate—we must remember that—but better figures are still better than worse ones.

I welcome the 4 per cent. fall in recorded crime in the Metropolitan police district in 1987. That does not mean that I claim that crime is defeated or that the tide has firmly turned. I am well aware that the figures for the first quarter of this year were less encouraging, but, despite the first quarter's rise, recorded crime in the 12 months to the end of March was 2 per cent. lower than in the preceding year. Having made all the cautionary points about statistics, I may say that 4 per cent. less crime in 1987 is an indicator of progress, for which the police and members of the public deserve some credit.

Overall figures can mislead. The 4 per cent. reduction masks more spectacular decreases, and increases, in particular crimes and at particular places.

The most disturbing trend was in offences involving violence. In 1987, there was an 11 per cent. increase in offences of violence against the person. Such offences still account for a very small proportion—about 3 per cent. —of the recorded crime total, but the fear they engender and the suffering they cause is especially severe. That is why the police and the courts have to concentrate on them. Crimes of violence can occur at any time and almost anywhere. That means that prevention is especially hard.

The Metropolitan police has issued guidance on ways in which members of the public can reduce the risk of attack, but we cannot eliminate that risk. We can, however, reduce it by increasing the police presence on the streets.

The additional manpower that I have authorised for the Metropolitan police has been granted with the specific intention of increasing street patrols. In 1987, the Commissioner targeted 16 divisions in London in which there was a particularly acute street robbery problem, and made a special effort to provide them with additional resources—particularly manpower. These divisions—despite having severe crime problems—performed better than average. While robbery over the rest of the Metropolitan police district rose by 17 per cent., in the 16 chosen divisions it rose on average by 9 per cent. and in three of the most difficult—Brixton, Clapham and Battersea—it actually fell. The Commissioner was right to target his resources in that way.

Not all groups of violent offences showed an increase. It was especially heartening to note a fall of 11 per cent. in the figures for rape and a small decrease in the number of homicides.

The figures for non-violent offences are more encouraging. In particular, the reduction of nearly 5 per cent. in domestic burglaries must be connected with the efforts that people are increasingly making to reduce crime in their own communities. That investment of effort—usually in the form of neighbourhood watch schemes—was reflected in outstanding local results. In Highbury vale, Holloway, between March and September 1987, two excellent watch schemes on council estates showed burglary figures 20 per cent. and 50 per cent down on the same period in the preceding year. These trends can be maintained. They are not necessarily short term. The 131 schemes in Wimbledon cover almost 44,000 households, and the number of recorded burglaries is almost a fifth lower than in 1983.

Theft of and from cars accounts for almost 30 per cent. of notifiable offences. I find that an amazingly high figure. Our cars are much more vulnerable than our homes or ourselves. We take much less trouble in protecting them, although perhaps we are changing our ways. Theft and the unauthorised taking of motor vehicles fell by 15 per cent in 1987. Like burglary, this a crime that the public can help to prevent by taking fairly simple precautions.

Levels and trends in crime vary not only between types of crime, but also between divisions. The Metropolitan police district covers an immense diversity of communities, from the tourist and financial centres of the west end and the City, through inner-city divisions, to the outer suburbs and the rural fringe. That is why it makes sense that local chief superintendents consult their communities and set local priorities to meet the varying needs of their divisions.

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

In 1988, burglary, rowdyism and autocrime appear in the divisional objectives of divisions like Barkingside, Bexleyheath and Hayes while in divisions such as Peckham, West Ham and Hackney, robbery, drugs and violent attacks are included. The spread of the Metropolitan police district is catered for by the discretion granted to local management. That means that the concerns of outer divisions are not made subservient to those of inner city, or vice versa.

The Metropolitan police is responsible for maintaining the Queen's peace in a capital city. It is an organsation of about 40,000 people, costing about £1 billion each year. That is a huge effort and a huge resource. The Metropolitan police deserves, and I am determined that it should continue to receive, the resources that it needs, but we must be clear that those resources must be used to the best possible effect.

Let me deal with the provision of resources in a little more detail. The main resource is manpower—men and women, civilian and uniformed. Manpower accounts for about 80 per cent. of police spending. The strength of the Metropolitan police has never been greater. At the time of the last bulk intake of recruits on 6 June, the strength of the force stood at 27,786, which is a record. The figure is 5,550 higher than it was in May 1979. That means greater cost, because one cannot police on the cheap. The consequences of policing on the cheap were all too plain 10 years ago in the lowering of morale and in the number of police forces way below establishment.

The provision of proper pay for police officers has improved matters immensely. Ten years ago, forces simply could not recruit up to their establishments. Today, we have not only increased those establishments; we have provided the resources to realise them. The Met is no exception. Today, its strength is about 99 per cent. of establishment and it expects to reach before the end of the year the increased establishment that I announced in April. Provision has been made for a further 300 officers next year. That shows that we are talking not about paper figures and rhetoric but about real support for the police.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I apologise for missing the first couple of minutes of the Home Secretary's speech. I accept that he is making efforts to increase establishments and to recruit. Will he tell the House whether the problem of the retention of police officers in London has been dealt with equally successfully and progressively? The great concern of London Members is that the established force in a particular division or district may be reduced when key people leave suddenly to take up another position in the force. Policing London is difficult, and young people especially find it difficult to stay. They are tempted to go to quieter parts of the country. Is the Home Secretary confident that we are dealing with that problem, because people in London consider the retention of police officers to be one of the signs of a coherent and committed police force?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. We have managed to achieve record strength in the Metropolitan police despite the problem he mentioned, which is a very real one. That is why, in the Police Negotiating Board, the official side is trying to work out a reorganisation of the London arrangements to concentrate the extra resources available on retention rather than on the London allowance, which covers everyone. That proposal is in the negotiating machinery at the moment, and no doubt we shall return to the matter.

Spending on the Met has increased by 59 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79. That is a huge increase. Taxpayers and ratepayers in London strongly support that increase, but they are entitled to ask whether the money is being well used. In the foreword to his annual report for 1987, which was published earlier this month, the Commissioner wrote:

> "Quite rightly we must, along with other public bodies like education, health and social services, show that we give value for money."

In an organisation of the size of the Metropolitan police, which has a huge range of tasks, it is not at all easy to measure value for money. However, the police are beginning to do that more effectively.

Some portray the Met as an uncontrolled bureaucracy with too many expensive officers stuck behind desks. Let me give some facts to refute that. Last year, there was a reduction of 344 in headquarters staff and an increase of 752 in the number of officers on area. More than 400 additional constables were on divisions between March and the end of the year, and 13 per cent. more hours were spent on street duty by divisional police constables. There were 6 per cent. more arrests. That push of resources into the field—it is not easy to achieve—is a tribute to the present Commissioner, who has made an outstandingly good start, and to his predecessor, Sir Kenneth Newman.

People want more officers out in the streets. Street duty is up by 13 per cent. People want criminals arrested. Arrests are up 6 per cent. People want officers in their areas, not in distant headquarters buildings. The number of headquarters posts went down by more than 300, and posts on areas rose by over 750. The average division of the Metropolitan police had five to six more uniformed police constables at the end of last year than at the beginning. Civilianisation is steadily releasing officers from desk jobs. In the first two years of the manpower programme that I announced in May 1986, around 200 officers were released by civilianisation to operational duties.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I refer the Home Secretary to resources and the expansion of requirement. Is it not a fact that a considerable proportion of the £1 billion comes from existing ratepayers, with a national proportion from the Exchequer, to deal with the national responsibilities of the Metropolitan police? Therefore, when we change to a poll tax, persons will literally pay for the protection of persons.

Is it envisaged that a significant proportion of money will come from the national commercial property tax to pay for the protection of property? The Home Secretary is quite properly talking about value for money, but it is not at all easy for the voter who pays poll tax to evaluate it. These are important, fundamental issues, and perhaps the Under-Secretary of State will refer to them in his winding-up speech. The poll tax payer will pay a significant amount of money.

Mr. Hurd: Yes, but we do not intend to reorganise the way in which the policing of London is financed. Therefore, there will be a continued contribution from the business rate. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will elaborate on that.

I was about to refer to the importance of special constables. They are not substitutes for regular officers, and they are not used to offset demands for increases in police establishments, but they are an invaluable additional resource and a link between police forces and the community. I am glad that the Commissioner has undertaken a scrutiny into the Metropolitan police special constabulary, and I look forward to hearing the results. I hope that all police officers, and also those outside London, will respond constructively to recommendations to strengthen the role of specials. I understand that there are historical misgivings about using part-time volunteer officers. If there is a lingering traditional view in some quarters that, in some way, specials are a threat and hindrance to the regular force, it does not bear examination in 1988 and should be abandoned.

I am aware also of the need to prevent the Metropolitan police from being regarded as a force entirely by itself. It is important that the best practices of provincial forces can be spread to the Met, and vice versa. We have takena big step forward. With my full support, the Commissioner invited Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary to start a programme of inspections of selected parts of the Metropolitan police. That has never happened before. The first inspection of community involvement and crime prevention branches has been completed, and we are studying its findings. Further inspections of particular areas of London and of particular functions will follow. That is an important advance in securing further gains in the effectiveness of policing the capital.

That big organisation—40,000 people and £1 billion—will always have areas in which its effectiveness can be improved, but I am sure that important work has already been done. I commend the initiatives that I have mentioned and others as examples of what the Commissioner described as efforts to achieve a

"leaner, fitter and better integrated"

force. But, of course, they are not objectives in themselves. They are improving the means to an end. The Commissioner and the police authority at the Home Office quite rightly put emphasis on the end to which resources are aimed. That is why the Commissioner has continued the priorities about force goals. I shall spend a little time on that matter, as each priority directly affects the quality of life of Londoners, and each one concerns activities that can injure or frighten people.

The first priority is the reduction of criminal opportunity. The involvement of members of the public in crime prevention is the key. I have already mentioned neighbourhood watch schemes. They are the most popular example, illustrated by the striking fact that more than 1 million London households have joined them. There are professional doubters. Of course the quality of schemes varies a good deal—it is bound to vary—but the professional police assessment of the Commissioner is:

"I have no doubts whatsoever about the effectiveness of Neighbourhood Watch; my support is unequivocal".

Of course, the Government have a part to play in creating the right structures for crime prevention. The various Government-funded schemes that are available for crime prevention—the community programme, the urban programme, and the housing investment programme—are well used in London. We have just invited the boroughs of Lewisham and Tower Hamlets to become part of the first group to join our new safer cities initiative. I hope that they will give me a positive response to that invitation. They know that the Metropolitan police will fully support the programme. As the House knows, we are building on the success of our five town-Home Office initiatives in the past year or so and some excellent crime prevention work that is already under way in London.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Does the Home Secretary agree that the safer cities initiative is actually an admission by the Government that just putting more police on the streets is not the way to solve the rising problem of crime within inner-city areas?

Mr. Hurd: I do not know whether any sensible person has ever argued that putting more police on the streets is the only way. It is not a sufficient way. It is a necessary part of it, but I do not think that anyone has argued—certainly I have never argued—that, by itself, it is sufficient. The safer cities project, with the full backing of the police, is based on the idea that we make progress by bringing together—locally and specifically—all the different agencies that can help towards the prevention of crime. For example, the hon. Gentleman knows of the Government-funded task force in north Kensington, security improvements to shop fronts and homes around All Saints road, the crime prevention shop, and better street lighting. That is just one example. There is another task force in north Peckham, employing 150 people—mostly local people—to improve the security of pensioners' homes. Once again, the police are closely involved.

But crime prevention is not concerned only with physical security. Methods of policing, which can forge closer links between officers and local residents, can be invaluable. We do not usually find a commendation of our efforts in the magazine "Time Out", but hon. Members may have read a striking article in it earlier this month, describing the system of policing the Pepys estate in Deptford and the impressive reductions in burglary and motor vehicle and street crime. Estate policing, which means a team of officers dedicated to a certain estate, has been tried in several London divisions, and the Commissioner is exploring the scope for extending it.

They are the informal police-community contacts that help to bind the police and the community more closely together. There is also a need for more formal arrangements that have been laid down by the House. I refer to the rather fraught history of police-community consultative groups in London. In the past, those who are opposed on doctrinaire grounds to any constructive contact with the police have sought to thwart the formation of such groups, and those who desire to control policing for their own ends have tried to distort their purpose. As every hon. Member knows, it has been uphill.

I am glad to say that we have now reached the stage at which all London boroughs except one—Newham—now have consultative groups. I understand that a group may soon be established in Newham. The police have persevered in establishing these groups. It must have been discouraging—they met hostility from time to time—but it is a considerable achievement for them and for people of good will in different political parties who have helped them.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the Secretary of State concede that the establishment of the consultative groups was foreshadowed many years ago by the policies of the Greater London council, which wished

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

to see more democratic control of the police? The response of the police was eventually to agree to the establishment of those consultative groups, which, I am glad to say, now operate in all but one London borough. Surely the Home Secretary should give some credit to the Greater London council for the work that it did in trying to bring the police closer to the rest of the community in London?

Mr. Hurd: No, it was precisely the doctrines of the GLC —which, unfortunately, lasted beyond its demise—which got in the way of the process that I am trying to describe diplomatically. People tried to use the fact that there were to be consultative groups to assert, by the back door, political control over the policing of particular boroughs. That is what happened, and that is what has eventually been worn down. I do not want to upset what in some places is still a delicate situation, but the hon. Gentleman has provoked me into doing so. As the shadow of the GLC ceases to hang over these deliberations, we have been able to move on a bit.

Through consultative groups, Londoners can make a contribution to the realisation of the police service that they want, and the police can tailor their effort to gain public co-operation and satisfaction. I hope that that process will continue.

From prevention, I turn now to detection. Some difficult decisions are bound to have to be taken on this. Clearly the police have to set priorities because the demands on them are almost inexhaustible. That is why the Met has now introduced crime screening, a technique which concentrates detective resources on those crimes where clear-ups are most likely.

I should dispel two misunderstandings about this. First, all serious crimes are automatically investigated—none is screened out. Secondly, there is no screening out of categories of crime simply on the grounds that they are minor. There is no question of an "amnesty" on, for example, the theft of cars. What crime screening does—it is an honest and cost-effective way of dealing with the problem—is to divert effort away from crimes where a solution is unlikely, to those where the chance of a conviction is higher. That is bound to create occasional disappointment if crimes are not followed up because there are insufficient leads. However, that is better than going into a whole series of mechanical investigations which will not lead anywhere, when the resources—the police officers involved—could spend their time solving, preventing and detecting crime.

Tucked away on page 52 of the Commissioner's report is the appalling statistic that assaults on officers on duty rose by a third in 1987. That fact should be in all our minds because officers continue to perform their duties in a professional manner in such circumstances. That is an impressive testimony to the force.

Government and public must work together to clean violence out of the atmosphere of London, because I think that we would all agree that violence is the worst form of pollution. We cannot allow this city to degenerate to the level of, say, Los Angeles, New York or Miami. That is why we have asked the House to approve changes to the laws on firearms and offensive weapons. The use of knives in crime in London, and elsewhere, remains unacceptably high.

I need not rehearse the discussions that we have had on the Criminal Justice Bill, except to say that, when the Bill completes its stages, as I hope it will next week, it will be an offence to have any knife except a folding pocket knife in a public place without good reason. The onus will be on the possessor to show that he has a good reason. That will make the job of the police easier in dealing with people they find in possession of knives. It means that people who casually carry knives should take note that they will no longer be able to evade the law; they should leave knives at home.

I turn now to another form of violence——

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Secretary of State give way on the issue of knives?

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman once more, but that is his ration.

Mr. Corbyn: In that case, I am deeply grateful to the Home Secretary. Like everyone else, I welcome any attempt to reduce the number of knives that are carried in public because they can be used for crime. Has the Home Secretary considered whether there is any possibility of reducing the number of outlets that can sell open or sheathed knives; is he prepared to introduce any regulations for the curtailment of such points of sale, or to follow up those people who buy large quantities of those knives for later private sale?

Mr. Hurd: I was generous in giving way to the hon. Gentleman for a second time. As only four Labour Members are in the Chamber it seemed reasonable to give him a second go as a reward for assiduity. Of course we have looked at that possibility. We have adopted it in respect of certain types of martial arts weapons, and under the Criminal Justice Bill the sale of such weapons will be outlawed. However, we have not adopted it for the wider range of knives—that is the problem—for which there are perfectly legitimate uses. It would be difficult to find a way of restricting such knives at the point of sale. Therefore, we have turned, I believe with the support of the Opposition, to operating on possession in a public place.

I turn now to racial attacks. I know that the House has always wished us to concentrate on them, because they are a particularly ugly form of violence. A year ago, the force adopted a new policy and new guidance on the recording and monitoring of racial incidents, and many divisions have made racial attacks an essential priority. The increase of 26 per cent. in racial incidents in 1987 has been at least partly attributed to the encouragement which the police have given the community to report incidents, and arrests have increased by 28 per cent.

As the hon. Members for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will know, in Newham a dedicated squad has been established to counter such attacks. In Newham and Ealing, and recently in Redbridge and Tower Hamlets, extensive campaigns have been mounted to provide information in different languages, advice on reporting racial incidents, and simple measures to avoid them. The training for new recruits emphasises the importance that the force attaches to tackling racial incidents.

Organised crime often hits the headlines, and it is right that it should do so because it poses a particular threat to society. The various forms of organised crime, particularly

drug trafficking and robbery, must be given high priority. I hope that the new confiscation provisions in the Criminal Justice Bill will help in that effort.

Policing the Underground is the responsibility of the British transport police; but the Commissioner and I know there is considerable public conern about crime on the Underground. I have discussed this with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, and he has undertaken a number of measures to improve policing on the Underground. I am especially concerned, as is the Commissioner, about the need to ensure that, although there are two forces, they work so closely together that there is no effective division between them.

I have been into this issue carefully in recent months, and I believe that liaison is generally excellent. I hope that hon. Members will share with me their impressions on that issue. When I opened the new Uxbridge police station the other day, I was impressed to find a British transport police officer serving there in liaison and on attachment to the Metropolitan police station to ensure the total co-ordination of police operations dealing with crime in that busy part of the Underground.

Neither the police, nor we in this House and the Government should or can forget the victims of crime. They are one of the Commissioner's priorities. We have shown our commitment to victim support through a substantial and expanding programme of funding for local schemes, which will rise to £4 million a year by 1989-90. Several London schemes are taking part in special projects, funded from this source, to look into the needs of the families of murder victims and victims of racial attacks, in close co-operation with the Met and other agencies. The police have excellent relations in London with the many victim support schemes. They have made special efforts in the last few years to provide a sympathetic service to victims. That includes the provision of eight suites for the victims of sexual offences, five of which are operational.

The final target of the Commissioner's strategy is the maintenance of public tranquility and the policing of public disorders. That is one of the hardest areas of policing in London. Whatever tack the police follow, they are sometimes criticised. If they police too lightly, the atmosphere in our streets can become insecure and intimidating; if they police too heavily, young people in particular will complain of aggressive policing. It is satisfactory that major public disorder in London has mercifully been less frequent recently, but we should not be complacent. The levels of minor disorder in London are still unpleasantly and uncomfortably high, even though, through a lot of hard work by many people, we have managed to avoid a repetition of the disastrous riots of 1981 and 1985.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Hurd: I have been quite generous in giving way. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman quite merits it. Of course, that will not prevent him from speaking in the debate and I shall conclude so that he and others can do so.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I am surprised that the Home Secretary has not mentioned alcohol. One of the threats to tranquillity and the preservation of security, is the enormous amount of crime and vandalism occasioned in London and elsewhere because people drink too much and then misbehave. On a Saturday night in the Old Kent road, the entirely sober citizen has to run the gamut of hordes of people spilling out of pubs, having had far too much to drink, and police vans with sirens racing up and down as if it were an American inner-city highway. Will the Home Secretary tell the House what can be done in London to make sure that alcoholism is reduced and security increased?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right to say that far too high a proportion of crimes in London and elsewhere are committed by people whose natural self-control has been destroyed or weakened by drink. That is particularly true of the young, and it is certainly becoming a substantial problem. It has always been a problem, and it is now becoming more substantial. That is why, in the Licensing Bill, for example, while permitting adults to have a glass of beer or wine in the afternoon, we are tightening up on under-age drinking. That is why we are looking at the powers available to licensing justices and the police to clamp down on particular places—not necessarily pubs, as supermarkets are one of the main sources of this stupid alcohol abuse—so that the existing powers can be used more effectively to solve specific problems.

We shall certainly need to return to that subject. I agree that it is not peculiar to London; it is a national subject. We have to move fairly cautiously not to appear hypocritical or over bossy. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is certainly entitled to draw attention to that subject, which requires a response from the Government, law makers, parents, teachers and all those who can influence people towards sensible rather than stupid drinking.

Mr. Tony Banks: This is an important matter, and while we have the Home Secretary at the Dispatch Box it is useful to direct his mind to the issue. I have the leave of the House to introduce a ten-minute Bill on the labelling with health warnings of all alcohol products for consumption. There has been some demand from hon. Members from all sides of the House for control on the advertising of alcohol products. Do any of those proposals appeal to the Home Secretary?

Mr. Hurd: I am not sure that those particular proposals appeal to me, but my right hon. Friend the Lord President chairs the ministerial group which the Prime Minister set up to examine all those proposals, and he is looking particularly at the proposals of Lady Masham's report on the subject; the Government will reach conclusions about them.

I do not think that Opposition members would argue that it was easy to get the balance right. We do not want to tip over into bossiness, which would simply antagonise people and not advance the position at all. We cannot avoid the need to steer people away from the stupid drinking which undoubtedly lies at the heart of a good deal of minor and major crime.

There are a number of matters that I have not mentioned, because we have other occasions to discuss them. I have not mentioned the work of the Metropolitan police against terrorism, because we shall be discussing our efforts against terrorism in the next Session. I have not talked about its work with schools, although I believe that

[Mr. Hurd]

it is crucially important. I have stuck to the main priorities mentioned by the Commissioner, which I believe are the right ones, and I fully support the goals that he has set.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has been speaking on these matters to the electors of Kensington in the past few days. I expect that we may get the same analysis from him today, and I find it particularly confused. The electors of Kensington may not have heard the old gospel. So the new gospel may appear convincing to them. But to those of us who have heard the old gospel, the new gospel does not make very much sense. We remember when it was the Labour party's view that the Prime Minister was responsible for crime because she had created poverty and unemployment. Now the right hon. Gentleman is saying that she is responsible for crime because she has created prosperity and affluence.

In the old gospel, the Labour party believed that the police were responsible for many of the problems in London and therefore should be treated with hostility and at arm's length.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Will the Home Secretary tell me when I said that the police were responsible for crime in London?

Mr. Hurd: I am not saying that the right hon. Gentleman said that. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) referred to the GLC. The whole tradition of GLC thinking, which we easily can document from the past, was precisely that the police were part of the problem and not part of the answer. We have constantly heard that theme not from the right hon. Gentleman but from his predecessors. There are hon. Members present today who know that to be perfectly true.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. The House should know that, in Ealing, the Labour councillors have always refused to sit on the police consultative committee. But they spent £600,000 on what is as much an anti-police committee as that conducted on the GLC by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng).

Mr. Hurd: Many of my hon. Friends could corroborate what I have said; it is perfectly true. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is now trying to make up for the years of neglect and hostilty towards the police. But he does not seem to have told the London Labour party, which continues, in vestiges, to obstruct. I mentioned the borough of Newham and the consultative groups. In several areas it continues to obstruct the formation of neightbourhood watch schemes, the putting up of signs and so on.

Mr. Spearing: Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Hurd: No. I have given way to the hon. Member twice.

Mr. Spearing: No—only once.

Mr. Hurd: I stand by the main point that I am making, that vestiges of the London Labour party have not received the new message.

I welcome the new message, because I have set out to drain the politics out of policing issues. I welcome the fact that in most parts of the country, we have made substantial progress. We have made some progress in London. We are draining the venom out of some of the issues. The very sensitive reaction from the small number of Labour Members here today shows the truth of that. They have a considerable way to go, as I think all Londoners understand.

Mr. Spearing: I should be grateful if we could get away from the venom that the Secretary of State has mentioned. Will he accept that whatever may have occurred in the past, the protracted discussions, which have now been concluded, in the London borough of Newham to set up the statutory consultative group will produce the sort of group and the sort of debates that he and I, and my hon. Friends, will welcome? Therefore, Newham can now be excluded from his strictures.

Mr. Hurd: I know that the hon. Member has worked hard in the direction that he favours, and I pay tribute to him for that. I am not complaining about him, but he knows that in the London borough of Newham, part of which he represents, there have been precisely the elements, with precisely the message and attitudes, that I have described. That is one reason why the process has taken so painfully long.

This is the first debate since the new Commissioner took over from Sir Kenneth Newman. In an organisation the size of the Metropolitan police force, expected to perform an ever more complicated range of duties, there will occasionally be weaknesses. We require our police to be managers, accountants, personnel officers, social workers, detectives and comforters. They are committed, across this huge range of duties, to the highest professional standards, and a single misdeed by one officer can tarnish, for a moment, the reputation of his or her 28,000 colleagues. That is why the Commissioner, with my backing, is committed to dealing firmly with all cases of misconduct.

There is an absolute need to maintain the highest professional standards. Whatever our other disagreements, we can all agree on supporting the impressive efforts that the police carry out in London to do that. It is a tribute to the Commissioner, the 28,000 officers under his command, and the 13,000 civil staff that, in the difficult circumstances that I have described, and that he describes in his report, they are striving with increasing success to deliver an increasingly efficient and effective service to the people of London.

10.22 am

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The Home Secretary addressed us for a little less than 50 minutes. I make no complaint about that. As what passes for a police authority in London, he has the duty, as well as the right, to give what amounts to a report to the House on the crime in the capital over the past year and the prospects for policing in the next. However, he might have spent just a little of those 50 minutes, or have added a few minutes to them, by saying something about the reasons for the causes of crime inside and outside London. He gave an analysis of crime in the capital but said not a word about why crime is here and why it has increased over the years, apart from a single sentence in refutation of what I said last Thursday—I am pleased and gratified that the Home Secretary described it as likely to impress the

electors of Kensington. We had nothing whatsoever about why crime has been steadily on the increase over the past decade.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): And before.

Mr. Hattersley: Yes, but not as fast as in the past decade.

I have an explicit point to make about the Home Secretary's allegation about my right hon. and hon. Friends. When challenged to give examples, he said, rather feebly, that it could be easily documented. If it can be, what a pity that he did not bring with him a document which would have given him one example. The most recent example of the attitude of hon. Members towards the Metropolitan police comes from the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), who has spoken in support of ticket touts, many of whom are operating illegally. That is one example, and no doubt civil servants will now run around in the next four hours to find an example that the Under-Secretary can give in the other direction at 2 o'clock.

As we are on to the trivial matters raised by the Home Secretary, I hope that when the Under-Secretary tells us of the assaults by the GLC on the Metropolitan police, he will also tell us whether, in the immortal word used by the previous Home Secretary, the right hon. Gentleman proposes to "disown" those members of his party who support illegal action. Does he propose to disown the hon. Member for Billericay, who has supported ticket touts, who often are acting illegally?

I shall now deal with more serious matters than those raised by the Home Secretary. It is necessary to say something about the causes of crime. I do not doubt that two of its principal causes are unemployment and poverty. Nor do I doubt that those causes are particularly potent here in the capital, when grinding poverty in some parts of the city exists cheek by jowl with great affluence. Nor do I doubt that an additional cause, and one that makes it difficult to attack the symptoms, is the physical condition of the places where many London citizens live. The condition of London estates, the dilapidation of tower blocks and the absence of adequate lighting could be improved by additional public expenditure, but they have been ignored or neglected by the Government, who have even positively prevented such improvements.

On the other hand, and this is the point to which the Home Secretary was kind enough to draw attention, I equally have no doubt that a new cause of crime, which is, according to the Chief Constables' Association, a new form of crime—the crime committed by the affluent young—is the result of values that are increasingly fashionable in society and which have been advocated and encouraged by the Government. A Government who have spent almost a full decade extolling the virtues of getting rich quick, of abandoning responsibility for other people's health and housing, and making a profit out of medical and community services, ought not to be surprised when some young men translate that philosophy into the belief that they have the right to do whatever they choose on Saturday night, as long as they pay for the damage afterwards.

Like the Prime Minister, those young men believe that there is no such thing as society, only individuals. Anyone who has seen on television young brokers, bankers and commodity dealers celebrating a financial killing in the City wine bars must realise two things. The first is that those young men are the direct product of a society that the Government have created.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): They were born when you were in control, you berk.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope not to have to listen to the use of that word in the Chamber again.

Mr. Hattersley: I do not want to offend your ears by using the word again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I am talking about hooliganism being the direct product of Conservatism, the fact that a Conservative Back Bencher uses a word that you and I consider improper, but no doubt is the common parlance of his normal conversation, illustrates my point better than I can illustrate it with second-hand examples.

I was saying that those young men whom we see on television celebrating financial killings in the City wine bars are clearly the product of the Government's philosophy, and in philosophy and spirit they are not very different from the upwardly mobile hooligans who drive out from London on Saturday nights and tyrannise home county market towns. I have little doubt that often they are the same people.

In short, a Government who base their philosophy on Mr. Ivan Boesky's philosophy that there is nothing wrong with greed ought not to be surprised when one of its byproducts is an intolerable increase in the crime rate. The Government exalt the City of London, but when so many of their friends and supporters there are prosecuted, allegedly for trying to get too rich too quickly, we must not be surprised if that sort of idea becomes contagious. It simply cannot be a coincidence that crime increases under this Government; the Government have created the climate in which it breeds.

Yesterday at Question Time, whenever the Home Secretary said anything remotely enlightened about race relations and immigration, he was heckled, chivveyed and chased by mutterings and mumblings from his Back Benchers. If that is the philosophy and ethos that Tory Back Benchers create, should we be surprised when there is an increase in crimes of racial violence and racial attacks?

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I am fascinated by the right hon. Gentleman's thesis that all the increases in crime can be laid at the door of the Government, whom I support. As in my judgment the largest single factor in the increase in crime is drunkenness, will the right hon. Gentleman give evidence of where the Government advocate getting drunk?

Mr. Hattersley: I was about to give another example of the Government's behaviour. They give brewers what they want by extending licensing laws——

Mr. Wilshire: That is nothing to do with it. One can get drunk without going to a pub.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman says that that is nothing to do with it; the ability to drink on Sunday afternoons has no influence on Sunday afternoon violence. The Government gave brewers the licensing laws that they wanted and said that if we were patient we would soon hear their proposals for preventing the abuse of alcohol

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and the increase in crime that comes from it. That is an exact example of the Government giving in to vested interests without caring whether it affects the crime rate.

Mr. Boateng: I regret that the vagaries of London Transport prevented me from hearing the Home Secretary expressing his concern about racial harassment. I am glad that he did so and I am aware of his concerns about it. A number of Labour Members went to see the Commissioner of Police only the other day precisely to reiterate our concerns and alarm at the 26 per cent. rise in the incidence of racial violence in the capital.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that not only the police but all of us have an important role to play in creating a climate in which there is no room in our communities for those who engage in racial attacks? A responsibility falls on politicians to set the tone and on local authorities to adopt a multi-agency approach to the issue. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is not enough simply to talk about it and that we must apply the resources to address the problem?

Mr. Hattersley: I agree with my hon. Friend. If the immigration policy of this country has at its root the suggestion and implication that a few more Asian husbands entering the country is a bad and dangerous thing, it is bound to breed a climate in which the far, dangerous and unacceptable end of the philosophy turns into attacks on Asians who are already here.

I move from what I regard as the only possible conclusive explanation of why crime has continued to increase to discuss and describe the assault on its symptoms, which was the burden of the Home Secretary's speech. He spoke explicitly and specifically about the two measures, relating to knives and guns, that he has taken during the lifetime of this Parliament. He was kind enough to say that the Opposition had facilitated the passage of the parts of the Bill that reduced the prospects of knives being employed and freely sold for the wrong purposes. Of course we did, and we similarly supported his attempts to reduce the damage and death that might be caused by the improper use of guns. The problem that the Home Secretary had over the Firearms (Amendment) Bill was not with Labour Members but with Conservative Members. A Government with a majority of over 100 who have such problems with their own supporters cannot claim to be competent in managing their business, and certainly not competent in producing the right sort of Bill.

Clearly, the crime rate in the capital is causing its people increasing apprehension—greater than at any time this century. I do not think that we should be surprised at the concern that has been expressed, because, despite the marginal improvement in the figures, which I shall discuss with the Home Secretary in a moment, crime in London continues at a terrifying rate. I know that the Home Secretary says that overall, year on year, there was a marginal reduction, but he conceded that it has been a bad first quarter this year. I hope that he will agree that the claims for a marginal reduction are based on the number of notified crimes. The problem with that statistic is that a large proportion of the crimes committed in London are not being notified because of the policy of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is right; the figures, by definition, are for recorded crime. As the British crime survey showed, a substantial body of crime is not recorded, but that has always been so. My impression—this is also the impression of the police—is that the proportion of crime getting on to the books is increasing. As we increase police numbers and improve police relations with the community, the proportion of crimes such as sexual crimes, which previously might have been kept hidden, getting on to the books is increasing. I turn the right hon. Gentleman's point in the other direction.

Mr. Hattersley: That may be the Home Secretary's impression, but it is not mine and it is not borne out by the facts. I shall give one of the reasons why I believe him to be wrong. Crime screening, which the Home Secretary endorsed at Question Time two months ago, is causing great concern. It is a policy whereby the Metropolitan police say, "Short of resources as we are, there are certain kinds of crime that we cannot respond to quickly and there are some crimes that we cannot respond to at all." The net result, apart from its effect on relations between police and public, is that people say, "Since they will not come round even if we phone them and since they believe that this is the sort of crime that goes on round here and that there is nothing they can do about it, there is no point in reporting it." I believe that that attitude has led to a fundamental change in the statistics.

Even if the Home Secretary's guess is right and the evidence as I have tried to describe it is wrong, we have had a bad first quarter, and in some areas there have been substantial increases year on year. Robbery, racial attacks and offences against the person, including assaults and woundings, have increased. Those problems are matters for great concern, not complacency.

The clear-up rate has not improved at all; it is exactly the same this year as it was the year before. *[Interruption.]* The Home Secretary is producing more figures out of the hat, but I shall rely on the Commissioner's figures rather than the political judgment of what the Commissioner should have said.

It is extraordinary that, years after it was claimed that more policemen were being devoted to the task of crime prevention and detection, that they were being put on the beat and that civilians were being used to ensure that the police were used for their primary task, the clear-up rate has not improved. Again, that is in part why the Commissioner introduced what he called graduated response or crime screening—a system of not replying to crime calls immediately and not replying to some complaints at all. The phrase "crime screening", which has slipped into jargon, is a decision to take no action against some offences and to give such low priority to others that it amounts to no action.

The police and community must work together to combat crime. I can think of nothing more likely to undermine people's faith in the police than somebody phoning the police because an offence has been committed but being told when a reply is eventually obtained, "This is not something to which we give high priority. If you live in this area this sort of thing is bound to happen. We do not have the resources to deal with these crimes."

In his annual report, the Commissioner said:

"Simply we must decide at a Force level where the priorities lie and concentrate upon them. We cannot meet every demand and make every demand a priority."

I have some sympathy with the Commissioner because I believe that he is short of manpower. I hope that the Under-Secretary will say, according to the Commissioner's analysis, exactly how short of manpower the Metropolitan police are. The assistant commissioner for personnel and training, Mr. Sutton, wrote to me about that subject in December last year. The Home Secretary said that force levels are now almost up to full strength. In December they were 400 below the full establishment of nearly 28,000, which is as near to being at full strength as a large force can probably be at any one time. The assistant commissioner for personnel and training said in his letter:

"force levels ought to be judged against the 1986 judgment written into the annual report that an extra 4,000 men were needed to meet basic day-to-day policing demands and increasing workloads."

In 1986, the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis believed that 4,000 additional policemen were necessary. As I understand the additions that have been obtained and approved since then, and as I understand the confirmation of those decisions, as descried by the Home Secretary, the force level has increased by about 1,600. That means that the Metropolitan police are still 2,500 men short of what they need if they are to fulfil their responsibilities.

I emphasise again that if the Metropolitan police are so short of manpower that they cannot meet many of the calls on their services—which they may not regard as high priorities but that people who have had minor offences perpetrated against them certainly regard as of the highest priority for them—the loss of faith and confidence in, and respect for, the Metropolitan police will have an appalling effect on the proper relationship between police and people.

If the Commissioner believes what he says, and I am sure that he does, about the importance of that relationship, he must go out of his way to attempt to improve what he called a

"steadfast confidence in the style of policing"

in the capital and to convince many people, who now believe that they are neglected, that they will not be neglected and that their calls on the police will be dealt with at the first possible opportunity.

I have some sympathy with the Commissioner when he says that existing force levels make it impossible for him to meet all the demands made on him. The Commissioner lays the blame for that fairly and squarely on the Government. He says in his report:

"it is difficult to impact violent crime significantly with our present resources and, simultaneously, to maintain an adequate standard of service across the full spectrum of other responsibilities."

I have no doubt that that is right, but I was deeply depressed by one of the Home Secretary's responses to the dilemma, as revealed last Thursday in his speech to the House. He spoke about compulsory identity cards as a means of reducing crime. Inevitably that proposal received a great deal of publicity. I am opposed to compulsory identity cards. It involves a denial of civil liberties that I regard as intolerable. My main objection to the flotation of that idea is that it does not have a chance of being implemented. Not even this Government would introduce such a measure. It is an alternative to serious thought about how crime in London can be reduced. At its best it is a counsel of despair. What we want, particularly from the Commissioner, are not headlines but action, and that action has to be encouragement of the police and people to work together.

My basic thesis is that for the police and people to work together the police must be seen to be doing the job that the people want them to do. I want to pursue for a moment how capable the police are of performing that task in the light of their present manpower shortages. I have already asked the Under-Secretary about total numbers, about the 1986 estimate that 4,000 more police were needed and about the calculation that fewer than half of them have been recruited. I want to ask him another question, which I understand applies to London and I know applies to other police areas. I shall ask both questions together and perhaps the Home Secretary will answer them at the same time.

Do more men necessarily mean more policing? Does an increased establishment automatically mean more police hours?

I am told by some authorities outside London, and I suspect that it is true of the capital, that one of the net results of the extra recruitment has been a massive reduction in expensive overtime. Although there are more men on the force, there are no more policemen on the beat or anywhere else, because policing hours have not been changed by the much-vaunted increase in recruitment. If the Home Secretary wants to answer both those questions now, I shall give way. Alternatively, the Under-Secretary of State might like to reply later.

Mr. Hurd: I shall answer the right hon. Gentleman's first question and leave the second one to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary. The right hon. Gentleman will want to be fair about manpower in London. A constraint on manpower in the Metropolitan police force has not been imposed by me for some time. I have been increasing the establishment ahead of what the Metropolitan police, despite all their recruiting efforts, have been able to match. The right hon. Gentleman was perfectly right that when he received that letter last December the deficit was 400. It is now below that figure. We are now approaching the time when the Metropolitan police will have managed to recruit and maintain the force up to the level that I fixed, so we have to consider the force level for the future. In the recent past the constraint on manpower was not imposed by me.

Mr. Hattersley: I take the Home Secretary's point, but I hope that when he has time to consider it the Under-Secretary of State will deal with the direct point that although in December 1986 the assistant commissioner for personnel and training said that, to fulfil the task adequately, 4,000 men were needed, only 1,600 of those additional 4,000 men have been recruited. It is difficult not to conclude that the officers and the Commissioner and his staff believe that the estabilishment is too low. I hope also, because the two questions go inexorably together, that the Under-Secretary will tell us how my analysis of police manpower applies. I fear that the reduction in overtime has been so great that, in terms of men at work and hours of policing, the increase in London, and outside it, of available police time has been not nearly so great as is sometimes suggested.

Mr. Spearing: On an associated topic that I hope to raise in the debate, but it would be appropriate to raise it now, is my right hon. Friend aware that because of the misguided value-for-money policy, limitations have been placed on vehicle mileage? When my constituents have phoned the police about a certain matter that is not considered by the police to be of sufficiently high priority

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they have been told that insufficient mileage is available and that the police have run out of their mileage ration. Is not the Government's value-for-money attitude counter-productive in public relations terms and in every other aspect?

Mr. Hattersley: That is another example of the crime screening policy that I was astonished to hear the Home Secretary fully endorse when I asked him about it two months ago.

To respond to what people need is an essential element in obtaining their co-operation. I want to see a partnership and co-operation between the police and the public. I know that that is important to the Home Secretary, who would never find himself totally at home in the run-of-the-mill political battle that portrays the Labour party as violently anti-police. I make it absolutely clear that I want to see co-operation between individuals and the police in the schemes that the police may propose: the safer cities initiative, crime watch schemes—I am a member of such a scheme—and co-operation between the people's representatives and the police.

I shall continue to argue about the importance of an elected police authority that has no day-to-day control over police operations but is able to guide the police on the priorities of the people for whom they provide protection. My reason for wanting such an authority is that without it I believe that there will never be the co-operation between police and people that I want to see. I remember very well the days of the watch committees outside London. They were considered to be not a Red revolution but a simple, sensible practice. Watch committees that could forge a relationship between police and people would be right both inside and outside London. As with all other aspects of policing, they would make possible the most important ingredient: a successful partnership between police and people.

I want the consultation groups to prosper. The reason why they are beginning to take hold is that the Home Secretary—like his predecessor—has begun to give them some marginal functions. The more functions such groups have the more they are likely to achieve the purpose that the Home secretary wants.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge the Commissioner's regret that, although there are consultative groups in the boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hackney, Haringey and Lambeth, the majority party in each of those boroughs—the Labour party—does not take part in them? Will he tell his hon. Friends that?

Mr. Hattersley: I should like them to take part, and if the hon. Gentleman wants me to repeat that, I am happy to do so. However, I understand why people are reluctant to play a part in organisations that they believe have inadequate power and purpose. I repeat that the greater the real powers given to such groups the more likelihood there is of people with real concern for the community's welfare taking part in them.

I have gone on for almost two thirds of the very long time that the Home Secretary took to make his speech. In London, we want a proper partnership between police and people. There will be no lasting or significant reduction in crime rates until that happens. The Home Secretary deludes himself if he believes it will ever come about while the police in London are so savagely restrained by the cost limits he has imposed on them and by their inability to perform all the tasks that the people of London want them to do.

More importantly, even when the police have the manpower, facilities and resources they want, crime in this country will increase until we encourage a different standard of values, based on the needs of the whole community. The Government are incapable of encouraging such a standard, so crime will go on increasing until the Government go.

10.52 am

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): In due course I shall refer to some of the points made by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) but I must say first that he should be awarded nought out of 100 for his knowledge of criminology. He, alas, has little real understanding of the causes of crime. He has a long way to go. Should he remain with us in his present capacity for a little longer, he may well profit in the course of his journey.

This is the first debate on the Metropolitan police under the commissionership of Sir Peter Imbert, who succeeded Sir Kenneth Newman in August 1987. It behoves the House to pay a warm tribute to Sir Kenneth for the excellent service that he gave the people of London. We shall look back on his commissionership with gratitude in the knowledge that he set the structure and administration of the force in good order. I know that Sir Peter intends to carry on that policy and ensure that the force succeeds in its ultimate objectives.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook once again drew out the Labour party's policy of what he called an elected police authority. It might be helpful if we considered for a moment the nature of the Metropolitan police district, because it involves more than just the policing of London.

The boundary of the Metropolitan police district includes the 32 London boroughs and eight outer districts. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), who represents one of these districts, here today. All told there are 84 London members of Parliament, and eight Members whose constituencies are included, in whole or in part, in the eight outer districts of the Metropolitan police area. Thus, 92 hon. Members in all represent constituencies in the area.

There is an excellent relationship between Conservative Members and the Commissoner. We look forward to our regular discussions with him and his senior policy group on policing objectives for London.

Contact takes place not only at the top; it exists with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in his capacity as the police authority. No one could be more available or accountable to hon. Members who represent the Metropolitan police district than my right hon. Friend, whose ear is always inclined to us when we wish to communicate our concerns or interests about the progress of the force.

More importantly for us all and for the people who reside in the Metropolitan police district is the burgeoning contact at local level between the divisional chief superintendents and their staff and the local community in the London boroughs and districts, the neighbourhood

watch schemes and local residential associations. Those are the contacts that really matter and it is by means of them that the public can communicate the order of their concerns and priority. As my right hon. Friend has already said, the police must plan their priorities locally.

It is also important to consider why the Home Secretary is the police authority. It is not only because of the size of the Metropolitan police; it is also because of their additional functions at national and international level. For example, the Metropolitan police have an anti-terrorist branch, a special branch, a royalty and diplomatic protection branch, a national central office for the suppression of counterfeit currency and a national identification bureau. They liaise, on behalf of the police service of the United Kingdom, with Interpol. The serious crimes branch still provides support for major investigations overseas and for murder on the high seas. That is one significant reason why the Metropolitan police, alone among British police forces, must be under the control of, and accountable to, my right hon. Friend who reports directly to this House.

The cost of the Metropolitan police in the current financial year is more than £1 billion. It is worth considering how that sum is funded. The Home Office police grant provides 51 per cent. What is still quaintly referred to as the imperial national services grant provides 2 per cent. to cover the special services to which I have just referred. Those two items, plus the block grant total 70 per cent., leaving the ratepayers of the 32 London boroughs and the outer districts to find 30 per cent. The Metropolitan police precept for the London boroughs and districts for 1988-89 is more than £309 million, which is 16·5p in the pound—a 9 per cent. increase over 1987-88. Broken down, the figures mean that a Metropolitan police officer costs more than £25,000 a year, which is a great deal of money.

The force must therefore, in the words of Sir Peter Imbert,

"place an emphasis upon economy, efficiency and effectiveness."

We are all realists. We cannot expect the costs of the police to go on rising without regard for the importance of other services. The Commissioner is quite right to emphasise efficiency. I know, too, that the London Boroughs Association is concerned about the increase of 9 per cent. in the precept. It, too, wants value for money of the same kind that it is required to give in the services it provides to its electorates.

I particularly welcome the Commissioner's 1988 strategy document, which deals with issues that people in London want to be addressed. His reference to continuing to improve the quality of service provided to the public is important, and his reference

"to improve the support to, and the use of that support by, the operational arm of the Force in order to assist all officers in providing an improved quality of service to the public"

and a reduction in crime of all kinds is the objective that should be achieved in the year ahead.

The force's establishment is at a record high of 28,115. That, together with the civil staff ceiling of 13,701, provides a total of 42,000. That makes the Metropolitan police one of the largest police forces in the western world. I welcome the recent increases in the establishment, but I think that future increases must depend upon proven need. As the problems of recruiting in the London area are difficult because of the rising employment prospects, we must be realistic. The force will find it increasingly difficult to find both police and civilian manpower to take up future vacancies. With that in mind, it is essential to examine the existing use of resources and practices.

I want briefly to discuss two areas that might be considered, one of which lies within the sphere of influence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to consider with his colleagues in Government, and the other within that of the Commissioner. The first is the use of police resources on what is called the operation of radar guns and radar speed traps in the Metropolitan police area, which takes up a fair amount of the time of the police traffic department.

I have carefully inquired about what effect those random activities have on the speed limits on our roads. I think that the House will agree that there is no discernible impact on speed. However, the consequence is that a great deal of time, money and effort is spent on what amounts to a giant lottery. Motorists are stopped on a random basis, are prosecuted and fines imposed with little profit either to the police or to the public. The Commissioner should reassess the use of high-cost resources on that task. I venture to suggest that it is so absurd that we could create a sort of premium bond arrangement at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre and just select the names of motorists at random, for all the good that those operations achieve in the reduction of speed.

The second area, which is within the scope of the Government, is the use of the police for the collection of vehicle excise duty. I am advised that the Metropolitan police annually sends some 250,000 reports of vehicles apparently not having an excise licence to the Department of Transport. That is a large number. In addition, the special exercises carried out from time to time take away the services of expensive police officers on what is essentially a revenue-raising activity. The time has come to transfer the collection of that duty from the excise licence to the price of petrol, thus removing at a stroke no fewer than 12 criminal offences, which also take up the time of the police and are a substantial cost. The police recognise the importance of maintaining a register of the keepers of vehicles, but there are other ways of protecting that position. For example, in Australia and West Germany the identity of the vehicle keeper is tied to the number plate that is obtained on an annual basis, when both the insurance and, where appropriate, the test certificate are checked. It would be possible to create such a system in the United Kingdom. It would be both self-financing and cost-effective, and would, at a stroke, reduce the misuse of police resources, thus releasing existing resources for proper policing duty, which I think the House wants.

In part, that answers one of the points raised by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, who spoke about the need for about 4,000 more police officers. I think that we should concentrate more directly on how we can make better use of existing resources, and the two proposals that I have made to the House are, perhaps, worthy of consideration.

Mr. Hattersley: I have a small correction. It was not I who referred to 4,000 more police officers; it was the Commissioner. That is a significant distinction.

Mr. Wheeler: I was quoting the right hon. Gentleman's speech, but it was indeed the previous Commissioner, when assessing potential police needs, who made that

[Mr. Wheeler]

point. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman understands my argument about the better use of resources.

One of the outstanding stories of recent years has been the involvement of the public in crime prevention. We all agree that the reduction in opportunist property crime, especially burglary, has been brought about by the combination of the police working with the public at all levels—in the local community through the increasingly successful neighbourhood watch schemes, with the business community, with local authorities and so on. That has helped to reduce that part of the crime problem. Most crime in London is petty, random and opportunist, so it is what the public do to help themselves that will reduce the burden of that crime, not necessarily the number of uniformed police patrols.

The Commissioner has been talking about the special constabulary and he has another idea of how the public can be better involved in helping to reduce crime. The use of the Metropolitan special constabulary should be re-examined to determine what special role it could play as part of the overall package of crime reduction in London. Alas, at the moment we have only about 1,500 special constables for the entire Metropolitan police district. It seems that an increase in public interest in that force would enable the policing of London to be improved still further.

The Commissioner has studied the special constabulary in Hong Kong, where a bounty is paid to encourage people to participate in its work. A few years ago, on a visit to Singapore, I studied the policing structure there. As the House knows, Singapore is a modern, confined city, with tower blocks, and it has many of the social ingredients of London. In each of the residential tower blocks one resident is a special constable. He is equipped with a uniform; he provides the liaison with the neighbourhood watch scheme; he helps to organise it; he relates to the local beat patrol; and he provides a very effective form of communication.

We could use and develop the special constabulary in London to perform in a similar way. It could be done without causing the regular police officer concern about non-professional or unpaid people absorbing part of his duties and responsibilities. The special constable does not usurp the functions of the highly trained regular police officer; he or she is merely an aid to the police.

Despite what the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said, I believe that the Metropolitan police are making considerable progress in dealing with those crimes that cause great concern to people in London. For example, I welcome the Commissioner's active involvement in dealing with child abuse, and in examining the complex and difficult problems of domestic violence and racial attacks. The mere fact that police have begun to focus more attention on that subject alone means that more of those offences will, of necessity be reported to the police. There has not necessarily been an increase in crime, but it is now being reported and considered as part of the police target and concern.

The police, too, say that despite advertising about the different ways to make complaints about the police, they are actually receiving more compliments, in writing and by telephone, than complaints. That suggests that the people in London do not view the police in the same way as some Opposition Members.

I am glad to note that there have been 200 more arrests for crimes of violence this year. It is worth remembering that, again, such crimes are often random. The fact that the overwhelming majority do not involve serious violence does not make these crimes easier to bear for the victim, but they need to be put into perspective. They are random and opportunist and, therefore, even more difficult to clear up, but the police are making progress. Last year, the clear-up rates for crimes involving serious wounding or rape had a 50 per cent. clear-up rate. Those high clear-up figures betoken great effort by the police as well as co-operation from the public. Crime prevention work, through the use of radio and television programmes, helps the public to communicate information to the police.

Fear of crime can be as damaging as crime itself. Many people, especially the elderly, believe that it is not safe to use the streets of London and that going out in the evening or after dark is somehow more dangerous than going out at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. All that is nonsense. The facts from the police are that those most at risk from violent crime are those whom we would describe as able-bodied young men. Most of these crimes take place in the middle of the afternoon rather than the evening. That is not to say that there are not pockets of London where serious crime affects the elderly and women. This crime is confined to 16 of the 75 Metropolitan police divisions. About 50 per cent. of the serious crime occurs in those areas. The reasons are complex. I do not have the time to go into the details. Suffice it to say that the police are increasingly targeting those specific areas and carrying out a much more detailed analysis into who is at risk, why and what environmental factors contribute. Through that approach, we shall begin to reduce serious crime in some parts of our capital city.

I conclude on an optimistic note. By any test, the people of London and its millions of visitors live in and visit one of the safest capital cities in the world. Despite what we have heard in the debate, crime rates here remain the lowest in the world, serious crime is contained and, where it occurs, is more certain of being detected than anywhere else in the world. That is a remarkable achievement. All hon. Members subscribe to the aim of continuing that achievement. I thank the Metropolitan police for their service to the people of London in the expectation that its quality will continue in the year ahead.

11.12 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I welcome the opportunity to debate policing in London, as it is two years since our last proper debate on it. It is regrettable that there are not more hon. Members here to participate.

I welcome the debate because London is unique in Britain in that it does not have a democratic police authority. Indeed, the police authority—the Home Secretary—has just left the Chamber. It is high time the House addressed this matter. The Greater London council argued forcefully and consistently for the right to have an elected police authority for London that could decide policing policy and tactics. I strongly support the idea of an elected police authority. If it is good enough to have police authorities in other parts of the country—albeit with the limitations that many have—what is it about

London that requires it to have a police authority who represents Mid-Oxfordshire and not even a London constituency?

The money spent by the Metropolitan police is not accountable in any way to Parliament, and that is not good enough. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is accountable."] Conservative Members claim that it is accountable. Unfortunately, it is not directly accountable. We are debating a motion for the Adjournment of the House. There is to be no vote, and there will be no opportunity for us to go through present or planned police expenditure in detail, and there has never been such an opportunity in the past. The only opportunity to do this is during the debate on the Home Office Estimates.

Mr. Simon Hughes: There may be good reasons why the Home Secretary has had to leave the Chamber, but does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is evidence of the problem that the police authority for London, who is the Home Secretary, cannot devote the time to be present during the debate on the police for London? Clearly, the right hon. Gentleman, as with any other person in charge of any police authority, should be here for the whole debate. This is not a personal criticism; I am talking about a structural problem—that the police authority for London is the Home Secretary as well.

Mr. Corbyn: It is extraordinary that, in the first police debate in two years, the police authority for London is apparently unable to remain here for the whole debate. He has left us with the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), and I do not know whether we should be grateful for that. Presumably the hon. Gentleman has some influence on what the Home Secretary says.

Page 115 of the annual report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis shows that the income last year for the Metropolitan police was £9[illegible]5 million. That is nearly £1 billion, far more than for any other local authority in London—far more than for the Inner London education authority or for the GLC. Is it satisfactory that this level of public expenditure can go ahead in such an unaccountable way?

The annual report refers to manpower and establishment levels. The Home Secretary said that the police in London were under establishment. The force establishment this year is 27,815 and the force strength is 27,434, so there is only a minor difference. It allows for people leaving, so the force is not seriously under establishment.

I note that the force establishment has increased consistently year on year. In 1977, it was 26,628, and in 1983 it was 26,915. Conservative Members consistently claim that local authorities in London are over-staffed for the decreasing population, yet the police force in London has gone up year on year for that same decreasing population—and, frankly, there has not been an enormous improvement in the crime clear-up rates.

Mr. Dicks: Surely there is a distinction to be made. An experienced officer may resign or leave to join another force, and it takes time for his replacement to get the necessary training and experience.

Mr. Corbyn: I well understand that, when a senior officer resigns and joins another force and is eventually replaced by a younger recruit on promotion, the force has lost one person of great experience and possibly gained one of less experience. Nevertheless, the force is near its establishment level, which has consistently gone up.

I have not been able to work out by what means police establishment figures are fixed. Deployment of officers was one point made in the arguments for democracy and control of the police force. Many of us would argue that there should be many more officers on the beat and more local involvement by the police force, yet I detect within the police expenditure figures a greater propensity by the police to spend more money on high technology and to undertake more motorised policing, which is far less effective than other means and often becomes intimidatory. When I hear sirens at midnight on police cars screaming up and down Seven Sisters road, keeping me awake, I wonder what on earth they are doing of value when there is no traffic hold-up through which they need to make their way.

I should also draw attention to the clear-up rate for crimes in the Metropolitan area. Table D on page 92 of the report shows that the rate has remained consistently at 16 per cent. In some areas, it is much higher and that is very welcome, but the basic clear-up rate has not improved much at all.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The 16 per cent. clear-up rate for London must be put into perspective. The national rate is 33 per cent., and even that is poor compared with 1980, when it was 40 per cent. The clear-up rate has decreased substantially since the Government came to office.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Conservative politicians seem to spend every weekend making speeches about the problems of law and order. Next year, unfortunately, will be the 10th anniversary of the Conservatives coming to office. It is not good enough for them to complain that everything wrong in society is due to what happened before 1979, when they have been in office for 10 years, during which violent crime and crime generally have increased and the clear-up rate has not improved substantially. We need some straightforward honesty from Ministers and their supporters.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Some hope!

Mr. Corbyn: As my hon. Friend rightly points out, that may well be a faint hope. Nevertheless, we should at least see some humility on the part of the law and order lobby, given that lawlessness and serious crime have increased. Commercial crime and City fraud have increased exponentially since the Government came to office, but the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) probably favours that, as she seems to support a free-enterprise economy in ticket fiddling at Wimbledon.

The Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) mentioned various forms of crime and follow-up rates. My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) rightly drew attention to the increase in the reporting of racial incidents and attacks in London and to the slight increase in the clear-up rate. I still believe strongly that a large number of offences which clearly come within that category are not reported or recorded as such, either because people are not aware that they can report them as

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such if they believe them to be primarily racially motivated or because of reluctance on the part of police officers at certain stations to do so.

I believe that there is serious under-reporting of racial incidents and attacks in London. In this debate, we must make it absolutely clear that racial attacks and racism in any form are totally unacceptable and that it should be the highest possible priority for the police to ensure that the culprits are brought to book at the earliest possible opportunity. Unless the police make it clear that this is a high priority, the signal will go out to the racists in society that the police do not regard it as a major crime or a matter of the highest priority. It must be made absolutely clear that racial violence is not acceptable at all in this city or anywhere else.

Another important issue mentioned by the Home Secretary is the incidence of rape, other sexual violence and domestic violence. The number of cases reported has increased in recent years, but I believe that a substantial number of women who suffer rape or other sexual attack still feel, for various reasons, unable or unwilling to report the offence to the police. It thus does not appear as a recorded offence and cannot be followed up because the police do not even know about it. Far more thought needs to be given to the protection of women on the streets of London at night and to a system of reporting, following up and investigating incidents which does not put the woman concerned under further stress or difficulty. The police could then be encouraged to follow the matter up, as I believe that there is still serious under-reporting of such offences.

A related but no less important issue arises from the fact that local authorities in London have suffered badly from Government policies and expenditure cuts. Women's refuges and women's aid and advice centres have been seriously affected, and many are having difficulty making ends meet. The funding problem for them is as serious as it is for law centres and other advice centres. The continual increase in police establishment and expenditure without a corresponding increase in the clear-up rate throughout London should be seen in comparison with central Government's continual criticism of local government and the cuts in expenditure which have destroyed local authorities' ability to provide many necessary services.

That must be brought to the attention of the House, because crime cannot be separated from social factors. It is time that the Government realised that high unemployment and homelessness have an effect on drunkenness, alcoholism, drug-taking and crime. It is no use the Government preaching against a lawless and criminal society if they encourage crimes such as commercial fraud, as the hon. Member for Billericay apparently does, and do nothing about the awful social divisions and deprivation which are increasing year by year and day by day in London.

Just a short distance from the House, by Waterloo station, a little bonfire burns every night as a group of homeless men try to keep warm. That is the only place they have to sleep, just as others sleep in cardboard boxes under Charing Cross station. Those are the social divisions that now exist in London.

Mr. Wilshire: The hon. Gentleman makes a fascinating argument, but he should get his act together with the Labour Front Bench spokesman. We were told earlier that the problem was caused by affluence and prosperity. We are now told that it is due to poverty and deprivation. The Labour party should think its policies through and speak with one voice.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman has made his point, and mine as well. He seems not to appreciate that there is a correlation between crude yuppies buying Porsches in the City and the number of people sleeping on the street. The tax rip-offs that are used to buy second homes, swimming pools and extended holidays mean an increase in the number of people sleeping on the street because there is insufficient public expenditure to provide housing for them. The Tories have always supported the creed which blames poverty on the poor. We believe that the poor are the victims of the society created by the Conservatives and the Government whom they so avidly support.

Mr. Wilshire: Last time the subject of homelessness was aired, the Salvation Army in London said that there was no need for anyone to be homeless.

Mr. Corbyn: There would indeed be no need for anyone to be homeless if a large number of previously privately rented houses were not deliberately kept empty by property speculaters as a result of Government policies. It is sheer hypocrisy for Tory Members to blame the poor unfortunate people who have to sleep in cardboard boxes when they themselves put those people on the street, splash them every night as they drive past in their Porsches and kick dirt in the faces of the poor. They are the people to blame for the situation faced by so many people in London, and it is a matter of grave concern.

In my constituency and in those of my hon. Friends there is a terrible homelessness problem. What has the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) to say to the homeless men thrown out of bedsits in which they had lived for years and forced to sleep in the street in the most undignified way because they cannot afford the private sector rents that the Conservatives are so keen to jack up to extortionate levels? I appreciate that the debate is about policing in London, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but other matters are revelant and I do not apologise for digressing, as I am sure that you understand why I feel so strongly about this subject.

Discussions have taken place between Labour Members and the Home Secretary and the Commissoner of Police of the Metropolis, and various other meetings have taken place about the events which occurred during the printing dispute at Wapping. The background is that the subsidised entrepreneur Rupert Murdoch came in and destroyed 5,000 jobs, moved his printing industry to Wapping and was then surprised that there were objections to this and a year-long dispute with the printing unions.

The activities of the police during that year merit close examination. I often attended the picket line at Wapping and I saw what happened on 24 January. A large crowd gathered peacefully, most of it at a rally to hear the problems suffered by print workers because they had lost their jobs. We heard how they were being treated after giving a lifetime of service to newspaper printing in Fleet street. There was continual police provocation throughout

the evening. Police horses were consistently ridden straight into the crowd, which was hemmed in by gates. The violence was disgraceful and shocking.

We know that there have been investigations within the Metropolitan police, and I understand that the findings have been reported to the Home Secretary. Complaints were entered against more than 100 officers. They were sifted by the Northamptonshire police, and some cases have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions. We understand that the DPP is now considering what action to take against certain officers.

This is the appropriate time for the Minister to tell us what action will be taken. It does the public's confidence in policing in London no good still to have no public statement 18 months later. If police officers wantonly committed acts of violence, we need to know about it. It is in the interests of the police that the officers' names should be made known, and that we should know what action is to be taken.

We have raised with the Home Secretary and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis the influence of freemasonry in the police force in London. The Home Office is well aware of that influence, and it must be aware of the article in *The Independent* of 19 February by James Dalrymple, who explained in some detail the Manor of St. James's Lodge, which is composed entirely of members of the Metropolitan police.

Many of us are gravely suspicious about the influence of freemasonry. I am utterly opposed to it and to the influence of other secret organisations because I believe them to be a deeply corrupting influence on society. That influence has been highlighted by the case of Chief Inspector Woollard who investigated allegations of incompetence and misconduct by a building contractor working for the London borough of Islington. During his investigation, he discerned considerable masonic influence among officials in the company and in the local authority. As he came closer to concluding that the influence of freemasonry in the administration of the contract had been great, he was removed from the case and sent to the Metropolitan police's equivalent of running a power station in Siberia.

Masonic influence is serious. The Commissioner, Sir Peter Imbert, has made it clear that he is not a mason and that he is concerned about masonic influences. I have here a list, for 1986, of members of the Manor of St. James's Lodge, No. 9179 of the masonic order, which starts with the right hon. Lord Farnham, who is the leader of the lodge. There are many people on the list. I shall not read it all, as it would take too long, but I shall give the first few names, as I assume that they are highly placed in the hierarchy, although I cannot pretend to be an expert on masonic procedures. The list begins:

"The Rt. Hon. Lord Farnham, Sir Peter Lane, Norman M. Jacobs, The Rev. Dr. Michael Morgan, Cdr. Michael B.S. Higham, Peter G. Lowndes, Peter C. Neivens, Lt. Cdr. Norman J. Nuttall."

There are 30 other names of people who I understand to be employees of the Metropolitan police or senior officers in it.

Is it not a danger to society that such a lodge exists, and apparently has great influence? I am worried that Chief Inspector Woollard was able to uncover what appears to have been serious corruption. He strongly believed that masonic influences were at work, but when he was about to bring his inquiry to a conclusion, he was pulled off it. He is no longer a member of the police force.

We need a clear statement from the Home Secretary in which he makes it clear that he opposes masonic influences of any sort and that police officers should be asked to sign a declaration of interests and membership of organisations such as many local authority officers and councillors are asked to sign, Freemasonry is incompatible with being a police officer.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I am not a freemason and know nothing about freemasonry, so I have no axe to grind, but when the hon. Gentleman talks about "masonic influences", he draws enormous inferences. He ought briefly to explain what he means by masonic influences.

Mr. Corbyn: I am suggesting that the power of a masonic lodge on any organisation is sinister and insidious. If an organisation decides to discipline an employee or one of its members, and that person happens to be a freemason and others in the organisation are also freemasons, they decide to get together to sort the problem out among themselves, and the person involved gets off scot free. Although that is a hypothetical example, it illustrates the power of secret organisations such as freemasons.

Conservative Members are concerned about justice and integrity, so they should be anxious about the power of freemasons. I ask them to join me in suggesting that membership of a lodge is incompatible with being an officer in the Metropolitan police.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the reasons why such a high incidence of membership of a lodge gives rise to concern is the allegation, which goes back many years, that because senior police officers are members of the same lodge as criminals, some criminals get off?

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend has highlighted the problem. If people get together in secret organisations, they are open to any form of blackmail. Any decision made by that body is not in the public domain, and cannot be, by that body's very nature.

Mr. Wilshire: Let me make it clear that I am not a freemason, either. If the allegations that the hon. Gentleman makes are true, I share his concern. But, if he makes wild allegations and says that they are hypothetical, it is incumbent on him to give us the facts so that we can judge. If the hon. Gentleman is so worried about secret organisations and their influence, perhaps he would care to condemn Militant while he is about it.

Mr. Corbyn: Although interventions take time from my speech and from the debate, I shall readily give way to any hon. Member who cares to announce that he is not a member of the freemasons. Some interesting declarations have been made. If any of the few remaining Conservative Members present wish to say that they are not freemasons I shall happily give way.

I remind Conservative Members that what I have said about the case of Chief Inspector Woollard and the influence of freemasonry on the police is not particularly new. The case was made in *The Independent* and there was a "World in Action" programme on the subject. The

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matter has been raised several times with the Home Secretary and with the Commissioner, and the London group of Labour Members is due to meet Sir Peter Imbert again to discuss this very subject.

I referred to the Manor of St. James's Lodge. A report prepared by the police committee support unit of the London borough of Islington, which deals with freemasonry in the Metropolitan police, says:

"The Manor of St. James's Lodge (No. 9179) was consecrated on 27 January 1986, after the Commissioner's advice had been issued."

The House will note the word "after".

"It has been suggested that this lodge was established as a direct snub to the Commissioner. Appendix A shows a meeting of the lodge in November 1986 and includes a list of its members. These papers have been placed in the House of Commons Library.

The Manor of St. James's Lodge was founded by Brethren, all of whom had served as police officers in 'C' or St. James's District of the Metropolitan Police. The term Manor was the colloquial expression used by police officers when referring to the District of place of duty. The lodge was sponsored, appropriately, by Prior Walter Lodge No. 8687, a lodge comprised by members of the order of St. John which has a close affinity with the police service."

These matters are very serious and I hope that the Minister will condemn the influence of freemasonry and the police officers of the Metropolitan police who are members of freemasonic lodges and that he will state once again that membership of the freemasons is incompatible with public service in the Metropolitan police or anywhere else. It is an insidious force in society.

My constituency, like those of other hon. Members, suffers considerable social deprivation and problems of crime—housebreaking, violence and burglary. It is important that policing resources should be made available to deal with those problems. I am not convinced, however, that the resources are necessarily directed towards solving those problems or that sufficient sensitivity is shown by the police in dealing with public complaints, or in their attitudes.

I shall conclude as I started: if we are to have in London a police force that costs nearly £1 billion a year, it is perfectly right that the people of London should have some say in the way in which that force is run, in the direction of resources of that police force and in the tactics, policies and methods used. That is not posible while the police authority for London is one person—the Home Secretary, who cannot even find time to stay for the one debate that we have had in two years on policing in London. Perhaps it is a vain hope, but I ask the Government at least to consider the need for an elected police authority for London. But perhaps the return of democracy in London will have to await the return of a Labour Government.

11.45 am

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): The House will be relieved to hear that I have no intention of following the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) into his Mozartian fascination with masonry. My only comment on his speech arises from an interesting point that he made near the beginning, which was more germane to our debate. He spoke of the declining population of Greater London and argued, by implication, that Conservative Members need no longer be so concerned about police establishment levels and the attainment of those levels. He tried to give the impression that the ratio of police to population was bound to improve and, hence, that law and order would improve because of the declining population of Greater London. That may be true in general, but in parts of the very large Metropolitan police area—notably in the Wallington sub-division, which is more or less conterminous with my constituency—the population has been expanding rapidly in recent years and, with that, the opportunities for crime have increased. We need to consider different parts of the Metropolitan police area in their own right, rather than considering the area in aggregate.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) spoke at length about the new crime-screening procedures recently introduced by the Commissioner. While I did not agree with much of what the right hon. Gentleman said, a number of my constituents share his anxiety about the crime-screening procedures. Relations between police and public must be good and the public must have confidence in the police. Therefore, it is important that those procedures, necessary as they may be, should be fully explained to the law-abiding public. If they are not, public confidence in the police may be undermined.

I associate myself with the tribute that my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) paid to the previous Commissioner, Sir Kenneth Newman and welcome the well-deserved honour given to Sir Peter Imbert, the new Commissioner. I very much approve of Sir Peter's major force goals for the coming year, especially the emphasis on reducing criminal opportunity, the enhanced detection of robbery, burglary and vandalism, and the enhanced support for the victims of crime, as well as his determination to achieve further improvements in public order.

My remarks will fall under four separate headings. First, I shall consider the sort of crimes that are being committed in the Metropolitan police area, particularly in the Wallington sub-division. Secondly, I shall consider the sort of people who seem to be committing those crimes. Thirdly I shall examine how well the Metropolitan police seem to be dealing with the problems, and, finally, I shall express a few thoughts on what more could and should be done.

I shall deal first with the crimes that are being committed—particularly those of most concern to my constituents. Between 1986 and 1987 street robberies increased by 13 per cent. In hard figures in my area that meant an increase from 64 such notified offences to 96. That is a matter of great concern because it helps to breed the feeling of personal insecurity that has already been mentioned. I welcome the fact that the burglary figures fell by 4 per cent. in the Metropolitan area in the year in question and that in my sub-division they fell from 1,840 notified offences to 1,521 in the same period. However, the figures are still far too high. The offence of burglary is of intense concern to those who live in the nice residential areas—indeed all residential areas—of my constituency, who feel insecure because of it.

The third aspect of crime, and one which I cannot stress too much, is the importance of dealing with vandalism and criminal damage to property. Again, I welcome the fact that the figures show a small fall in the metropolitan area

of 2 per cent. for the period in question. However, they are still far too high. In the Wallington sub-division, crimes of vandalism increased during 1986-87.

The fourth issue on which I should like to concentrate is what we might call alcohol-related offences, including drinking and driving, assaults on persons, street disturbances and various forms of damage to property. All those cause serious concern to my constituents, especially when they appear to be related to under-age drinking. I should like the Government to be tougher and to give even more of a lead on this problem.

When we consider who seems to be committing most of the crimes about which my constituents are most concerned, it is absolutely clear from the official statistics that young people commit a disproportionate number of offences—by that I mean those under the age of 21, and principally young males.

On page 43 of the Commissioner's report for this year, and under the heading, "Characteristics of offenders", an interesting short paragraph states:

"People aged under 21 years accounted for a disproportionate number of notifiable offences. Consistent with a long-established pattern, the age group 10 to 20 years, which is about 15 per cent. of the population of London, was recorded responsible for almost half (44 per cent.) of the notifiable offences. Clear majorities of people arrested in the offence groups of robbery, burglary and going equipped and motor vehicle theft were 20 years or under. In excess of two-thirds of those arrested for motor theft were 20 or under and almost one-third were 16 years or under."

The House should pay great attention to that serious point. More specifically, many of those young people are under the influence of alcohol when they commit such offences. As my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) said, many are opportunist offences. However, too often the perpetrators are found to be carrying knives and, regrettably, in some cases—by definition with those under the age of 16—are out of school without permission. They are playing truant and are, as it were, absent without leave. That is serious because when one examines the figures more closely one finds that this young age group, representing 15 per cent. of total notifiable offences, is responsible for 26 per cent. of all notifiable offences of robbery, for 24 per cent. of burglaries, and for 27 per cent. of motor vehicle thefts.

How well are the Metropolitan police seeking to deal with those various priority problems? The answer is that the police are doing their level best in difficult circumstances. I know that from my personal experience, because I take great pains to stay in close touch with the police officers at every level in my part of south London, as I am sure do all my hon. Friends in their constituencies. I also attach great value to our frequent and useful meetings with the Home Secretary, the police authority, and the Commissioner himself.

However, the most pressing problems still seem to be growing. To present a balanced picture, one must congratulate the Metropolitan police on the high clear-up rate that they manage, especially in some of the most critical areas, and for the more serious offences. For the year that we are considering in this debate, the 1987 report states that 180 out of 194 homicides were cleared up, and for drug trafficking, the figure is 1,905 out of 1,906. Therefore, only one such offence was not cleared up. That is an admirable record and a tribute to the effectiveness of establishing a clear scale of priorities in line with the seriousness of the offences.

However, on the other side of the coin, and as the hon. Member for Islington, North stated, it remains disappointing to me and to my constituents that in other vital areas about which there is equal public concern, the clear-up rates remain low. I do not say that in an anti-police sense, but we—police and public together—must find ways of improving the clear-up rates in the Metropolitan police area.

Mr. Wheeler: It is very good of my hon. Friend to give way on this point. I think that he will agree that there is one important factor which the House should bear in mind on the question of clear-up rates. The difference between the Metropolitan police clear-up rate and that of the provincial forces is that the Metropolitan police do not seek to pursue other offences in prisons, thus increasing the clear-up rate, whereas the provincial forces do. That changes the distortion of the clear-up pattern in London.

Mr. Forman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and am aware of the distinction which is drawn in the Commissioner's report between the so-called primary clear-up rate and secondary clear-up rates. That bears upon the point which he has helpfully made.

I am seeking to speak on behalf of the vast majority of my constituents, from all walks of life, and must place on record for the benefit of the House the fact that the clear-up rates in the Metropolitan police district of 12 per cent. for robbery, 9 per cent. for burglary and 11 per cent. for criminal damage, still cause great concern. I am sure that when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department replies to the debate, he will be able to offer to the House some reassuring words to show the serious way in which the Government view the figures.

Therefore, it is welcome and all the more important that the Metropolitan police themselves have made special efforts to deal with those offences where the record of clear-up seems to be least satisfactory. I was particularly pleased to see in the report, which I read carefully, that arrests for robbery increased by 27 per cent. during the year in question, and that there was an increase of 6 per cent. in arrests for burglary. Clearly, arrests are part of the answer but we all realise that in the complexities of justice, it is one thing to secure an arrest but it is much more important and, in many cases, much more difficult, to secure clear up and conviction.

As the Member of Parliament for Carshalton and Wallington, which, as I have already said, is almost conterminous with the Wallington subdivision of the Metropolitan police area, I am especially pleased that Chief Superintendent Peter Lockley has stated in his divisional report, which I read in advance of the debate, that he intends to make special efforts to combat the problem of vandalism. It is a serious problem in the Wallington sub-division and one to which he intends to give high priority in the coming year. I support him entirely in that objective. Although offences against property are not as serious as offences against the person, one never knows whether the kind of behaviour that gives rise to offences against property from young people acting in a loutish and irresponsible way might not spill over into terrorising old ladies or possibly even offences against the person.

What more could and should be done? We need a three-pronged approach. First, we need to encourage and assist the general public to pay even more attention to

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crime prevention than they are doing already. We know of the efforts made by the Home Office, and I commend the Home Office for launching a series of useful initiatives in this area. However, more could still be done by insurance companies, ordinary householders, motorists—indeed, by all involved. We can make our homes and cars more secure. We can make efforts to keep children in school and combat the problem of truancy to which I have already referred. We can deal more firmly with the social problems of alcohol and drug abuse. We can continue the welcome trend about which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary spoke earlier of getting more officers more visibly on the beat, because that is an inherent part of crime prevention.

The second prong must be to make sure that we have enough police with more either on the beat or available for effective quick response in targeting special needs and using specialist squads to deal with acute crime problems. It is obvious that the vast swathe of the most serious crime which shows up most noticeably in the statistics, especially in my part of south London, is perpetrated by a small number of villains. There is a good deal of circumstantial evidence to suggest that.

When the police are able to catch and charge a particularly active villain or gang of villains who have committed a robbery or burglary, it is amazing how, for a period at any rate, the crime figures go down encouragingly as a result of all the other offences that often have to be taken into account when the matter goes before the court. There is therefore an important role for specialist squads and the reassuring presence of the officer on the beat.

I am glad to hear that the Metropolitan police is now nearly up to its full establishment level and that the Home Secretary has been successful in securing more resources for effective policing. He and his ministerial colleagues are absolutely right to insist on getting better value for money and better distribution of the available resources, whatever may be on offer at any time. In that context, my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North was right to draw attention to the two or three matters of which he has special knowledge, to deal with the treatment of potential motor offences. I hope that my hon. Friend's proposals will be seriously considered.

With changes in society in modern times and changing public attitudes to law and order, which go together with increased opportunities for crime, we shall need even higher and more effective policing levels in the Metropolitan area. I refer to officers on the beat and specialist squads in particular.

I shall not enter into the controversy to which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook devoted some time about whether or not an extra 2,500 officers are needed. The Commissioner has a clear duty to make the most efficient possible use of the manpower and womanpower at his disposal and to continue the process of civilianisation, which is obviously necessary. At the same time, when he makes a case to the Home Secretary and, through him, to the Government for increasing establishment levels, he must ensure that his case is made unimpeachably and on the best possible basis. The combination of increasing affluence—affluence which has increased greatly in the 1980s—juxtaposed with declining social attitudes towards law and order among some groups in society, is a potentially explosive mix. Although it is a controversial subject, more thought should be given to it. If we can get more detections, arrests and convictions, we shall make the point to the general public that the surest deterrence is greater certainty of being caught and punished for an offence.

The last prong of my argument is that, obviously, Parliament has a duty to make great efforts to ensure that the legislative framework that is provided for the police is appropriate, so that they have the extra powers they they need to police our streets and the great city of London. I am pleased with the recent initiative in the Criminal Justice Bill about the carrying of knives and sharp instruments. It is good that the Government recognise the critical importance of providing the courts with the widest possible range of appropriate penalties—everything from non-custodial sentences to stiff, long determinate sentences for those who are convicted of the most serious crimes. The Government have been doing that over the past nine years. I commend my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and his colleagues for their excellent initiatives in that regard.

Combating crime is everyone's responsibility. Our excellent police in the Metropolitan area cannot achieve the desired results without the full support of politicians, the judiciary, magistrates, the media and the general public. I pledge my support to the police serving this large area. I commend them on their efforts during the year in question.

12.3 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Few people could disagree with the worthy generalisations of the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) whose speech I endorse. But, alas, the Government's philosophy and that of the great majority of Conservative Members is not capable of fulfilling his worthy generalisations. The majority of members of the ruling party consider that, in itself, public expenditure is bad or, at least, too great. That philosophy is becoming all-pervasive and destroys the quality of many things in our lives. There is some unity in the House about the need for more resources and more effective policing activity, even though we may criticise some aspects of how it is conducted. I refer Conservative Members to the fundamental philosophical jam into which they have got themselves.

The Secretary of State for the Environment is disrupting local taxation and introducing a poll tax, to focus people's minds on local expenditure, when rates in London provide a big chunk of Metropolitan police expenditure, which we now know is about £1,000 million. That is why I intervened during the Home Secretary's speech. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will return to that theme. Unless remedied or, at least, assisted by the central business rate or the Exchequer, the imposition of the poll tax will put a stopper on some of the things that nearly all hon. Members have called for today. It is a central anomaly of the Government's policy that Conservative Members should seriously consider. That anomaly is serious in respect of the police and even more serious in respect of other services.

I shall be something of a vox-pop. Many of the things that I say will echo what the man or woman in the street

say in respect of the Metropolitan police. I do not wish to be unfriendly, as the vast majority of policemen try to do a good job. I shall express how I believe the police often appear to those whom they serve. I shall try to introduce some constructive suggestions about how things can be improved. The theme is from the pavement up, rather than the other way round. Often, in every sphere of life, there are big generalisations at the top, but we should start the other way round.

A large proportion of the time spent by most policemen, including senior people, involves talking to other policemen. We see young policemen and policewomen in fast, expensive motor cars full of electronic equipment, and groups of younger policemen in vans. That must be—things are changing—but we must examine what happens to the ordinary person who goes into a police station. What arrangements are there for his reception?

I recall going into a police station that was designed in 1938. It has far superior reception arrangements than a police station in Plaistow, which has just been built at enormous public expenditure in the middle of my constituency. What thought has been given to the public-police interface, when the public go to the police, rather than when the police go to the public? There are training courses at Hendon to instruct police on how to approach the public in the street. There must be proper arrangements for the public to go to police stations. Some years ago, I asked the police to set up a little sub-police station in Freemasons road, Custom House, in my constituency. They said, "Yes, it is a jolly good idea. We shall try to do it." There were money complications. They had to get permission from the local council to try to rent a shop, and then there were security problems. The matter has been dragging on for three or four years. We are now to get a little police sub-station in the area, cut off from the rest of Newham, but in another road, and it will be rather bigger and probably more expensive than would have been necessary. All the correspondence and meetings that I have had with junior and senior policemen about the matter appear to make some fuss. I do not make a great complaint, but, when it comes to the nitty-gritty of administration, one often has to ask why it happened like that.

Like many hon. Members, I have the privilege of occupying a room in Norman Shaw north. That room was occupied about 100 years ago by Inspector Lestrade and, perhaps, some of his colleagues. It was purpose-built and designed by the architect Norman Shaw. I understand that Scotland Yard No. 3 was taken over as a converted office block. I have met many senior policemen who make great complaints about the modifications and the difficulties that they have had with Scotland Yard No. 3. Why is it that in the 1870s or 1880s a purpose-built building, which is still a magnificent place, was designed for the police, but in the latter half of this century they have a building which had to be adapted and in which there was a bit of a cock-up? That does not produce a great deal of confidence in what I would call the macro-organisation.

I shall return to the micro-organisation. The Home Secretary and I had a bit of a spat about Newham and about the statutory borough consultative committee which we are about to set up. I understand why the Home Secretary said what he did. But he has to understand that if there is to be an effective consultative committee, the constitution of that committee and the basis on which it works must be effective. It is no good having a shapeless, formless organisation, which meets every month or so for a natter and nothing really happens, or one to which everyone can come and in which there is no continuity and no degree of responsibility. I must tell the Home Secretary, albeit in his absence, that that was proposed.

I have been to many police public relations exercises. I do not blame them for taking professional advice from public relations advisers for their campaigns. They lay on exhibitions or hold conferences and invite everyone. I have been to quite a few of those events. There is a lot of good will around but it does not really get anywhere.

The constitution that we have worked out in Newham, after a lot of discussion, will get to grips with local problems. There were difficulties in deciding that constitution. Of course strong personalities are involved and differences of opinion. A certain senior police officer who is a well-known personality in east London has played some part in the protracted negotiations, which, fortunately, have now reached a conclusion. I put it to the Home Secretary, and I am sure that my hon. Friends will agree, that the time taken will pay off. We now have a structure which will really get to grips with some local matters and therefore it will be more successful than if we were to start off with an airy-fairy, fuzzy organisation which, quite frankly, would not have done the job.

When hon. Members attend an organisation or committee which has to thrash out some difficulty, when we meet the people with whom we thought we were wholly in opposition, over a cup of tea or a chat we find that we were under some misapprehension, and they find that they were under some misapprehension. Over some time spent getting to know each other, we can reach some commonsense results, which would not have happened without that institution. That will develop in the local groups, if they are given a good start.

I shall now turn to some of the practical problems that will face our committee in Newham and other Committees throughout the country. The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington mentioned the problem of young people. That problem is not new. For centuries, young people have tended to group together. That has existed throughout history; it existed when we were young. It is nothing new. however, some of the activities in which young people indulge are new—motor cars, drugs, alcohol and so on. At least, the problem of alcohol is very much to the fore. I recall sitting on committees considering licensing Bills when people were not too concerned about our control of that problem. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who I am glad to see present, has introduced a Bill. But I am sure that my hon. Friend and other all hon. Members will agree that much of this is a matter of local common sense.

Let us consider the management of licensed premises. The quality of the management of licensed premises varies a great deal. In the Committee considering the Licensing Bill I made the suggestion, which was recived with interest, that one condition of a licence is that a licensee puts up a list of 10 or 20 people, one of whom will be nominated to be in charge in his absence. I did not press it in the most recent Licensing Bill, but it would be helpful if that idea were put into statute at a later date. The law is not always the answer, it is a matter of commonsense discussion as to how we can ensure that the badly managed houses, which are in a minority, do not add to social disruption when the majority of houses and clubs are very well managed. How

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can we make sure that we maintain and improve that level of management? It cannot be done entirely by statute. The local statutory availability must be used to deal with local situations.

Mr. Forman: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the scheme known as pub watch which has some relevance to this and which is referred to in the Commissioner's report?

Mr. Spearing: I am not entirely aware of the details of it, but I would hesitate to introduce yet another organisation. I am advocating that the discussions in local committees in London should find out the administrative pinch points. I shall give the hon. Gentleman an example. Not long ago I found that there was an administrative difficulty in the serving of warrants when people had not surrendered to bail, particularly when they had been charged with actual bodily harm. If a person who is charged with that offence does not surrender to bail, something is very badly wrong. I am not criticising magistrates for granting bail, because we know the difficulties of accommodation, but the police have to take action. It may be that in some circumstances the police, or the new public prosecution service, are not as swift as they might be. The citizens then quite rightly get hot under the collar. They say, "The public ought to get at that tearaway. What will he do next?"

When people come to me worrying about capital offences, I say that some people may be at risk from their own feelings or, in a situation which is fuelled by alcohol, at risk of committing a capital offence. We must prevent that. A great deal of commonsense work can be done on the ground to prevent the spread of violence, through the identification of situations where violence is likely to break out. That should be done in committees by people of good will who have authority getting together to deal with it. We should improve the quality of communication, administration and action.

Following what the Prime Minister said at Toronto, the quality of society is not dependent on the market. One cannot get a consultancy in quality of the community or in the quality of family life. The essence of the quality of our community life is not susceptible to market forces. Alas, in sphere after sphere, the Government are introducing the intensification of market forces which will increase the tendency towards difficulties and violence.

Let us take housing as an example. I shall not take this too far, as we shall discuss it on Monday, but difficulties in housing cause pressure on families and problems between parents and young people, which add to local problems. The Government are not assisting community life through many of the economic pressures which they are now introducing and which did not exist before they came into office. As a result, the police and the public have to clear up the mess.

There is a logical and practical example of that which involves housing. I understand that the Metropolitan police force is now under orders from the Government to sell off police housing. There is a lot of police housing in Newham, scattered around and in groups. I understood that police housing—not section housing but housing in streets—was provided to give a start to policemen who wanted to do a good job, live in the community, and send their kids to the local schools. I see the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) is indicating dissent. If he wishes to intervene I will give way later. I understood that this is what many policemen wanted to do. Like many of us, they may want ultimately to buy their own houses. However, when they start off in a new area, or are moved around as a result of promotion, police housing is a useful social tool.

The Government's order to sell off such housing seems to me to be designed to reduce police quality. It reduces the options available to senior policemen when they want to move their people around. It reduces the choices for policemen when deciding whether to rent, take a tied house, go for sectional housing, buy, or go in with their in-laws. Therefore, it prejudices good policing, morale and the consistency and experience of older policemen that we want so badly in London. In any occupation, experience of the job is vitally important, and the Government's policy of selling off police housing is contrary to their stated aim of improving the quality of policing in London.

Mr. Dicks: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that one of the reasons why experienced policemen are leaving London is that they have better housing, better education for their children and a better life away from the city? Why should they be expected to live, for example, in the middle of Brixton if their natural way of life does not tie up with the culture of Brixton? It does not mean to say that they are bad policemen or policewomen if they do not want to live there. They have a right to choose where they live as against where they are sent to work.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood my point. It is that if the police have at their disposal a range of accommodation that can be made available to policemen, the choice for policemen is greater. The more housing is available, the better the choice of community in which to live. Policemen may not wish to live in the area in which they carry out their duties. If their duties are in Brixton, they may want to live in Croydon—that is up to them. I am glad to see the hon. Gentleman nodding.

No doubt, the Under-Secretary will tell me whether the Metropolitan police have chosen to sell off these houses rather than being ordered to do so by the Government. I suspect that it is the latter, because of the Government's overall barmy philosophy of selling off anything that is publicly owned. They are fundamentally reducing the quality of policing in London. It will show up well in the accounts, and it may even show value for money and all that nonsense. We must have value for money, but good will and loyalty cannot be priced. Even the Prime Minister would agree with that. The Government must look at this, and I hope that they will reverse the policy.

One aspect of policing that is rarely talked about, particularly in the House, although it is an important part of the responsibility of the Metropolitan police, is traffic management. When we think of traffic management and the Metropolitan police, we think of royal occasions, the opening of Parliament, public processions, blokes on motor bikes and all the rest of it. I have had the experience of seeing how Commonwealth countries do these things, and visiting Members of Parliament are often given a motor cycle escort. If one talks to the chaps afterwards, they say, "We were trained by the Met." The Metropolitan police force is excellent at doing this—it is probably the

world leader—but when it comes to traffic management in general, things go wrong, and I am not sure that it is so good.

East London has many traffic problems, largely because of the Government's terrible neglect of strategic planning. I will not go into that, but it shows a terrible lack of civic pride. The Blackwall tunnel is frequently closed for repairs and on other occasions, for some reason, the traffic cannot use it in both directions. The Under-Secretary of State for Transport has explained to me why that is so, but it is a great pity. When it happens, it causes immense problems. I cycle, so it is not bad for me, but many people are frustrated, and there is not a policeman in sight. Flyovers are closed, and there is not a policeman in sight. Surely it is not beyond the wit of the local authority to tell the police when there is to be a difficulty so that someone can sort out the trouble and stop the traffic from jamming.

If something happens in the streets around here, in two ticks, because of the traffic management, everything clogs up. That is not surprising because 15 or 20 years ago, the Greater London council organised traffic flows in London so that about 20 or 30 per cent. more traffic could move through the existing streets. That was a good thing. The GLC introduced parking controls, clearways, gyratory systems and other schemes in a skilled operation. However, if a lorry breaks down at the crucial point, or the lights go wrong, or there is an accident, everything jams very quickly. The police are not good at making sure that there is somebody not too far away so that when that happens the traffic is unjammed as quickly as possible.

There is a lot of talk about London jamming up, but there is no scientific evidence to suggest that in normal circumstances it is. However, when there is an abnormal circumstance, the repurcussions are great. The police should pay more attention to clearing away those breakdowns and dealing with accidents or jams caused when roads are up for repairs or so that adjustments can be made by the traffic boys at Scotland Yard.

Mr. Tony Banks: I would favour much stricter penalties being imposed on lorry operators who badly load their lorries, or badly maintain them with the result that they break down or shed their load, causing traffic congestion. The penalties imposed on lorry contractors bear no relationship to the costs that they have imposed on Londoners.

Mr. Spearing: I agree and I can give two examples about which the man in the street should know. I assume that when a lorry breaks down, the police have some arrangement with a contractor—they do not have heavy breakdown vehicles of their own—so that the lorry can be moved as quickly as possible. Even those of us who take an interest in this matter do not know what this organisation is. However, this is a critical matter, and if matters were organised properly, people would know that such and such a squad was responsible. We all know the contractors who move badly parked cars, because they are visible, but we do not know what happens when there is a lorry breakdown. Those are commonsense matters in which the people of London want a visible improvement.

We have a problem in east London with local parking because of bad planning. Many people are driving to and parking at the local underground station. In Plaistow many people from the new docklands development are causing difficulties for residents by parking in residential streets around the station and going up to London to work. That is fair enough; one would expect it to happen. It leads not only to traffic congestion but to other problems.

At present, the Metropolitan police controls traffic wardens. Discussions are going on about how borough councils can co-operate with, or ultimately take over, that service. When traffic wardens were first introduced, senior policemen were against the use of lady traffic wardens. I mention that to show how, in retrospect, such attitudes can appear extraordinary. Mrs. Jane Phillips, the then chairman of the GLC's highways and traffic committee, and Mrs. Barbara Castle, who was then a Minister at the Department of Transport, had to bully Scotland Yard to accept lady traffic wardens.

We must decide how much traffic wardens can co-operate with local officials. It is one of the matters that I hope our well-constituted committee in Newham will consider. On that constructive, wholly friendly and non-venomous note I close my remarks.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Eight hon. Members, most of whom have been present since the beginning of the debate, still wish to speak. I understand that the Under-Secretary and the Front Bench spokesman for the Labour party hope to catch the eye of the Chair at about 2 pm. That leaves 90 minutes; the arithmetic is obvious.

12.32 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I have not worked out the arithmetic, but I shall try to be brief.

I take this opportunity to welcome the optimistic tone of the Commissioner's report and the hopeful trends outlined by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

There are signs that the police in London are coming to grips with London's problems, but clearly there are still problems. It is little consolation to a crime victim to discover that, although the statistics and trends suggest that there has been an improvement, there is no quick response or police activity for the injury that they have suffered.

That raises the question of what constitutes good policing in London. Clearly there must be crime prevention and detection, but the public must also have confidence in and must co-operate with the police. It is to that aspect of good policing in London that I should like to address a few remarks.

It is essential that the Metropolitan police should represent, and in many ways reflect, the communities of London. Clearly those communities should have confidence in and be able to identify with the police. Police recruitment must ensure that, as the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said of traffic wardens, there should be clear representation of women in the force doing proper police work. At the same time, ethnic minorities should be seen to be active as policemen and should identify with those they serve, of whatever racial origin or ethnic group. Only with such widespread appeal will the police of London effectively gain the confidence and co-operation of those who live in and serve the community.

Much could be done for police recruitment if only the schools in London, especially inner London, recognised that the police force is a career prospect to be offered to

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children considering a career for when they leave school. It is a matter of regret that, over the years, ILEA has not given prominence to the police force as a likely career. In the past, it has positively dissuaded police from entering its schools—if not positively forbidden them. I am reassured that that is no longer the practice and that the police are able—I shall not say welcome—to enter all schools in inner London. On occasions, police officers have been able to enter only if they did not wear uniforms. ILEA's authorities have suggested that they would prefer the police not to be seen in schools in a positive police role.

To be more constructive, I shall refer to the beneficial effect of neighbourhood watch schemes in making connections with and establishing good relations between the police and the community at large. When neighbourhood watch and crime prevention schemes were first introduced, their primary function was crime prevention. My limited experience of those schemes in my constituency leads me to believe that it is too early to evaluate the success of the crime prevention function, but it is evident that they have led to the establishment of a rapport between the local community and the police.

When a neighbourhood watch scheme is set up, a home beat officer calls at one or two houses and seeks to advise the occupants on crime prevention. He is followed in turn by the crime prevention officer. Locks on doors are then changed, and burglar alarms appear on those properties. That has a knock-on effect. First one property owner does it and then another. The people in those communities are not nosey parkers, but such schemes lead to the community being aware of what is going on in the locality. That is beneficial and it should be fostered and encouraged.

I attended a recent meeting of the co-ordinators of neighbourhood watch schemes in one part of my constituency. I had never before been to such a well-attended meeting that involved people who live in a very limited area. I had never before seen such a lively response from the people who live there or such a constructive rapport between the police and the local community. I welcome such developments, because they will lead to better policing and to a decrease in crime.

Hon. Members on both sides referred earlier to the difficulties that had been experienced over the police consultative committees. My observations of the police consultative committee in my area lead me to believe that there is a conflict of objectives. When police consultative committees were first established, the intention was that they should follow what one might call the Scarman model and defuse tension between the police and the community. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will correct me if I am wrong, but I understand that, by encouraging the establishment of such committees, the Home Office felt that they had a major contribution to make to crime prevention. When Socialist authorities became involved in setting up these committees, they believed that, at the very least, they would act as a watchdog and that they would monitor police operations with a view to taking over political control of the Metropolitan police.

Such conflicting views meant that it was difficult to establish police consultative committees. In Southwark there was an agonising period during which efforts were made to establish a working relationship. I am pleased to be able to say that recent evidence suggests that at least some consensus has been reached. Although there may be be different objectives, it is now thought to be beneficial for the various groups to work together. It is another optimistic sign.

I am worried about the fact that there are some no-go areas in my borough. They are to be found on some of the more deprived and rundown estates. Milkmen have refused to deliver milk, postmen have refused to deliver mail and doctors have refused to make home calls. Even the police have felt intimidated about approaching those estates. It bodes ill for regeneration of the inner city if, within a mile or two of this House, there are areas about whose safety the staff of public services have misgivings.

Ms. Abbott: Would the hon. Gentleman care to name the estates he has referred to and say how recently he heard those allegations about police and milkmen not going into them?

Mr. Bowden: A month ago, postmen refused to deliver mail to the Dog Kennel hill estate because they were being assaulted and girocheques were being removed from their sacks. For the last few years, doctors have refused to carry out calls in, milkmen have refused to deliver to, and postmen have refused to enter, the North Peckham estate —except in twos or threes. I am prepared to give more instances if the hon. Lady wants them, but if she is satisfied with those, I shall continue.

If the inner city is to be regenerated, we must ensure that these public services are provided, and that they are supported by the police. The hopeful signs in the Commissioner's report and my right hon. Friend's speech show that progress can be made.

In the context of manpower and police morale, it is important that police on shift do not see members of their shift being withdrawn and so feel undersupported. In many cases this is the result of redeployment; members of a shift are withdrawn to be put back on the beat as home beat community police officers. That is done for the general benefit and improvement of life and policing in communities. Alongside public confidence in the police, the police must be confident that the public support them and recognise the good work they are doing. Bad police practices must be condemned and good ones congratulated. This debate gives us an opportunity to do just that.

12.42 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I welcome the opportunity of this debate. I am happy to speak after my political neighbour in Southwark—the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden)—whose constituency is the only borough that spans the political divide in the Metropolitan police district.

I, too, congratulate the new Commissioner on his appointment and wish him well. I have known him for a long time, ever since he served in Thames Valley and, in my previous incarnation as a lawyer, I did some work for him. I also pay tribute to the retired Commissioner for all that he did for Greater London. Londoners have good cause to place great confidence in both men. I share the general goals set out by the Commissioner: they are appropriate, although I might quibble about some details.

I also pay tribute without hesitation to the police in my borough. Two police divisions are based there—the

Southwark division in Borough high street, and the Rotherhithe and Tower Bridge division in Carter street. The latter covers part of my constituency and part of that of the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). Both forces are extremely co-operative and helpful. There are occasional complaints, some of which are serious and need dealing with seriously, but in general I pay tribute to the police's work in a difficult part of London. I agree with the hon. Member for Dulwich that policing in places such as Southwark is often far from easy. Police cadets and young officers have told me that they feel afraid when going into certain estates, not only in the south and middle, but in the northern parts of Southwark, too.

I have raised before with the Home Secretary, and I repeat now, the need to do everything possible to encourage police morale. One of the things that makes them unhappy is that, having pursued lawbreakers and made an arrest, they never ultimately discover what happens to them. Prosecution is now out of their hands and in the hands of the Crown prosecution service. The Home Secretary has been responsive to my concern that the police should be given more information and be able to feel rightly proud of what they successfully do on behalf of the community. I hope for better progress in this area. The CPS is still in its early stages and still makes mistakes, as the case of Robert McHale is proving at the moment. That is partly a Home Office and partly an Attorney-General matter.

Another matter that causes me even more concern is the wastage of police officers. I raised it in my intervention, but it is also worth drawing attention to the report. Pages 48 and 49 state:

"Wastage again was disappointingly high in 1987. A total of 1,621 officers left the force, 6 per cent. more than in 1986. The real strength of the Force rose by only 433 which was, nevertheless, an improvement on 1986 . . . The number of officers who left with less than two years' service (probationers) rose from 122 to 141 which was disappointing . . . Transfers to other forces continued to be a major cause for concern with 302 officers (19 per cent. of all wastage) transferring compared with 249 in 1986 (16 per cent.)"

The graph supplied with the report shows that the number of officers lost is almost the same as those recruited, especially at senior and middle rank level. When a community has become accustomed to its police officers and then they leave—a point already made several times—it undermines the belief in community policing, because the police officers that the community gets to know, and with whom it shares responsibility, suddenly move on. That is a serious defect in the system.

Housing is certainly a problem. I am troubled that we still do not provide adequate housing opportunities. I accept that police officers cannot be forced to live in the area in which they work, but I am even more concerned when, for example, just behind the police station in Rotherhithe, flats owned by the Metropolitan police—they were formerly police flats—remain empty, which is entirely undesirable in a borough where there are thousands of homeless people. Perhaps, in the short term, the flats could be given to other people in need, although housing police in the community enhances their commitment to it.

The Home Secretary has rightly said that the cost of policing London is high. Therefore, it is unfair when other Government Departments allege that the cost of other services in London are so high—for example, the Health Service, social services and education. One of the reasons for abolishing ILEA is that it costs so much but, in fact, it costs less per head than the Metropolitan police. We should remind people that, given such high costs, the results, although in some ways encouraging, are still not good.

The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) made a thoughtful speech, and I agreed with everything that he said—as, indeed, I did with other hon. Members. The hon. Gentleman said that the clear-up rate is still poor, and in terms of cost benefit is not a matter for complacency. We must ensure that there is no let-up, so that the police clear up a far greater percentage of crime.

Why should citizens of London, who pay a substantial amount towards its policing, have only half as much chance as the rest of the country of the offences committed against them being dealt with? The individual citizen's rights are the same in London as elsewhere. He should have the same chance of good policing. In that regard, the London police need to do better.

I want briefly to reflect on the theme of the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). The causes of crime are clearly complex, and no one can pretend that there is an easy analysis. However, I am persuaded that, if there is a disadvantaged and derelict community—one that looks vandalised before anyone does anything to make it worse—it does not enhance the chances of people feeling committed to it. For example, in my road, next to my house, there are five squatted properties. They have broken windows and are derelict outside. When people smash up other buildings on the road, it makes hardly any difference, because no one has a real commitment. I am the only person with a secure tenancy in my terrace. Bollards are broken and windows smashed, and there is litter, which all become just part of the community; the incentive to improve it is almost neglible.

We need community investment in the inner city that brings about community responsibility. When people feel proud of their community, they will act as police officers. There will be more self-policing. People know who lives in an area and are concerned about that community.

In a society such as inner London where there is high unemployment, poor schooling in secondary schools and much truancy, policing is more difficult. Almost half of all offences are committed by 10 to 20-year-olds, many of whom either should be at school or have no training or work available. Unless we give decent schooling, training and working opportunities, there will be no incentive to have a good community which is self-policing.

Parents and families must play their part. Often, they do not play a sufficient part and take responsibilities, but leave them to others. This is not helped when there is such a sense of dereliction and despondency in one area, while elsewhere people are doing well. My borough is typical of the two nations. A massive number of my constituents live in appalling conditions while next door extraordinarily expensive housing is being built—costing £200,000, £300,000, £400,000, £500,000, £1 million and, as advertised just last week, £2·5 million. It is not surprising, when people believe that there are two nations, that they have no commitment and feel that they are outsiders while others are clearly insiders.

The annual report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis refers to the work of the Metropolitan and

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City police company fraud branch. It is a reflection of the society in which we live that it has had so much more work. The report states:

"1987 was unparalleled in terms of media interest in the work of the fraud branch . . .

A total of 462 cases involving £1,545 million continued from 1986; in 1987, a further 590 cases were accepted for investigation with a total cash at risk figure of £3,295 million. During the year, 366 people were charged or summonsed.

Multiple share applications and mortgage frauds formed a large part of the workload of the branch.

The Government's privatisation programme led to an increase in the number of those who submitted multiple share applications using a variety of names and addresses. Neither the severity of the sentences imposed, nor the attendant publicity impacted on the desire to make large illegal profits . . .

Mortgage frauds showed a considerable rise during the year."

In a self-centred and greedy society, we are producing a cash-and-grab community. It is not surprising—whatever the rights or wrongs of it—when young and relatively inexperienced 14, 16 and 19-year-olds living on social security in bed-and-breakfast hotels or grotty council estates see in the windows of others expensive equipment that they have no chance of obtaining and so turn to crime, with thefts of videos and electronic equipment. They are encouraged by advertising and the idea that one can profit for oneself—the free enterprise society gone mad.

I was saddened yesterday by the fact that the Prime Minister when asked about ticket touts at Wimbledon said that she had no responsibility for them. She does. Like the Home Secretary and all other Ministers, she has a responsibility for curbing the selfishness in our society that allows people who profit selfishly and illegally at the expense of others to go about unhindered. Those people are now encouraged by Conservative Members, as the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) made clear she did the other day.

We need an attack on the two nations to make one nation, so that the two communities become one and young people are given the opportunities to grow up as law-abiding and respecting citizens. The youth service in London is under threat. We do not know whether it will have security of funding. Without a decent youth service, adult education service and nursery education, the chances of people living in a well-regulated society will be small.

I pointed out in an intervention that alcohol is a major problem. A substantial number of offences, both minor and major, are committed by people under the influence of drink and drugs.

Proper education and regulation are needed to avoid the situations so often seen in our society, whether on the way to or from football matches, discotheques, clubs and pubs, or in and out of supermarkets. If we do not curb the acceptability of drinking in such large quantities, we shall not deal with the vandalism and criminality that so often results. We must ensure that alcoholism is as high and vivid on the agenda as drug taking. Together they are lethal, but far more people fall victim to drink than to drugs and commit offences as a result, and it is a far more prevalent evil, conspiring towards the vast number of offenders who appear in the courts and the many others who do not.

I hope that this debate will show the police on the beat that they are respected and appreciated for what they do, but the authorities responsible for the police should be aware that we are still far from being a harmonious and well ordered society. The police must listen and respond more to the needs of the community and share with it the responsibility for policing. Only in that way will the quality of life of a capital city, which could be like Toronto but is not yet, become acceptable for the many citizens who, sadly, have to live in a city in which crime, vandalism and dereliction are the orders of the day.

12.56 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I differ in just one respect from the views expressed by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). I believe that he spoke of Conservative Members—in the plural—supporting touts. I believe that the singular would be more accurate.

I begin by apologising for the fact that, like so many hon. Members, I had constituency business earlier in the day and I have a further constituency appointment later. I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will forgive me if I miss his mellifluous words of wisdom, and that the two Douglases—major and minor—will forgive me for having missed their contributions. I shall read the *Official Report* with great interest over breakfast.

I wish to make four brief points. First, I believe that neighbourhood watch schemes are among the most helpful and useful innovations and I was delighted at the support expressed by all hon. Members who mentioned them. If we can encourge those who give up their own time to help to keep crime off the streets and to report it, we shall be performing a very valuable duty. My one concern is that the effect is to move crime to areas without neighbourhood watch schemes. That must be a major reason for adding to the number of schemes in existence.

Allied with that is the question of home beat officers. The last Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis began to reverse one of the most unfortunate developments in London—the fact that officers remained on home beat posts for too short a time. The job can be done properly only if they are there for three or more years, so that they get to know the people and the people get to know them. I welcome the new Commissioner and hope that he will continue that trend.

The courts will also have to be less lenient when guilty verdicts are delivered. Most of us must have heard people asking why Parliament does not increase the penalties, but it is no use increasing them when the courts so often do not use the existing maximum. I make no further comment on that, save to say that one day Parliament will have to take notice of the overwhelming demand of our electors to bring back the death penalty.

I wish to comment on two points made by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). I welcome his comments about neighbourhood watches and his assurance that he supports the police in the work that they do. I do not doubt that that is true of the right hon. Gentleman, but he must admit that his party in London has, in most cases, given a wholly opposite impression. I do not believe that London ought to have an elected police authority. We have a unique opportunity to question Ministers about the police in London, which is far better than leaving it to politically inspired local authority control.

As the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, the consultative committees, which got off to a bad start, are beginning to work well. In Camden, the Labour party, after a public split, now supports the consultative committee, which is doing remarkably good work.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) commented on the freemasons. I am not one and have not been one, but in view of the charitable work that they do, I would be proud to be one, and I do not agree that freemasonry is incompatible with being a policeman.

On page 24 of his report, the Commissioner talks about the special constabulary. I am worried, and have been for a long time, that the special constabulary is not doing the job it should be doing because of inadequate numbers. I should like to pay tribute to the recently retired Chief Commandant, Arthur Hammond, an old friend, who did very good work. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will insist that the new Chief Commandant rides a horse, which Arthur refused to do during his many years of service.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) said, we must get more members of the community involved with the specials. There is a job of work to be done, and we must try to overcome the unease that has for a long time been felt by some full-time policemen.

I hope that the Commissioner will pay more heed to the views of local police than to the traffic branch when it comes to discussing matters of traffic. It is highly frustrating for good chief superintendents, who have a good rapport with their local community, to have to tidy up the mess created by the traffic branch. Of course the traffic branch is only doing its job, but it often does it unthinkingly and unfeelingly.

People in my area have immense problems with towings away and clampings where, frankly, it is unnecessary. The police have to do it because there are yellow lines. I hope that, as a result of the efforts of Councillor Spence, there will be a review of yellow lines and that the unnecessary ones will be removed. Such difficulties do more harm to police-community relations than almost anything else.

The House needs an opportunity, from time to time, to discuss the Metropolitan police's good work. It is not surprising that there is far less division in the House about the police than there used to be. One of the reasons for that is the opportunity for discussion. We can now meet the police in a larger forum, rather than on a one-to-one basis with chief superintendents or superintendents.

The consultative committees are doing a valuable job. I hope that the Home Office will find it possible to maintain and perhaps even increase the allocation to the Commissioner to enable him to support consultative committees and neighbourhood watch schemes. There is a danger that, as the number of neighbourhood watch schemes increases, the Commissioner might not be able, with existing manpower, to provide the number of policemen necessary to maintain active liaison with neighbourhood watchers. I warmly welcome the Commissioner's report.

1.4 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): First, I should like to place on record my commitment—and that of all London Labour Members—to fighting crime and helping to make London a safe place for people to live in. I am a single woman and live on my own, so I understand the fears of women of all ages, whether single or married, about crime, sexual violence and being alone at home at night.

It is absurd to argue, as some of the more disreputable Tory Members have argued, that the Labour party in London is pro-crime and pro-disorder. It is our people who suffer most from crime. All over the world, it is the poor who suffer most from crime, whether council tenants, single parents or pensioners, so the Labour party in London, which endeavours to represent working people and the poor, is worried about crime. It is our people who are hit worst and hit first by the effects of crime. Crime is a very big issue in my constituency of Hackney North, and Stoke Newington.

I shall touch on Tory hypocrisy about law and order. Hypocrisy characterises the Tory party in the 1980s, and on the matter of law and order the hypocrisy is particularly gross and stinking. Since the Prime Minister has been in power, crime has increased by half. My hon. Friends have mentioned how, in general, the Conservative regime has contributed to the rising tide of lawlessness and disorder by promoting a climate of materialism and grasping rampant individualism. Spiralling poverty and homelessness, have also been the consequences of eight years of Tory misrule. There have also been cuts in social security. There is no doubt that all these create the climate for the rising tide of crime under the Government. In 1979, the Tory party said in its manifesto:

"respect for the rule of law is the basis of a free and civilized life."

That comes ill from the Tories. If they want to give lectures about respect for the rule of law, they should give them to Ernest Saunders and other leading Conservative voters who were involved in the £1 million Guinness scandal, and other City frauds.

I shall touch on the Home Secretary's closing remarks in his introduction to the debate. He talked of the importance of the highest professional standards in the Metropolitan police. I feel that I can speak for every London Labour Member in saying that we agree with him wholeheartedly about that. When we discuss those matters, when we meet our local police commanders and when we speak to our local communities, tenants' associations, community groups and young people, that issue is always top of the agenda. That is why we have raised the issue of freemasonry.

There was a lot of spluttering and noise from Tory Members when we brought up the subject of freemasons. Hon. Members talked about proof. Books and television and newspaper investigations have given rise to considerable concern. The point, above all, about the Metropolitan police and freemasonry is that, like Caesar's wife, the police force should be above reproach. There is no doubt that the continuing drip of allegations, cases and investigations about freemasonry in the Metropolitan police does not leave the Metropolitan police above reproach.

I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) say that membership of the freemasons was not incompatible with carrying out police duties. That is not quite the view of the Metropolitan police. Even it acknowledges that membership of the freemasons can cause a problem—if only a problem in public perception. That is why the

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Metropolitan police itself in 1985 officially advised officers that they should consider the advisability of membership of the freemasons.

If those at the highest levels of the Metropolitan police are aware of the problems caused to the public's perception of the police by the fact—it is a fact—that one in five police officers in London are freemasons, I am amazed that Conservative members are so smug about it. Not only are one in five police officers in London freemasons, but they include members of the fraud squad and the complaints investigation branch.

With the best will in the world, there can be no doubt that that causes problems when it comes to public confidence. All kinds of possibilities can arise from such high levels of police involvement in freemasonry at senior levels, including the questions of promotion within the force, and corrupt collusion with freemason contractors. I need only touch on the case of chief inspector Brian Woollard who, unfortunately, has recently had to resign from the Metropolitan police. He alleged throughout his period of suspension and in many interviews that it was because he, as a loyal dedicated policeman, chose to investigate what he suspected might be corrupt connections between contractors who were freemasons and the policemen who were awarding the contracts also being freemasons, that he was suspended and forced out of the police.

Freemasonry in the Metropolitan police also causes problems with internal investigations. How can a senior policeman who is a freemason possibly be seen as adequately investigating a complaint against another policeman who is also a freemason, and even if he is doing so, how is that situation perceived? As I said earlier, it is possible that the public might think, because senior policemen are members of freemasonry lodges along with known criminals, the criminals might escape the long arm of the law. Those are only possibilities, but the problem of the Metropolitan police connection with freemasonry is one of perception. As I said earlier, the Metropolitan police should be seen to be above reproach.

I want to continue my theme of the highest professional standards. One area in which the Metropolitan police may have been slipping from the highest professional standards is in collusion with the media. I refer to a case in Hackney. When a raid was made on a club in Clapton, both national and local media were tipped off about it in advance. A photographer from the *Evening Standard* went along and photographs of police in riot gear were splashed in the papers. All the stories in the papers referred to the Yardies, the Jamaican mafia which is supposed to control every crime in the London area, from a bank robbery in Brixton to a mugging on Croydon high street. About 70 people were handcuffed during the raid but only five charges were brought. Several Jamaican politicians have been in and out of London in the past few months and I have discussed the issue with them, with Jamaicans in this country, and with my constituents. People are alarmed that inflated media propaganda about the Yardies, the non-existent Jamaican mafia, reflects badly on the Jamaican community, both here and abroad the vast majority of whom are law-abiding people. If the police have been colluding in that media propaganda and media hype, that is wholly irresponsible and will undoubtedly damage police-community relations.

I should like to touch on another case of media collusion and to talk about a woman who is a personal friend and whom I have known for many years. She is called Dolly Kiffin and is a community leader on the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham. I have known her since before either of us moved in the public domain and know her to be a principled, hardworking woman who is committed to her community. She has done an enormous amount of work to turn Broadwater Farm around from a sink estate to an estate which people from all over the world now visit to see the community initiatives and the things that have been done to bring young black and white people together and to see the way in which the estate has been improved and employment generated.

Dolly Kiffin was subjected to a slanderous campaign in the newspapers, especially in the Mail group of newspapers. It was implied that she was involved in instigating the Broadwater Farm riots; that she even ordered the killing of PC Blakelock, and that she was financially corrupt. I am pleased to say that in the last few weeks Dolly Kiffin has received damages and compensation running into six figures from the Mail group of newspapers, which has had to admit that all those allegations were downright lies. The problem is that—it reflects on the Metropolitan police—it is alleged that the stories that appeared in the Mail newspapers have now been admitted to be slanderous. They appeared in the Mail newspapers with police collusion. Such collusion with the media does nothing to enhance public esteem of professional standards in the Metropolitan police.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Abbott: I shall not give way. I shall develop my arguments.

I wish to talk further about professional standards and about the Broadwater Farm trials. As Conservative Members will remember that, at the end of investigations, six people were charged, three of whom were juveniles. Of the three juveniles, two were acquitted. I remind Conservative Members of what the judge said in acquitting them. The judge found that the treatment of one juvenile, who was 13 years of age, was oppressive on three points. He spent 48 hours in a police cell, isolated from his family, and cut off from the outside world. When he was interviewed, he was clothed only in underpants. After a change in interviewing tactics, the child broke down emotionally and cried. The judge found his treatment to be oppressive, and directed his acquittal.

There was another child, aged 15, with a mental age of a child of seven. Again, the judge found that the police treatment of that little boy was oppressive. Such cases call into question the professional standards of at least a minority of Metropolitan policemen.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend will recall that the policing of the Broadwater farm estate and the subsequent trial was the subject of a report from such an esteemed body as Amnesty International. That report has not been widely reported in the national media or taken up by the Government and commented on. Does my hon. Friend agree that Amnesty International has made a serious report and that it should be given due weight?

Ms. Abbott: I thank my hon. Friend for reminding me of the Amnesty International report. *[Interruption.]* I can hear the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) sniggering. Of course, torture and the oppressive treatment of young people is of no concern to him. I put it to the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington that we shall not have effective policing in this city until——

Mr. Dicks: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Abbott: I shall not give way. I wish to complete my point.

I put it to the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington that effective policing and law and order in this city depend on wide public consent to the activities of the police. The cases that I mentioned call into question the professionalism of at least some Metropolitan police officers.

Mr. Dicks: Rubbish.

Ms. Abbott: It will do the hon. Gentleman no good to say, "Rubbish." I am merely quoting a judge's remarks. If the hon. Gentleman considers that the judge's remarks are rubbish, he should take up the matter with the judge concerned.

I now refer to the police in my constituency of Hackney, North and Stoke Newington. Unfortunately, there have been several disturbing cases of police behaviour in Stoke Newington, and in Stoke Newington police station in particular. I remind hon. Members of the case of Colin Roach, who died from a shotgun blast while in custody in Stoke Newington police station. In the eyes of the community, how Colin Roach was shot and died has never been satisfactorily explained. There was the case of Derek Pascall, a 25-year-old, who was beaten up and burnt with cigarettes on his stomach by two policemen. He was eventually awarded £3,500 damages against the police. There was the case of Danny Rama and Brian Donovan, two London printers, who won their appeals against conviction during the Wapping dispute. They alleged that they were badly beaten in a police van. The police said that they could not explain their multiple injuries.

There was the recent case of Trevor Monerville who was arrested by police at Stoke Newington police station. He turned up in Maudsley hospital suffering from a swollen brain and his body was covered in bruises. To this day he suffers from paralysis and his family have had no answers to questions as to how he received the brain damage and why his body was covered in bruises. Two pensioners were assaulted by Stoke Newington police and eventually gained damages in the High court.

I am not saying that such instances are the norm. If Conservative Members take seriously issues of law and order in London, and if they are concerned about the reputation of the Metropolitan police force, it is not enough for them to snigger and sneer and to shrug off instances of brutality which have resulted in court rulings in the complainants' favour. If hon. Members' wives, mothers, sons, had been assaulted and had to go to the court to get damages, they would take it seriously. On behalf of the citizens of London we are obliged to take seriously such cases, which reflect poorly on the reputation of the Metropolitan police force. When I and my hon. Friends raise such cases, we are accused of being anti-police. That is absurd. It is pro-police to expect the highest possible standards from the police.

While on the subject of absurdity, it is only fair to mention a motion on the Order Paper signed by a large number of Conservative Members, entitled, "Hackney police operation against muggers". I note that none of the Conservative Members who have signed the motion have anything to do with Hackney. Some of them have never been to Hackney. The two Labour Members of Parliament for Hackney, the Hackney council and the Hackney police committee are united in wishing to fight crime and mugging in Hackney.

I wish to place on record my respect for the work of the police committee support unit, which is denigrated in the motion. It has done a great deal of work on crime prevention on estates. The police committee support unit has been quoted as saying that the police operation was inappropriate. It has been quoted out of context. One aspect of the police operation against muggers, which in some respects was successful, was the suggestion that there should be mounted police in Ridley road market as a deterrent against muggers. The police committee support unit merely pointed out that, given the packed nature of Ridley road market, mounted police were not the most effective way of chasing muggers. The police committee support unit has been quoted out of context in the motion. The motion is foolish. It has been signed by people who have no real interest in the problems of crime in Hackney.

In conclusion, I hope that all hon. Members are united in wanting effective policing in London. Effective policing needs broad popular consent. Some boroughs and people were unwilling to become involved with the police consultative committee. They were not against police consultation in principle, but they did not believe that the police genuinely wished to consult. They considered that the committees were a sham and that there would be no genuine consultation and that there would be no practical result. Where it can be proved that those committees can result in genuine consultation people have been willing to join them,but there is no doubt that the unwillingness of people to join the consultative committees was because the consultative committees did not conform with the blueprint laid down in Lord Scarman's report and did not have the powers that were suggested. People genuinely doubted the commitment of the police to genuine consultation.

If we are to have effective policing with broad popular consent, we must be open-minded and we must face some of the problems over the puplic perception of the Metropolitan police. We must face the problem that the high level of police involvement in freemasonry poses to confidence in the police. We must face the problem of recurrent instances of abuse of police power. We must face the problem of the taint of racism attached to some activities of some members of the Metropolitan police force, whether in individual cases or in general attitude. Anyone who is genuinely for law and order and who wishes to protect the life, property and well-being of the people of London must wish to see the Metropolitan police force stand in the highest public esteem. That is particularly so of those of us who genuinely believe in these issues, and are not merely trying to gain cheap political advantage, and who live in inner London among the communities that we represent. The Metropolitan police force will stand in the highest public esteem if the force itself and its political masters are seen to pursue with rigour and seriousness some of the abuses and problems which I have touched on.

[Ms. Abbott]

1.25 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I have never heard such a load of codswallop in all my life as the words of the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott). She claims to represent the working class, with her middle class accent, yuppie media background and visits to Champneys. She says that she lives in her constituency, but does not say that she is living in a house that most of her constituents could not afford.

Ms. Abbott: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dicks: No, I will not give way to the hon. Lady under any circumstances. We had not one word of regret from her about the death of P. C. Blakelock, which showed her one-sided views. P. C. Blakelock was butchered by a load of West Indians bringing their tribal behaviour on to the streets of Broadwater farm. He was butchered and cut into dozens of pieces, but there was not a word of apology from the hon. Lady for that.

Ms. Abbott: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dicks: No I will not give way. I want to get on to the main issue of policing of London.

Ms. Abbott: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What does the hon. Member mean by "tribal behaviour"?

Mr. Dicks: I will treat that intervention with the contempt that it deserves. The hon. Lady knows very well what I was talking about.

Policing in London is a major problem, as has already been said. Crime is at a high level—far too high to be acceptable. The increase in establishment referred to by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is not having an impact on policing, and the move to civilianise some of the posts is not leading to a large number of bobbies being back on the beat. In 1985, the previous Commissioner called for 3,000 more police officers to be appointed. Two years ago, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary agreed that there should be 1,200 more police officers, with the increase being spread over four years. That is hardly an effective response to those demands.

Public order is a huge drain on both public resources and manpower. Like me, many people in London are annoyed that the issues for which the police are used are often not related to Britain. There are demonstrations by Arab against Arab about problems in their own countries and police manpower is used to ensure that the demonstrators keep moving through the streets of central London. Police officers on the beat want to know why such demonstrations should be allowed on the streets of London at the taxpayers' and ratepayers' expense. A recent demonstration involving middle east factions cost the taxpayers and ratepayers £6,000, with people walking through London causing chaos to the traffic and chanting words that most people in England could not understand. There have been demonstrations on Indian and Eastern European matters, all of which cost time and money and take policemen away from the job that they should be doing—preventing and finding the answers to crime.

A continuous police presence has to be maintained outside the South African embassy because the anti-apartheid groups want to go on about rights. These people have good solicitors and are able to show that they are blocking only part of the pavement. There is a constant noise and the constant potential for violence, so police have to stay on duty. If these demonstrations were taking place outside the Foreign Office or the Home Office, regulations would be introduced within 24 hours to get them stopped and to get these people removed. Instead, we have to waste police resources to allow these anti-apartheid groups to cause bedlam around the clock.

The Notting hill carnival, which takes place once a year, locks up the best part of Kensington for two days to allow a handful of West Indians to bring their culture and way of life on to the streets of London. Last year, policing of the Notting hill carnival cost about £1 million, of which £56,000 was spent on feeding the police. There is no reason why the streets of Notting hill should be blocked off to enable people to behave in the way that they do and to encourage petty crime. Ordinary decent people who have lived there many years longer than the immigrants want to go about their normal business. Why should not they be allowed to drive through Notting hill just because there will be a West Indian culture concert and rabble-making throughout the weekend? I have written to the Secretary of State about this, but he replied that it is a good social occasion and that it should not be stopped. I find that amazing, as do most ordinary people and, of course, the police.

Sometimes junior police officers have been instructed to turn a blind eye to drunkenness, petty thieving and minor drug-taking. If they carried out the letter of the law it could lead to a massive uprising of the local inhabitants. It seems that there is one rule for my constituents but a different one and different interpretation of the law for the constituents of Kensington and the West Indians of that area. I want people from that area to be treated in exactly the same way as my constituents who are picked up for drunkenness, smoking pot or petty thieving. It is most unfair that there is this one-sided approach to the maintenance of law and order in some parts of London.

Football and other sporting activities are a tremendous drain on police resources. The best time to be a criminal, especially in London, is Saturday afternoon. If the police are not at demonstrations they are at football matches. Most weekends police stations are undermanned because police must cope with football matches or demonstrations. Mention has been made of London's responsibilities for processions. It is perhaps necessary for various processions to take place, and various heads of state come here and must be protected. But the other activities that I have mentioned are completely unnecessary.

I have a letter from the Under-Secretary dated March 1987 saying that there were not any no-go areas in this country. That is untrue. Does he have the courage to go with me—I am not sure whether I have—to go along All Saints road, the home of the Mangrove club? He will know that policemen are not allowed to make arrests at that club unless they get permission from senior officers. Those senior officers must talk to community leaders to ascertain whether it is all right to send the police in to make arrests. If they do not talk to community leaders there must be a large police presence to ensure that the officer making the arrest can get out safely. That is only one no-go area of which I am aware, but there are many others, and my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) mentioned some. Those are areas where not only milkmen or postmen cannot go but where there must be special policing. That is positive discrimination. Normal police duties cannot be

undertaken because the ethnic community might not like it and cause trouble. Why is there special policing for primarily the West Indian communities in the capital city but different policing in the rest of London? I cannot understand it but, more important, nor can people outside. Apart from All Saints road, there are no-go areas in Brixton and Broadwater farm.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): That is not true. Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dicks: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman has just come into the Chamber, but some hon. Members have been sitting here since 9.30 am. I could go on and on about no-go areas. *[Interruption.]* I shall take no notice of the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) who has just popped into the Chamber to sit on his backside and grin. I believe the police officers who are at the sharp end, day after day, all over London. I take their word for what is happening.

It has been suggested that civilianisation will have a massive impact, that 1,500 posts could be civilianised so that bobbies could return to the beat. That figure is to be found in the 1985-86 Session report of the Public Accounts Committee. With 150 posts being civilianised every year, it will take 10 years to get policemen back on the beat. Some serving police officers in London also say that they have yet to see a bobby being taken off a job that has been civilianised. They have great doubts about the speed at which civilianisation is taking place.

The Crown Prosecution Service is one of the best services that many policemen know for the successful villian. The chance of cases being withdrawn or dismissed is higher now, because of having to resort to the Crown Prosecution Service, than ever before. Communication between the police and the CPS is very poor. To process cases before they are passed from a police station to the CPS leads to an enormous drain on the resources of local police stations. Why on earth can we not return to the old system under which a policeman arrested a suspect and took the case right through to court? Why should the CPS act as a buffer between the police and the courts? We are getting nowhere very slowly.

The equipment used by the Metropolitan police is deteriorating. According to some police officers, the cuts have led to a reduction in the number of vehicles. They say that maintenance standards are not what they were and that there is now a directive to buy British. I am sorry to have to say that the British car is still not the best car in and around town. The police should be allowed to reconsider the directive to buy British if British cars do not serve the general needs of the Metropolitan police. I am also told that the police experience problems with their radios. They are often defective, and that leads to inefficiency. Furthermore, it can lead to the police being put in danger.

Policemen are not gaolers and they should never be gaolers. Last year, 1 million man hours were lost in London, the equivalent of 700 officers on the beat, because they had to look after prisoners who were on remand in police cells. It is wrong that police manpower should be taken off the streets of our cities so that policemen can act as gaolers in their own police stations. There is something wrong somewhere.

Let me put the other side of the coin. Since 1979, two new prisons have been built, at Frankland and Wayland, and £1 million has been spent on providing sports facilities for the prisoners. They have floodlit facilities and up-to-date sports halls. Everything is provided for them. It seems strange that we have allocated £1 million for sports facilities in those prisons when people on remand have to be placed in police station cells. A priority of that kind leads me to believe that there is something wrong with the system.

There is disillusionment among police officers in the Metropolitan police. They are leaving every week for better jobs in county forces, or they are just resigning. The official side on the negotiating board suggests that rent allowances and the London allowance should be reduced. What a way to encourage police officers to stay in London. Police officers leave London because there is cheaper housing elsewhere and better schools and more agreeable living conditions outside London. Most important of all, as one young policeman said to me, there is less abuse by Labour party politicians—and some Conservative ones—if they move to the counties. The police hear nothing but criticism from the Labour party, from its leaders and from some of the militant Left-wing members of the Labour party, about their role in London.

Many of us have seen disgusting literature from organisations funded by the now defunct Greater London council, which did nothing but run down the Metropolitan police. The police look for understanding of the problems of their work and for some respect for what they do.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dicks: The hon. Gentleman has been here for only two minutes; he can sit down again.

The Metropolitan police are doing a marvellous job in trying conditions. They are continually under attack by liberal do-gooders, some of whom are in the Home Office, where hands are wrung and brows creased, but, in some cases, no action is taken. The Home Office must support the police, for that is what the police want. They sometimes worry about whether that support exists. I believe that it does, but we need further evidence of it from the Home Secretary and the Home Office.

The police should not be expected to be social workers or community relations officers. Their job is to maintain law and order. That does not necessarily mean that they should have to put their arms round the shoulders of potential villains or worry about the community relations effect of law and order decisions. The sooner we realise that the police are there to do their job—not to worry about the impact that that might have on West Indians, Asians, Englishmen, Irishmen or Scotsmen—the better. Drastic action to improve manpower and conditions is called for. Until it is taken, policing London will remain a problem.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Three hon. Members are still hoping to speak before the winding-up speeches at about 2 o'clock. I hope that they will divide the time between them.

1.42 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Racism is a serious source of friction which hinders the important work the police must do to protect communities of all races, colours and beliefs—including the black community. That friction is

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

not helped by the sort of speech made by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks). He fosters that sort of racism, and I hope that the Minister will dissociate himself from the hon. Gentleman's remarks. If crime is to be tackled, the black community must work with the police, and vice versa.

I recently caught a television programme, one of the series called "C.A.T.S. Eyes", in which Jill Gascoigne goes about with a couple of other girls and catches criminals and spies. She reports to a black boss, who is presumably head of the security services in Scotland Yard. Although it was difficult to table the question, I recently asked the Prime Minister how many black people there are in management positions in the security services in Scotland Yard. I asked whether

"the security services are an equal opportunity employer".

Today, I received the answer:

"The legislation governing equal opportunities recognises the need for exceptions in relation to members of the armed forces and the safeguarding of national security."

That almost certainly means that there are no black citizens in management positions in Scotland Yard or similar services. The implication of the Prime Minister's answer is that they are not to be trusted. So this racism extends to the Government, who do not provide equal opportunities in this respect.

Racism goes much further. For example, on the "South Bank Show", Lenny Henry went to New York and made a speech in which he said:

"We have black people in London, too. They are generally known as 'the accused'."

I am afraid that there is more than a grain of truth in that. A disproportionate number of our black citizens are in gaol or mental hospitals. We complain about Eastern bloc mental hospitals, but a disproportionate number of our black citizens have been put in them by the predominantly white police and judiciary. that has to be sorted out if we are to deal with the problems of racism that have been touched on by the last couple of speakers.

Rising crime in London is generally non-racial; it affects all Londoners. there has been a substantial rise in virtually every major category of notifiable offence since 1979. It shows the Tory manifesto pledge to be a myth. It states:

"Yet respect for the rule of law is the basis of a free and civilised life. We will restore it."

That pledge was another trick on the electorate.

Violence against the person is up 49 per cent. since 1979; sexual offences are up 16 per cent.—that is a rapidly growing category—burglary is up 65 per cent., robbery is up 161 per cent., theft and handling of stolen goods are up 45 per cent., and fraud and forgery are up 13 per cent. —although that figure does not include the city slickers in the City of London who are getting way with millions. They are not caught because the police are not properly equipped. Criminal damage is up 84 per cent. and other offences are up 119 per cent. There is now 53 per cent. more crime than there was in 1979—more than half as much again. While the crime rate has accelerated, the clear-up rate for the entire country has gone down—from 40 per cent. in 1979 to 33 per cent. The clear-up rate in London is even less. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said, it is down to about 16 per cent. That is an abysmal record for the Government.

It is all part of the tout philosophy enunciated by the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) earlier this week. She said how wonderful the touts were—all part of the free market economy, which we must respect in everything. What it really means is that someone can make a quick, large buck without earning it. Of course, other people adopt the free market philosophy, for example the plying of the drugs trade and the increase in prostitution, including child prostitution. There has been a large increase in Thatcher's Britain; it is part of the free market economy. The arguments that apply to the touts also apply to those sorts of free markets.

Since 1979 there has been inequality combined with greed. There has been a massive increase in desperation arising from hardship. There are people on the make who, perhaps, have too much money in their pockets, yet they literally kick everybody out of their way so that they can make more. They have learnt a lesson from the Government—if they are powerful enough they can make the laws and get away with committing crimes. That philosophy, which the Government have created, has resulted in a large increase in crime, especially violent crime. That is reflected not only by racial attacks but by crimes against women, which have also increased substantially, and against children. As the House knows, I am a campaigner for animal rights. The incidence of violence against animals has increased; they are being treated appallingly—dog fights are an example. That is all part of the syndrome of life being treated as cheap and worthless which, again, stems from the Government's philosophy.

I know that Sir Peter Imbert has a difficult job, but I do not think that that was helped by his comment quoted in *The Guardian* this week, which said that Sir Peter was trying to appease some Tory hardliners. That is not a sensible way for a Commissioner to go about the task. Sir Peter is reported as saying:

"I have heard it said that the way to empty prisons is to threaten to fill them up."

That is an empty phrase, which would result in magistrates and judges sending more people to prison, causing overcrowding. Sending more people to prison will achieve exactly the opposite effect to what Sir Peter wishes. That is an empty phrase but it will not mean empty prisons.

The problem will become worse because prisons are a breeding ground for crime. We need to empty our prisons as much as possible and leave them for the violent offenders—the rapists, murderers and the like who must be in prison. We should not throw everyone else in there. We need another version of community care to deal with prisoners so that when they are released they have jobs, homes and a proper place in society rather than becoming isolated and desperate, and thus likely to reoffend. Sir Peter's suggestion is not helpful as a way to alleviate the problems in prisons or the problems of crime.

Police numbers should be evident, as this is an important part of police accountability. One problem of which London Labour Members complained when they met the police about events at Wapping was that the police in riot gear were not wearing numbers. Civil liberties are important and police numbers must be on show at all times.

The Government have a blind spot about the role of local authorities in tackling crime. When the Prime Minister had her crime prevention review, she did not invite anyone from the local authorities. In my area,

people are involved in this work on the Cathall estate. I paid tribute to the police when I consulted them about crime prevention on that estate. They were helpful and came up with useful solutions, but solutions require local council finance. The Government are cutting local authority expenditure and cutting grants to organisations involved in victim support schemes.

It has been said that capitalism presents us all with a wonderful opportunity, if only we take it with both hands. That phrase came not from Ministers or professors of capitalism but from Al Capone. It shows that when we have the Prime Minister's brand of free market capitalism we get the rise in crime associated with it.

1.53 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): At least two Opposition Members have sought to undermine confidence in the police. Conservative Members prefer to support our police, especially in London, in their dedicated and courageous job. We salute their work and achievements as portrayed in the Commissioner's report. We salute the 4 per cent. reduction in crime and the 13 per cent. increase in the time spent on the beat. We salute the 100,000 more neighbourhood watch schemes, which have taken the number of schemes over the 1 million mark.

There are problems. One is street robbery. Arrests have increased by 45 per cent. and the clear-up rate by 25 per cent. Nevertheless, robberies are up by 13 per cent. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary referred to some achievements in my area of Battersea. I should like to highlight that, because the Battersea street robbery figures show a decrease of 19 per cent. Arrests have doubled and clear-ups have risen by 117 per cent. That shows what can be done.

That has been achieved by deploying street crime squads. That means more men. It has been achieved by targeting known streets and criminals. That, too, means more men. It has been achieved by bringing in the territorial support group. That also means access to more manpower. Because fewer men have had to be sent to pickets and demonstrations—there has been a 65 per cent. decrease since last year in that respect—more are available to deal with street crime. It has also been achieved by shifting resources and concentrating on this rather than on other aspects of crime. That is good news, but it shows that good news comes only when we have the manpower and resources to achieve it. There is good news, too, on motor crime, vandalism and sex offences, but figures for house burglaries have risen, which I suspect is due to the transfer of manpower to concentrate on street crime.

The lesson is clear. If we have the men, we can win the war against crime. More men means less crime, more arrests and more clear-ups. As has already been pointed out, having so many police officers guarding prisoners in police cells, on remand or already sentenced, means the loss of 950,000 man-hours per year which should have been spent on the beat. The increasing complexity of fraud and the number of officers taken from the CID to concentrate on that type of crime has an effect right down the line, leaving fewer men available to solve crimes on the streets.

We must declare war on crime and there must be no hiding place for criminals. It is fine to have the neighbourhood watch, the shop watch, the pub watch, the cab watch and all the other exciting developments about which we have heard today. It is fine to have better lights, locks and alarms and greater vigilance by the public, by car owners, by home owners, by shopkeepers, by neighbours and by cameras. But we still need the manpower, both in the Metropolitan police and in the transport police.

Not long ago I went by Metropolitan line tube to Wembley with my son to see the final between Luton and Arsenal. We were appalled at the behaviour of drunken louts urinating in the carriages, setting fire to paper and insulting and abusing passengers, many of whom were young children travelling with their families. All that the police could do was to force more people into the carriages at Baker street and then let the train go on to Wembley Park. When the train arrived, there was not one police officer there to arrest the offenders and stop them going to the match. The police should be stopping such louts going to matches, and the transport police should be stopping them going on tube trains, but sufficient manpower is not available to make it possible to travel safely in London. We know of the problem on the Northern line and the black hole of crime which is such a danger to passengers, assuming that it is possible to get a train and thus to become a passenger.

The crime rate has fallen by 4 per cent., but there are still 737,000 offences, of which 120,000 are cleared up, so in more than 600,000 cases the criminals get away with it. For burglaries, the figure is 97,000 with only 7,000 clear-ups, so in 90,000 cases the criminals get away with it. We need to recruit more police and to pay them properly. If housing is a problem, we should consider some kind of shared purchase scheme to assist recruitment.

There is much to be said about traffic policing and many other areas which require additional manpower, but above all we need the police to stop crime. It is a simple question of what is required and the simple answer is more police. Sometimes the simple answer to a simple question is the right one. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to meet that answer.

1.59 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I am appalled that the House cannot organise its business better. It is insulting to my constituents and to my local police, on whose behalf I wish to speak, that, having put my name in a week ago, I have had to sit here for four and a half hours, through 75 minutes of Front Bench speeches, one speech lasting 30 minutes and three of more than 20 minutes, only to be told that I have only three or four minutes in which to make my speech.

This is the first time since becoming a Member of Parliament that I have had to focus my mind on the Metropolitan police. I am proud to say that my previous incarnation in local government was in a provincial police area.

There are three issues on which I had hoped to speak, but I cannot now go into any detail on two of them. I thought about the basics of policing, and the conclusion that I reached was that the accountability argument, which the Labour party deploys, is bogus, irrelevant and, on some occasions, when it is argued in respect of London, downright dangerous.

The second subject on which I focused my mind was the significance of London having different policing relations. My conclusion, on which I cannot elaborate, is that it is quite right that the capital should be policed separately

[Mr. David Wilshire]

and differently but that it is vital that standards throughout the Metropolitan police area should be the same. That thought would have led me, if I had had time, to develop an argument about whether the current Metropolitan police boundaries are correct.

I shall concentrate on what local experience in my constituency has taught me in the year that I have been Spelthorne's Member of Parliament. My conclusions are that I am lucky to be where I am and that, in that part of the Metropolitan police area, there are some tremendous policing successes to report. I suggest that the House takes some of that experience on board. The rest of the country could learn from what is going on there.

Community co-operation and a multi-agency approach to policing are the keys to beating the rising tide of crime. The important thing now is to focus on the effective use of existing resources, although we should consider providing new resources. In my little bit of the Metropolitan police area, the local community, particularly local community leaders, has been positive, enthusiastic and progressive about combating crime, and successful. The local police have provided me with a briefing note which says:

"The community of Staines through its local consultative committee has itself accepted its responsibility for crime prevention. The results could not be achieved by police acting in isolation but serve to demonstrate what can be achieved when police have the full confidence and support of a community and council all working together towards a common goal."

I have time to highlight only a few of the things that are going on. The formal framework is fully in place and operational. There is a consultative committee which has flourished and found a real job to do. It has produced a crime prevention panel, which is claimed to be the best in the Metropolitan police area. It has produced a junior crime prevention panel which, I am told, is the first in the Metropolitan police area. There is also a drug and alcohol abuse panel. One of its initiatives, taken with the help of a national brewery, is the establishment of the Metropolitan police area's first alcohol-free pub.

There have been several notable initiatives. The police have organised business watch successfully. They have set up the first non-retail business watch scheme in the United Kingdom on the Poyle trading estate near Heathrow airport, and emphasised road safety campaigns. Spelthorne borough council has financed security packages for the elderly. It provides locks and fits them free. The council has also combated juvenile crime. Last summer, it set up a "summer safe" campaign which attracted 400 children to take part in activities ranging from water skiing to snooker, with which police staff helped.

All that has produced dramatic results; and this is the lesson to be learnt. During the "summer safe" campaign, vandalism fell by 34 per cent. and cycle theft by 26 per cent. W. H. Smith reported a 50 per cent. reduction in shop lifting during that period. The security package for the elderly has resulted in burglaries of the elderly dropping by 40 per cent. and the road safety campaign has reduced death on the roads by 60 per cent.

The size of police territory is critical. May I therefore press the Minister to tell me whether he is now prepared to urge the Commissioner to accept the report that divided the current Twickenham division into two separate divisions so that Spelthorne borough has its own police station. Secondly, will he undertake that when the Staines police station is rebuilt, it will be situated in the middle of the community and that he will not give way to the temptation to build it outside? Policing by consent—high profile policing, the full and enthusiastic support of the borough council, which puts a large amount of money into policing in its community—is the only way to beat crime. What has happened in Spelthorne is magnificent, and the rest of London and the rest of the country can learn from it.

2.5 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I sympathise with the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) but I remember how, in an earlier debate on the Commissioner's reports, I have been squeezed out entirely. He has been luckier than I have been in the past, although I have been more fortunate this afternoon.

It has been an interesting debate, in which plenty of crimes have been committed by Conservative Members. We started with a bad case of political fraud and deception perpetrated by the Home Secretary, who described the activities of the GLC so as to give a completely misleading impression of the GLC's attitude to the police. I am a forgiving person. I still proudly wear a pair of GLC cuff links, and I have a spare pair at home. If the Home Secretary promises to wear them at a Cabinet meeting and flaunt them in front of the Prime Minister, I shall give him the spare set.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): What about the silver?

Mr. Banks: I am keeping that.

We have had an incitement to violence from the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), who gave us his customary blend of racism, vulgar abuse and dementia. We have had incitements to boredom from many hon. Members and I suspect that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department will be committing his usual crime of being inebriated by his own eloquence.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) is looking at me somewhat askance. Presumably, he is wondering whether I shall be arrested for dangerous political driving at the Dispatch Box. I shall do my best not to let him down.

The Opposition associate themselves with the congratulations to Peter Imbert, both on his appointment and on his knighthood. The London group of Labour Members has regular meetings with the Commissioner. At times we find them very illuminating and at times very annoying but they are always useful and we intend to continue those meetings and our meetings with the Home Secretary.

Let me say to the hon. Member for Spelthorne and others that the annual debate on the Commissioner's report is no replacement for a democratically elected and publicly accountable police authority in London. If such a system can operate outside London, why cannot we have it here in London? Why cannot we have a police committee? The City of London has its own police authority with a committee structure, and what is good enough for the City of London and good enough outside London should be good enough for Greater London.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook laid it firmly on the line that it remains the Labour party's position to establish a directly elected police authority for London when we are next in Government. That authority will have nothing to do with control of the day-to-day operations of the police but it will determine the overall operational policies and practices.

The biggest difference between the speeches of the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook was the willingness of my right hon. Friend to examine causes as well as the effects of crime in London. That marks the great difference between the two parties. As I said in an intervention, even the Government are beginning to realise that the root causes of crime must be addressed. However, with this Government, and the policies that they are pursuing at the moment, crime will never be eliminated nor will any serious indentations be made on the levels of crime in our society. I accept that the Prime Minister cannot be personally blamed for all the crimes that are perpetrated in London, although she might be an incitement to riot should she walk the streets of London. However, she must take some indirect responsibility. She summed it all up when she said:

"There is no such thing as society. There is only a collection of individuals and families."

The Government's whole philosophy and all their policies are based on selfishness, greed, a sneering attitude to the public services and the caring professions, and an ideological hatred of publicly owned assets. We believe that the Government have done great damage to the concept of community. It is little wonder that our society is increasingly violent and divided. The decline in moral standards in this country is a reflection of the Government's immorality, espoused by their "devil take the hindmost" economic and social policies.

We are concerned about all crimes in London and in our society as a whole. We are concerned about the crimes of poverty, homelessness and unemployment. All those crimes have been perpetrated by the Government on the people of London. At the next election the Government will be called before the court of the people, and we believe that they will be pronounced guilty. The Home Secretary did not say anything about those crimes. He did not say anything about the other crimes that are prevalent in London at the moment, such as fraud in the City of London, involving tens of millions of pounds. The Conservative Government seem soft on such crimes, but tend to be hard on social security fraud.

The Home Secretary did not say anything about the collapse of the football hooligan trials, involving the possible fabrication of police evidence. I am glad that Commissioner Imbert has promised action. We in this House have a right to demand that action, because the collapse of those trials has resulted in a serious undermining of public confidence in police evidence procedures. We must be careful about putting excessive political pressure on the police to secure prosecutions and increase clear-up rates. As the hon. Members for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) have said, we need to improve the clear-up rates in London but we must not follow the bad example of the Kent police in apparently doing deals with convicted prisoners and getting them to admit to previously unsolved crimes.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook directed the House's attention to the causes of crime. Unemployment, poverty and ignorance are not excuses for crime, but they are factors in criminal activity. We bombard our young with images of affluence on television, and in films and advertisements. Then we deprive many of them of the wherewithal to share in the affluence that they see around them. It is not really surprising if so many of them fall foul of temptation. The yobbos in the Stock Exchange with their "Hooray Henry" attitudes give the lead in many ways to the sort of street crime that we have to suffer in London.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) talked about the alarming rise in drink-related crime. Again, the advertising of the drink manufacturers is aimed specifically at the 18 to 24-year-old group and it is in that age group that instances of crime are at their highest. Alcohol abuse in London and in the country generally is now rampant. We demand more Government action on that. There should be health warnings on all alcohol products and a total ban on advertising drink on television, in the cinemas and newspapers. Consumption in public places should be banned and there should be much stiffer sentences for alcohol-related crimes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) made a thoughtful and eloquent speech. She was foully abused by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington, who is not in his place for me foully to abuse him, so I shall move quickly on.

My hon. Friends the Members for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) referred to freemasonry. We have raised that matter with the Home Secretary and the Commissioner. There is public concern, particularly about Mr. Woollard's report and his subsequent fate. The police must not be perceived as having some higher loyalties than the impartial and even-handed enforcement of the law. Opposition Members believe that, because of its rites and oaths of brotherly loyalty, freemasonry is incompatible with police membership.

Policing in London is highly complex, not least because of the proliferation of specialised national functions that Metropolitan police must take on and which detract from local policing needs. Many local policing needs could have been mentioned during the debate. I am particularly concerned about the failure of the Metropolitan police to enforce traffic regulations in London. They say, "We cannot do that because we have insufficient resources." Quite frankly, if Parliament wills the ends, it should also will the means to enforce the ends. It is not acceptable for force orders to be pronounced by the Metropolitan police, in effect saying what parts of the laws that are passed in the House shall be enforced by the police. That is not the duty of the police. The function of the police in London, as elsewhere, is to enforce the laws that are passed by Parliament. That must be done even-handedly, impartially and with resolution in respect of all forms of crime, including street offences, parking offences and related matters.

It is a fact that the police are regularly used by the Government in an overtly political fashion. That is seen most graphically during a strike, particularly in Wapping. The police officers whom I know have expressed privately and, on certain occasions, publicly, their dissatisfaction with being caught like the contents of a sandwich—between two sides who are set against each other, often

[Mr. Banks]

incited by the political policies of the Government. That was particularly true in Wapping, and it remains true in Dover and other strike situations.

The Labour party in London is far more concerned than Conservative Members about law and order in the capital city. We support the police in London, and we shall continue to support them while they pursue the interests of Londoners. It is our intention to support the police by giving them far less to do on the streets of London. We shall do that by creating a socially and economically just society. That will be the task of the next Labour Government. The sooner that happens, the fewer occasions there will be to have inadequate debates about complex policing matters, but, of course, we are given only rare opportunities to do so.

2.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I shall not follow the example of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) by accusing my opponents of crimes in this place. It would be difficult to do so, if only because so few members of the Labour party are present to commit such crimes. In view of their frequent criticism of policing in London, their complaints about accountability, and their newly disclosed adherence to some of the principles of law and order, it is remarkable that only three Labour Members from London seats were in their places at the start of the debate.

Mr. Tony Banks: We do not have ministerial cars.

Mr. Hogg: I understand that the hon. Gentleman is extremely venal, but the ordinary people who walk the streets will not find that explanation particularly attractive, especially from somebody who liked riding around in the Greater London council official car.

The other point that I regard as unattractive is the denial of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that certain Labour Members are profoundly hostile to the police. We all know that that allegation is true. I can prove that fact conclusively with quotations from the hon. Members for Tottenham (Mr. Grant), for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), for Barking (Ms. Richardson), for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown), for Preston (Mrs. Wise) and for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). If any hon. Member challenges me, I shall read them out.

Not only do I find the denial by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook of the hostility of some parts of his party to the police surprising, but I find his analysis of the problem less than persuasive. When unemployment was rising, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook attributed crime to that. Now that unemployment is falling he attributes the increasing crime to prosperity. That is a remarkable case of facing both ways. However, as he has some personal political problems at the moment, I do not find that wholly surprising.

The right hon. Gentleman's command of detail was less impressive than I would have expected from the Opposition Front Bench spokesman. He congratulated his party on the support that it gave to the firearms legislation. I know that the right hon. Member was not able to be present at the Report stage of the Bill. I make no criticism of that, but had he been there, he would have known that a number of his hon. Friends were among those who opposed the Firearms Bill in Division after Division and on Third Reading.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was one of those who called for a complete ban on self-loading rifles. He nods in agreement to that. Perhaps he does not know that his fellow Front Bench spokesman the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) voted in favour of an amendment to permit some classes of self-loading rifle to remain on section 1 control.

Mr. Hattersley: The position is absolutely clear and well-documented. We were in favour of the proposals that the Home Secretary gave to the House. We voted for them on Second Reading. Then, in Committee, we discovered —and perhaps the Under-Secretary is responsible—that the Government's definition of self-loading was so incompetent that the trade could not run it.

Mr. Hogg: I am afraid that that is not the case. The truth is that Opposition Members could not make up their minds. They saw a bandwagon rolling past them and they hopped on it. That is neither attractive nor laudable.

The right hon. Gentleman should also bear in mind that his comments on clear-up figures disclosed less than his customary control of detail. When he said that the clear-up figures in 1987 were the same as those in 1986, broadly speaking he was correct. However, he failed to point out that in the first quarter of this year, the clear-up rate had increased from 16 to 18 per cent. Much more damaging to his cause was that he failed to draw the House's attention to the important provisos contained in the Commissioner's report. On page 41 of the report the Commissioner drew attention to the contrasting trends between primary clear-ups and secondary clear-ups.

Primary clear-ups are those where the offence is dealt with by a charge, a summons or a caution, the most significant test. Had the right hon. Gentleman quoted those figures, he would have observed that there was an increase of 7 per cent. in the clear-up rate in 1987 in comparison with 1986. If the right hon. Gentleman comes to this place to make broad criticisms, it would be better by far for his reputation, not to mention for the knowledge of the House, if he were a little fuller in his comments.

There was some difference of opinion between Opposition Members about manpower. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook approves of increases in police establishment. Some of his hon. Friends do not. I have grave doubts whether the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) favours such increases. He made some comments about policemen with sirens late at night which suggested to me that he lacked support for increases in manpower. Moreover, to criticise the Government——

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hogg: No, I shall not, as I have only six minutes.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman has made a charge against me and should give way.

Mr. Hogg: No, I now have only five minutes left and I shall continue.

It is extraordinary that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook did not draw attention to the fact that in the present year we shall spend 59 per cent. more in real terms on the Metropolitan police force than was spent in

1978-79. Moreover, by the end of this year, the manpower of the police force will have increased by 5,500 since May 1979.

The right hon. Gentleman went on to say that, notwithstanding the various increases in the manpower figures, the efficiency of the police and their ability to deploy people on the streets had diminished. This suggested to me that the right hon. Gentleman had not read the Commissioner's report, so let me remind him of page 13, where the Commissioner says that as a result of more efficient use of manpower, arrests have increased by 6 per cent. in the current year, and the number of police officers available for street duty, which one would think would be one of the paramount tests to be applied, has increased by 13 per cent.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hogg: No, I shall not give way. The right hon. Gentleman grumbled away about these points and, when I reply to them clearly and precisely, he grumbles again. I am sorry, but there it is. Perhaps next time before a debate of this kind, he will read the Commissioner's report a little more fully.

I agree entirely with what my hon. Friends the Members for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) and for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) said about the more effective use of manpower. My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North made two important and specific points about police attitudes to road traffic, which will be considered. The broad message from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North, supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington, and it is also the view of the Commissioner, was that the Metropolitan police force needs to make yet more efficient use of its manpower.

The hon. Member for Islington, North made an important point about sexual offences. He is right to draw attention to the incidence of such offences, particularly rape. I am glad to say—the hon. Member may know—that there was an 11 per cent. decrease in the number of rape cases.

Mr. Corbyn: Reported cases.

Mr. Hogg: Yes, reported rape cases decreased by 11 per cent. The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that the Metropolitan police force is attaching more significance to this class of offence and to the methods used to deal with it and with the victims. Clearly, if policemen are not sympathetic, people will not come forward with complaints. Last year, four dedicated rape suites were opened and, in the coming year, another four will be opened. About 1,300 officers have received specific training in this sector, and the number of female police surgeons has been increased, so that 15 female doctors are available to deal with such complaints.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington understandably focused on street robbery. It was partly to combat that crime that we incorporated the knives provision in the Criminal Justice Bill. About 56 per cent. of all robberies take place in 16 divisions of the Metropolitan police force. Over the past year, the Metropolitan police transferred additional resources to those 16 divisions, which resulted in a substantial reduction in the rate of increase of robbery offences. Police in London are conscious of the need to tackle robbery on the streets.

The same applies to burglary. I was interested by what my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington said about burglary. He stressed what crime prevention can do, and my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) echoed that, though in the slightly different context of the involvement of the police in community action and what the community can do.

It being half past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Southwark (Archaeological Heritage)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Alan Howarth.*]

2.30 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am pleased to have the opportunity to debate the subject of the protection of Southwark's archaeological heritage. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for the Environmemt will be especially sympathetic as he, like me, represents a south London constituency.

Many people are excited by the opportunity of preserving the heritage of what is rapidly being discovered to be one of the most interesting archaeological areas in Britain. The concern that motivated the debate is to ensure that hon. Members and the Government now act to protect and preserve this archaeological treasure trove.

Southwark is one of this country's oldest settlements. It was a key settlement because two highways—Stane street from the south coast and Watling street from Dover—converged and became at Southwark the crossing point of the Thames, where London bridge is now situated. Southwark was the southern suburb of Londinium. The excavations are revealing much of great importance about Southwark and its past.

In a few minutes, I shall make specific propositions about what needs to be done, but, first, I shall identify the two key issues. To protect Southwark's heritage we need, first, money and, secondly, time.

I shall list the sites that have emerged as being of particular importance to show the breadth and diversity of our heritage. Bermondsey abbey was a Cluniac priory of the 11th century and was one of the major, if not the major, Cluniac settlements in England. It was a huge abbey located at the junction of what is now Abbey street and Tower bridge road. Yesterday I returned with my younger brother who is a Southwark councillor for the Abbey ward, to the part of the site being excavated and we looked with archaeologists at the exciting excavations that are going on at that borough council-owned site.

The Bricklayers Arms site is almost immediately outside my front door. It is in private ownership and is about to be developed for housing. Recently, an article appeared in *The Standard* headed,

"Official: Bermondsey really is prehistoric. Archaeologists have discovered the first positive evidence that prehistoric man once inhabited inner London.

A team from the Museum of London has found wooden structures and tools dating back to between 2000 and 3000 BC in an area which until now has been something of a mystery."

I do not think that the area has been a mystery to many of us, but archaeologically that has been the case. The site is the former Bricklayers Arms goods depot. The museum's archaeologist, Michael Hammerson, said:

"This is the first real proof of what might be regarded as a permanent habitation. It does suggest a quite intensive occupation of the area. It is an important find and there is no doubt whatever that other unexplored parts of greater London have a similar or even greater potential for transforming our knowledge of the region's history."

Planning permission was granted last week by the council to Ideal Homes, and any day now there may be a large-scale private housing development.

Hay's wharf is a large site that is also in private ownership. It is owned by St. Martins' property company. The site is opposite the Tower of London and adjacent to Tower bridge. There have been amazing and wonderful discoveries on that site in recent weeks that have rightly commanded great press attention. First, there was the discovery that the Rosary palace of Edward II might have been built on that site. It is also probable that the house of Sir John Fastolf was built there. Shakespeare took the name to create one of his greatest characters. His residence was moated and contained gardens and pools. I was on that very site yesterday in hot sunshine. I spent the whole morning there and at the Bermondsey Abbey site. They have found wonderful things there—for example, a leather male vestment, probably from the middle ages, and children's shoes in perfect condition because they have been preserved by the moist clay. They have also found a piece of stained glass. I wish that I could have brought it to the House, but I could not do so because they dared not allow it to leave their possession. It is an example of very early stained glass that contains a beautiful representation of a lion. In all probability it came from a window of the royal palace on that site. They have also found fascinating timber work and foundation work that identify the pattern of what must have been the early moat and dockyard.

The developers, St. Martins' property company, have given the archaeologists six months to explore the site. They are using that time to great advantage, but one needs to ask how much time should be given to them and how much guaranteed protection there should be for the site. The developer is not compelled to give the archaeologists that amount of time. The amount of time that has been given is quite generous and I applaud the company for that. A public inquiry is now scheduled, which may lead to more time being allowed to the archaeologists.

The last of the major sites is the Courage brewery site, just off Southwark bridge road. That led to a long article in *The Times* on 11 May, headed

"The Docklands of the Caesars."

It said:

"The latest piece of Roman London to emerge from the mud could be the most significant archaeological find for years—yet may be lost to new building."

What was discovered during Easter weekend this year was a warehouse, 15 ft, by at least 30 ft. It was a wooden structure and the first suggestion that the Southwark side of the Roman Thames was an international commercial port before AD 200. I shall read what was said to make clear the excitement that the importance of the site generated. The warehouse was found by a team of Museum of London archaeologists, led by Harvey Sheldon, whom I know well and to whom I have often spoken. The British Museum's Romano-British curator, Dr. Potter, who is an international authority on the subject, was ecstatic about the discovery and said that he had never seen anything like it:

"'It is terribly important. To find a Second Century wooden warehouse . . . with the floors as perfectly preserved as any modern building, it is quite extraordinary. We now know there were a lot of Roman settlements in the Southwark area, and I would think that you're getting a whole series of warehouses. It is emerging as a sort of Docklands of Roman times.

The building was constructed using the finest carpentry skills: no nails have been found. The floor, made from great oak sheets, has been preserved, along with a ramp down which barrels would have been rolled to just below ground level, where they could be kept cool. The floor is surrounded by the sloping remains of wooden walls, with mortice-and-tenon joints still intact.' Potter enthused: 'The simple fact is that we need to know more, more, more. When you've got a state of preservation like that, it offers an exceptional chance of answering a lot of long-posed questions.'"

I have taken an interest in these things for many years, and not only in Southwark, but that site prompted a reawakening of my interest. I wrote to the noble Lord Caithness and received a courteous reply. I wrote to English Heritage, too. That site needs only another six weeks or £40,000 worth of work to ensure that what can be found and preserved, is dealt with.

I shall now list the other sites, and then discuss the politics and policies that relate to them: Phoenix wharf is in private hands; Platform wharf, by Cherry Garden pier in Rotherhithe, is in the control of the LDDC, which has so far done a good job for Southwark archaeology. The previously lost palace of Edward III is there. There is a chance to preserve it and open it to the public, thanks to the LDDC. There is an archaeologically important site in the grounds of Guy's hospital. Yet to be discovered is the original site of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, which is thought to be on a larger site currently being developed. There are various exciting discoveries on Southwark street.

The length of this list shows the importance of Southwark in British archaeology. It is all the responsibility of English Heritage, or the Historical Buildings and Monuments Commission, as it is more formally known. The House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment, in its first report of 1986-87, to which the Government responded on New Year's Eve last year, examined ways in which English Heritage and the Government should be more responsive.

There clearly needs to be guaranteed protection for areas of such significance. At present, if a site is scheduled, a delay is allowed before development can go ahead, but there is no guarantee of money. The danger, in areas such as Southwark, of waiting for sites to be scheduled lies in the rapid pace of development in the regeneration of the inner city. All sites must be dealt with in time, so it is vital that time and money are provided for publicly and privately developed sites.

The Courage site is in Southwark council's hands. For reasons that I will not go into now, the council has a tight budget. Its leader is supportive of the archaeological rescue operation. If Southwark has no available money we must none the less ensure that it does not lose the opportunity of co-operating—as the landlord—with the Government in getting the archaeological work done. The same applies to any local authority or public authority, such as the LDDC. The same applies also to private sites. Apart from a four-month delay in certain circumstances, there is no statutory guarantee that the developers such as St. Martin's at the Hay's wharf site will carry out archaeological rescue. I have been given a letter which makes it clear that some developers resist any such rescue proposal. They are asked whether development can be deferred and often say that that is not worth while financially. Then the site in question is lost for all time.

I quote a letter from Regalian, developers in south London, to the Museum of London:

> "I have considered all that was said at our meeting and I regret to say that we are not swayed by the arguments in favour of developer funding. We believe that this type of work which is undertaken for local or national purposes should be paid for out of local or national funds."

So, although there are some powers in planning law to impose planning conditions on private developers, they might well say that the profit motive forced them to go ahead—and the rescue operation cannot be secured.

The same sometimes applies to public bodies. The Department of Transport often finds itself involved with archaeologically important sites, but in 1987 it donated £100,000 to English Heritage—hardly enough to cover any of the sites.

I propose, first, that Southwark, or, more narrowly, north Southwark, which happens to be conterminous with my constituency, should be urgently designated an area of outstanding archaeological importance. I know that the Government are carrying out a review, but I earnestly hope that, as this is not one of those debates where we are just going through the motions, it can be completed quickly and the area added to the five already listed and designated in Britain.

Secondly, there should be no differentiation between public and private sites, because they should both be eligible for Government funding through English Heritage as the appropriate agency, but the funding should be increased to ensure that the necessary money is forthcoming.

Thirdly, financing to English Heritage should be increased. One of the tragedies is that although it is doing some good work, much of its resources are being spent on post-excavation activity and not on the major recovery activity. Bids in 1985-86 for excavation work totalled £3·8 million, but the grant was only £0·3 million. Its budget is £7·2 million, but it is clear that it needs more funds as it rejects an enormous number of sites for listing.

It has been assessed that 10,000 archaeological sites are being destroyed countrywide. An article in *The Independent* on 8 January, only six months ago, stated:

> "According to the Council for British Archaeology there are now about 15,000 archaeological sites being destroyed without excavation throughout the country through lack of funds".

I hope the Minister will accept the urgency for more funding and more control to allow time for the rescue operations to be put in train. Above all, the Government need to reconsider the special and urgent case for Southwark archaeology to be protected.

People may ask, "Is it equally important to preserve and protect the archaeology as it is to build houses, hospitals and schools?" The local paper that the Minister and I share—the *South London Press*—recently polled a random sample of local people from south London. Its headline stated:

> "You have your say on keeping heritage alive."

There was not one person who did not think that preserving the heritage was vital, because the heritage of Southwark, as of any other community, is what people treasure and want to know more about. It should be preserved and the Government must act immediately to ensure that it is.

2.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): If the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has seen *The Guardian* today, he will not be surprised to see me here rather than at the launch of the Scottish unleaded petrol week. It is the stamp of bad journalism to report only part of a story. He will be the first to understand that my priorities as a Minister should at the Dispatch Box. I am grateful to his hon. Friend the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) for standing in for me

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

in Scotland. It is good that there is an all-party approach towards persuading more motorists to use unleaded petrol.

I am also grateful to the hon. Gentleman for putting his case so fully. I am sorry that the problems that beset the world of hooliganism precluded me from joining him yesterday morning. I promise him that I would have much preferred to view the archaeological sites to which he referred than do the work that I was, in fact, undertaking. I make it clear straight away that the Government attach great importance to this country's extraordinarily rich and varied archaeological heritage. We are fully conscious that our present civilisation is only possible because of the achievements of our predecessors over many generations. If we ignore this part of our heritage, we deny ourselves an important understanding of how this country has become what it is, and archaeological remains and discoveries are a constant source of wonder and interest to many of us. Historic Southwark clearly played an important part in the history of London, and the hon. Gentleman is justly proud of that. We all know, I am sure, of Chaucer starting his famous pilgrimage to Canterbury from the Tabard inn at Southwark; of Shakespeare and his companions drawing the crowds at the Globe theatre, which is to be reconstructed. We can see Southwark cathedral standing proudly by the river, surrounded by the borough market and the Victorian railway line, to testify to continuing values in a constantly changing world.

In recent years archaeologists have shown us that Southwark has even more to offer. As the hon. Gentleman has pointed out, there is increasing evidence that historic Southwark, far from being the less-favoured south bank, where nothing happened, is busy and alive. Indeed, it is largely our present wave of development in the City, following the big bang, that is spreading over into the south. That is showing us that Roman London did exactly the same. Perhaps we can seek to draw a parallel between Southwark's past and its present. It is certainly good to see new developments coming to the south of the river, with the prospect of future prosperity, which our descendants may look on with as much respect as we regard our medieval heritage.

As the hon. Gentleman rightly point out, we now have evidence that prehistoric men once lived on the Bricklayers Arms site—one of the first signs of human habitation in inner London, and some of us are becoming increasingly aware that once, long before that, hippos roamed over what is now Trafalgar square. We find increasing signs of the Roman occupation, at the Bricklayers Arms site and on the waterfront at the old Courage brewery site. We see signs of extensive medieval occupation, for example, in the influential Bermondsey abbey—the site of which has recently been scheduled—and the reputed palace of Edward II at Hay's wharf, London Bridge City. This is a significant batch of archaeological discoveries, in a short time, for any area or any constituency.

Now we come to the difficult problems. They are both philosophical and practical. How much of this archaeological heritage can we, as a country, preserve? Indeed, how much should we preserve? Which takes precedence —the needs of the present or the needs of the irreplaceable, fragile heritage? How far will future generations wish us to preserve their past for them? Who should pay for the archaeological work?

It is sometimes said that we need more development and more conservation. There is a genuine dilemma here. The pressures for development have never been greater than they are today. Equally, the public awareness of the desirability of conservation and the value of the heritage of attractive countryside and historic buildings has never been higher. Archaeology gives rise to particular problems; the increasing sophistication of archaeological technique means that finds may be discovered which, perhaps, a generation ago, might not have been made, and such finds may now be interpreted with greater accuracy.

That is an exciting advance in knowledge and skill. It is also, to be frank, a practical problem for the developer. A listed building can be seen and identified, and its value assessed. The archaeological find is unpredictable. It is probably not exaggerating to suggest that in historic urban areas each new development site may overlie valuable archaeological remains, and there may be two very different attitudes to that fact.

Government must, as so often, seek to find a balance between the different sides. We have the mechanism for protecting archaeological sites and monuments by placing them on the Secretary of State's schedule of ancient monuments, compiled under the Ancient Monuments and Archeological Areas Act 1979. These are, by definition, monuments of national importance and, because of that, the Secretary of State keeps for himself the power of granting or withholding the scheduled monument consent which must be obtained before any works are carried out which would affect or damage such monuments. As I said, we have recently scheduled Bermondsey abbey, because of the considerable remains there and the importance of the abbey to medieval London.

Scheduling, however, does not mean that the monument must be left untouched for all time. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that in many cases that would not be in the monument's best interests, for often the work for which scheduled monument consent may be sought will be desirable repairs to the fabric. The great majority of applications for scheduled monument consent are granted, although conditions may be attached to them. The procedure does, however, ensure that a close look is taken at the effects of the proposals on the monument and the relative merits of allowing it to be altered, developed, investigated before development or preservation in its entirety. Each case is different, and I cannot—indeed, I must not—prejudge what the decision would be on any individual application.

Scheduling will be appropriate only for a fairly small proportion of the known monuments. English Heritage is embarking on a programme of assessing all the known monuments and considering on a comprehensive basis which ones merit scheduling. We expect that, as a result, it will recommend a large number of additional schedulings to us, but the total proportion will still remain small. I am sure that it is right that, since scheduling imposes additional restrictions over what a landowner can do with his land, it should be imposed only where it can be justified archaeologically by the application of stringent criteria.

Other monuments are not left without protection, but it is right that monuments or sites of more local importance should be considered primarily at the local level. We have made it clear, however, in a circular to local

authorities that where development would be likely to affect an ancient monument, whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled, the desirability of preserving the monument and its setting is a material consideration to be taken into account in determining planning applications. Indeed, that approach has been backed by the courts. Although planning considerations are many and varied, and the process of balancing them all, each with their due weight, can sometimes demand the skills of an expert juggler, the archaeological considerations must be included in the balancing act.

There is a third mechanism for taking account of archaeological considerations which the hon. Gentleman mentioned, although at present its practical extent is comparatively limited. This is the designation of areas of archaeological importance—AAIs for short—introduced by the 1979 Act which I have already mentioned. Five areas have so far been designated—the historic town centres of Canterbury, Chester, Exeter, Hereford and York.

The significance of designation—although a local authority may designate, such a designation takes effect only if confirmed by the Secretary of State—is that there is then an opportunity for a nominated investigating authority to enter a site and carry out archaeological investigations for a period of up to four and a half months before development can take place. I know that many elements in the archaeological world value this legislative provision and would like to see it extended. English Heritage is currently reviewing the operation of the scheme so far. I must point out, however, that the AAI procedure does not allow for preservation of finds or monuments —it allows only a breathing space, effectively for rescue archaeology. In that respect, before we designate more such areas we perhaps need to think through carefully and, I agree, as speedily as possible how we should best protect archaeological remains under towns—bearing in mind, as I said earlier, that there will be some areas in which one may expect valuable finds every time one puts in a spade —while at the same time not putting unreasonable restrictions on much needed development.

All the points that the hon. Gentleman raised were significant in this respect and I shall bring them to the attention of English Heritage. Perhaps I may also ask him to pursue in conversation or in a meeting with me any other ideas that he may have, so that we can ensure that they are fully considered in the current review. I emphasise and respect the need for there to be no hesitation or foot-dragging in the consideration of these very important details so that a decision can be reached as soon as possible. The hon. Gentleman will also accept that digging everything up may not always be the best solution; that may be better left to the more advanced techniques of future generations.

With regard to where the money comes from, I should point out straight away that, as the hon. Gentleman knows full well, we have no bottomless pot of gold. For the avoidance of doubt, I should put straight a misapprehension which sometimes occurs. The scheduling of monuments and the designation of an AAI does not bring with it any financial resources to the owner or authority concerned. It is up to the investigating authority to decide its own priorities as to what, within the AAI, it wishes and has the resources to investigate, and to stimulate local developers' or authorities' interest in the work being done and its importance. AAI designation is an opportunity for the archaeologist—not a burden. There is no immutable law as to who should pay for archaeological investigations, and nor should there be. The archaeological heritage belongs to all of us, individuals and companies and local and central government, and it is right that each sector, public and private, should be willing to contribute as appropriate.

It is a hard fact of life that we all—central Government, local government, firms and individuals—have to determine our own priorities. Fortunate indeed are the bodies or individuals whose resources are adequate to meet all the demands that they can anticipate. I am extremely encouraged, however, to see how far the private sector is responding to the needs of the archaeological heritage by providing facilities, time and financial support for archaeological investigations. Indeed, I understand that a recent report by the British Archaeological Trust shows that public and private sector developers contributed some £3·37 million for rescue archaeology in Britain in 1986-87, in contrast to a mere £58,000 in 1978-79. Much credit here must go to the constructive relationships that have been forged between developers and archaeologists, which have borne fruit in the code of practice issued in 1986 and sponsored jointly by the British Property Federation and the standing conference of archaeological unit managers. The code not only encourages developers to provide financial support to enable worthwhile archaeological investigations to take place but provides valuable and sensible guidelines for mutual co-operation and communication between the two. I believe that central Government should be fully involved, and we achieve that by looking to English Heritage to provide financial help with rescue archaeology. English Heritage is constrained by the need to determine its own internal priorities as well as by its total grant in aid from the Department, which itself must be balanced against other demands on the public expenditure purse.

The hon. Gentleman referred specifically to Bermondsey abbey and the Courage brewery site, both owned by Southwark council, and suggested that they were examples of cases in which more central Government funding might be appropriate. With regard to the Courage site, I understand that the Greater London council, before its abolition, gave £120,000 for archaeological work there and that the proposed development was to be undertaken jointly by Southwark and the GLC. English Heritage, since its establishment, has given a further £71,000 and has committed £75,000 more for post-excavation work. That is indeed a generous contribution. At Bermondsey abbey, too, the excavations which have been going on for several years have been financed generously by English Heritage.

I will bring to the hon. Gentleman's attention more detail on important issues such as the Bricklayers Arms and London Bridge City sites and other areas that he mentioned. Suffice it to say that he and I share the same conviction as readers of our local paper about the importance that we should attach to this work. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the thrust of his remarks is well taken and we shall pursue the individual points that he has raised. I hope that through further discussion outside the Chamber we can reach a satisfactory conclusion in the interests of both the hon. Gentleman and his constituents.

The Motion, having been made at half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 13 June 1988

HOME DEPARTMENT

Health and Safety Legislation (Prosecutions)

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to raise the maximum penalty in the magistrates' court for prosecutions under the health and safety legislation.

Mr. John Patten: We have no present plans to do so.

Terrorism

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Acts 1974, 1976 and 1984 were subsequently convicted on the basis of confession evidence only; and how many of those convictions were contested by the defence.

Mr. Hurd: This information is not available.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many times access to a solicitor has been delayed under section 58(13) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act to individuals being held in police custody under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 since 1 January 1986; and for how long;

(2) how many times section 56(11) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 has been invoked since 1 January 1986 to delay action to inform a relative, friend or person interested in the welfare of an individual being held in police custody under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, and for how long.

Mr. Hurd: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will list the occasions on which he has met Sir Basil Feldman since 1 January and discussed Sunday trading deregulation;

(2) on what occasions his departmental officials have met Sir Basil Feldman since 1 January; and which officials were in attendance at these meetings;

(3) what information was available to his Department before it agreed to meet Sir Basil Feldman, concerning the nature of his fiancial involvement in the campaign for Sunday trading deregulation; and whether he will make a statement;

(4) whether he will make it his policy to refuse to meet persons involved in the campaign for the deregulation of Sunday trading who are contracted to receive success fees in relation to that campaign; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Sir Basil Feldman called on me on 25 January and on my right hon. Friend on 25 May to discuss Sunday trading. Private secretaries and officials concerned with this issue were present on each occasion. Officials have not otherwise met Sir Basil Feldman except at a conference organised by him on 17 February, which I also attended. Sir Basil Feldman has informed my right hon. Friend that his involvement in the Sunday trading campaign is voluntary and that he is under no contract to receive either a fee or a success-related fee in connection with the campaign.

Mr. Stuart Holmes

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the South Yorkshire constabulary as to when the Sheffield police will return to Mr. Stuart Holmes his extendable banner, seized outside the Crucible theatre during the world professional snooker championships; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of South Yorkshire police that the banner is being retained for evidential purposes and will be returned to Mr. Holmes when the legal proceedings are complete.

Police Complaints Authority

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to grant the Police Complaints Authority powers to carry out itself the investigation of serious allegations against police officers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. My right hon. Friend is not persuaded of the need to extend the powers already possessed by the Police Complaints Authority, to which I referred in my reply to the hon. Member's question on 18 May, at column *462*.

Sex Discrimination Act

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will bring forward legislation to amend the Sex Discrimination Act to bring private clubs with both male and female members within the scope of the Act.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) on 14 March, at columns *422-23*.

Endangered Species

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions involving wildlife trade have been taken under *(a)* the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations 1985, *(b)* the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976 and *(c)* the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979; and in each case what penalties were imposed.

Mr. John Patten: Records available to me for 1986, which may be incomplete, show no prosecutions under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations 1985 and one prosecution under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976 which resulted in a conviction and a fine of £600. The number of prosecutions under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 which involved wildlife is not available separately.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes there were in the Chelmsford local authority area in each year from 1982 to the latest available year.

Mr. John Patten: I understand from the chief constable of Essex police that at the end of 1987 there were 160 neighbourhood watch schemes in the Chelmsford police sub-division, the boundary of which is roughly conterminous with that of Chelmsford borough council. The first scheme in Chelmsford was established in October 1984. There were seven schemes at the end of 1984, 49 at the end of 1985 and 108 at the end of 1986.

Member's Representations

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects that the private office of the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), will respond to the telephone query of the hon. Member for Stretford of 6 June and the subsequent telephone calls of the hon. Member concerning the case of the passports of Mr. S. A. H. (Home Office Ref. Nos. H209976 and H 392426) and of his relation Mrs. A. B.

Mr. Renton: My Private Office supplied the information requested by the hon. Member on 10 June.

Police Interviews (Tape Recording)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to issue a code of practice on the tape recording of police interviews with suspects, in accordance with section 60(1)(a) and section 67 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Mr. Hurd: In accordance with sections 60(1)(a) and 67(3) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, I have today laid before Parliament a draft code of practice on the tape recording of police interviews with suspects at police stations.

The draft code published today has been produced after extensive consultations, but publication affords an opportunity for me to consider any further representations about the draft, which should reach my Department by 11 July.

The Act provides for the code to be brought into operation by an order made by statutory instrument and approved by both Houses of Parliament. I propose to lay such an order before each House as soon as possible after 11 July.

After the code has come into operation it will need to be applied in separate orders to particular police force areas. It is my intention to make the necessary orders, under section 60(1)(b) of the 1984 Act, in relation to individual police force areas, or parts thereof, when chief officers, in consultation with other agencies in the criminal justice system, have made satisfactory arrangements for the tape recording of interviews in the areas to be covered by the order. The effect of such an order will be to require the tape recording of interviews with persons suspected of specified offences in accordance with the provisions of the code. But police forces may proceed with arrangements for tape recording in advance of an order applying to their area, and most forces are already doing so.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Departmental Staff (Education)

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the proportion of senior civil servants in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: One third of the Department's staff at grade 3 and above attended state schools and two thirds attended private schools.

GCSE

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to review the current standards and administration of the general certificate of secondary education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Secondary Examinations Council (SEC) and the GCSE examining groups are collaborating to review experience of the first GCSE examinations this summer and to make any necessary improvements quickly. My right hon. Friend looks to the SEC and its intended successor body, the School Examinations and Assessment Council, to report on the outcome of the review by the end of this year, and to recommend changes as necessary.

Higginson Report

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the Higginson report; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend on 7 June, at column *436*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), in which he announced the publication of the report.

School Leavers

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of 16-year-olds leave school at the first legal opportunity.

Mr. Dunn: The proportion of pupils aged 16 at the end of August 1986 in England that had left school by January 1987 was 70·5 per cent.

Derbyshire (Expenditure)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will meet a deputation from Derbyshire county council to discuss its education capital expenditure for 1988-89 to 1990-91;

(2) how many requests he has received from Derbyshire county council to discuss its education capital expenditure for 1988-89 to 1990-91.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received one substantive request. A meeting has been arranged for 27 June.

Head Teachers (Early Retirement)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimates have been made of the cost of early retirement of head teachers during 1988-89 and 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government's expenditure plans for 1988-89, set out in Cm. 288, provide for spending of £80 million on the costs of premature retirement compensation in the schools sector. The costs of early retirement of head teachers cannot be separately identified within this sum. Detailed plans for 1989-90 have yet to be settled.

Irish Citizens

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many citizens of the Republic of Ireland are attending United Kingdom universities and colleges of higher education.

Mr. Jackson: In 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, there were 1,042 students from the Irish Republic on higher education courses in the United Kingdom.

Teacher Training

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what evaluation studies will be carried out on the bursary schemes for initial teacher training in shortage subjects; what are his targets for the proportion of persons in receipt of such bursaries to take up a first appointment in the maintained sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: An evaluation of the bursary scheme is being carried out by Bath university school of education as part of a review of the major Government initiatives introduced to combat teacher shortage. A summary of phase 1 of the review, which was completed this spring, will be published this month and a copy will be placed in the Library.

The evaluation confirmed that the bursary has made an important contribution to the increased numbers of students entering initial teacher training in the shortage subjects.

All those in receipt of the bursary have to sign an undertaking that they intend to teach in the maintained sector on qualification and we expect all those who satisfactorily complete their training to do so.

Mr. Paul Gray (Letters)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is undertaking a leak inquiry into the leaking of the briefing given to him by civil servants about leak inquiries relating to the unauthorised disclosure of a letter from Mr. Paul Gray to Mr. Tom Jeffrey, regarding educational testing, in relation to questions for answer on 17 May from the hon. Members for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) and for Linlithgow.

Mrs. Rumbold: All unauthorised disclosures of information are investigated by whatever means seem appropriate.

Education Reform

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from schools in the north-west in response to his proposal that state schools should be permitted to opt out of local authority control.

Mr. Dunn: All individual schools which have approached the Department have done so on the basis that their interest will be treated in confidence.

Senior School Population

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are his latest estimates of numbers of 19-year-olds still at school.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1987 the number of pupils aged 19 and over in school was 2,707.

"The Bangladeshis in Britain"

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will arrange for the document published by his Department "The Bangladeshis in Britain" to be made available in Bengali; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: "Bangladeshis in Britain" was not published by my Department. It was a report of the Home Affairs Committee in the 1986-87 Session.

Technological Studies

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his assessment of the effect which the proposed technological studies course will have, if implemented, on the standard of technical drawing and on the number of students qualified in technical drawing.

Mrs. Rumbold: With the introduction of technology as a foundation subject in the national curriculum, all pupils will be introduced to the principles and practice of good design, the application of theoretical knowledge to practical problems and, within that context, the practical craft, design and communication skills needed for realising their designs in a range of materials. My right hon. Friend believes this will increase the opportunities for students to obtain qualifications in all aspects of design and technology and provide a sounder foundation for the development of specialised skills such as technical drawing.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is aware of any proposals or plans for a city technology college in Sunderland.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has as yet received no proposals to establish a city technology college in Sunderland. If there is support in industry and in the local community for doing so he would be pleased to consider any proposals which are put forward.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the amount of public funds payable to the City Technology Colleges Trust for each year since its establishment; what grant is planned for future years; for

what purpose this grant is payable; and what proportion the grant represents of the total income of the City Technology College Trust for each year.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Grant is being paid to the City Technology College Trust to support work in obtaining premises for CTCs and in briefing prospective sponsors. It is envisaged that the trust will also provide support for individual CTC bodies, for example, in curriculum and staff development. If so, the Department is prepared to make a temporary contribution to the cost of these activities.

I envisage that grants to the trust for these purposes will not exceed £200,000 over the next three years, including the current financial year, and that the amount of grant will be limited to a maximum of two thirds of the trust's total relevant expenditure. The trust has secured money from private sources to meet the balance. The trust has submitted claims totalling £20,140 in respect of the financial year 1987-88 and is expected to submit claims totalling £90,000 in the current financial year.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list respectively, how many officials at what grade, and at what estimated cost *(a)* comprise his Department's city technology college unit, *(b)* work outside this unit but in respect of city technology colleges, *(c)* work on the abolition of the Inner London education authority and *(d)* work on grant maintained schools.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: *(a)* The city technology colleges unit comprises:

1 Grade 5
1 Grade 5 HMI for approximately ⅓ of his time
2 Grade 7s
1 Higher Executive Officer
1 Executive Officer
2 Personal Secretaries
1 Administrative Officer

The unit's salary cost is currently about £14,000 per month.

(b) Staff in the architects and building branch are working on design and refurbishment of buildings for CTCs. Currently this involves:

0·75 Grade 6
1 Grade 7
4 Senior Professional and Technology Officers
1 Administrative Officer

This level of commitment is recent and is likely to decline after the summer: the salary cost is currently about £11,000 per month.

(c) The team working on the abolition of ILEA currently comprises:

0.75 Grade 5
1·5 Grade 7
1 Senior Executive Officer
1 Higher Executive Officer (Development)
2 Higher Executive Officers
2 Executive Officers
1·5 Administrative Officers
1 Personal Secretary
1 Typist
1·5 Casual clerical support staff

I expect there to be a modest increase in the staffing of the team if and when the Education Reform Bill is enacted, but the staff salary costs are at present running at about £16,000 per month.

A considerable amount of the time of many other senior officials and their staffs within the Department is also devoted to matters arising from the abolition of the ILEA.

(d) The team currently working on grant-maintained schools comprises:

0·33 Grade 5
0·75 Grade 7
1 Higher Executive Officer (Development)
1 Executive Officer
1 Administrative Assistant

The staff salary costs are about £6,000 per month.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science of what plans he is aware for the establishment of any trust or other body to support or encourage the development of grant-maintained schools; and what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards such trusts or bodies receiving finanical assistance from public funds.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am aware that there are plans to establish an independent trust with the aim of supporting the development of grant-maintained schools. I welcome this initiative. If such a body were in due course to make an application to my Department for financial assistance towards specific activities intended to provide support or advice for schools which had acquired grant-maintained status, the Department would be prepared to consider it.

Student Finance

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be in a position to make a statement on the conclusion of the review of student finance and on when it will be published.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The student support review has not yet completed its work. The Government's proposals for the future of student support will be published in due course.

Universities (Expenditure)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give central Government spending on universities per head of univerzity population since 1979 at constant prices, including planned expenditure per head for 1988-89 to 1990-91, together with the intake to universities of undergraduate students for each of these years.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* In the following table Government expenditure has been taken as University Grants Committee recurrent grant to universities in Great Britain plus home student fee income. Per capita figures for each financial year have been derived by dividing by full-time equivalent home student numbers. The figures are at constant 1986-87 prices as measured by the gross domestic product deflator. The full-time home undergraduate student intake shown relates to the corresponding academic year.

	Government expenditure per student £ (constant prices)	*New Undergraduate entrants 000's*
1979-80	5,421	74·7
1980-81	5,773	76·4
1981-82	5,589	74·0
1982-83	5,796	71·6
1983-84	5,830	69·2

	Government expenditure per student £ (constant prices)	New Undergraduate entrants 000's
1984-85	5,790	70·5
1985-86	5,606	70·3
1986-87	5,552	70·7
1987-88[1]	5,753	72·0
1988-89[1]	5,829	73·6
1989-90[1]	5,741	75·7
1990-91[1]	5,621	74·2

[1] Based on estimated figures.

Schools (Expenditure)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the average expenditure per pupil in local authority schools on *(a)* books, *(b)* scientific equipment, *(c)* computers, *(d)* sports facilities, *(e)* school meals and milk, *(f)* teachers, *(g)* in-service teachers training and *(h)* school buildings, at constant and current prices, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Dunn *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* The available information is set out in the following table:

Average expenditure (£) per pupil[1]
(Maintained, Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Special Schools—England)

Year	Teacher salaries[2]		Seconded teacher salaries		Repair and maintained buildings		Text and library books		Educational equipment[3]		School meals and milk	
	Cash terms	Real terms	Cash terms	Real terms	Cash terms	Real terms	Cash terms	Real terms	Cash terms	Real terms	Cash terms	Real terms
1979-80	365	610	2	3	n/a	n/a	6	10	14	23	50	84
1980-81	473	666	2	3	n/a	n/a	7	10	16	23	49	69
1981-82	539	691	2	3	29	37	7	9	18	23	50	64
1982-83	586	701	3	4	34	41	8	10	21	25	53	63
1983-84	627	716	4	5	39	45	9	10	23	26	57	65
1984-85	665	728	6	7	41	45	9	10	25	27	59	65
1985-86	716	739	7	7	41	42	9	9	26	27	60	62
1986-87	800	800	11	11	48	48	11	11	32	32	64	64

[1] Based on returns of expenditure to the Department of the Environment and of pupil numbers to the Department of Education and Science.
[2] Excluding seconded teacher salaries.
[3] Expenditure levels for different types of equipment are not available. The figures in the table show the overall expenditure on educational equipment.
Note: The case figures for the earlier years have been repriced to 1986-87 real terms using the Gross Domestic Product (Market Prices) Deflator.

Village Schools

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the number of *(a)* village schools closed since 1979 and *(b)* the capital spending on local authority schools falling within metropolitan areas, in each year since 1979 at constant prices.

Mr. Dunn *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* In the period from 1979 to 1987, 590 primary and 27 secondary schools in rural areas were approved for closure as a result of proposals published by local education authorities under section 12 of the Education Act 1980 which were either approved by my right hon. Friend or his predecessors or determined by the local education authorities. Local education authorities have a statutory duty to implement all such proposals which have been approved or determined.

The gross capital expenditure on schools by metropolitan district councils (excluding Greater London) in England is as follows:

Year	Expenditure at 1986-87 Prices (£000s)
[1]1986-87	82,350
1985-86	96,242
1984-85	97,639
1983-84	99,278
1982-83	107,628
1981-82	86,268
1980-81	129,475
1979-80	124,297

[1] Provisional.
Notes:
1 Figures for 1985-86 converted from outturn prices to 1986-87 prices using gross domestic product market prices deflator.
2 Source of information—Department of Environment capital outturn forms CO1.

PRIME MINISTER

Scotland (Ministerial Visits)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Prime Minister to which Department is allocated the responsibility for publicity relating to *(a)* prime ministerial and *(b)* other ministerial visits to Scotland.

The Prime Minister: The prime responsibility for publicity in connection with prime ministerial and other ministerial visits to Scotland rests with the office or Department of the Minister concerned. Scottish information office provides valuable support.

Graffiti

Mr. Favell: To ask the Prime Minister what is her estimate of the cost of removing graffiti from all statues, vehicles, buildings, and other structures; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The information is not available.

Psychological Operations (Ministerial Responsibility)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Prime Minister which Minister in Her Majesty's Government is currently responsible for psychological operations activities in *(a)* Northern Ireland and *(b)* Great Britain.

The Prime Minister: "Psychological operations" is a military term. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has primary responsibility for military questions.

President Reagan (Visit)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total cost of the visit to London by President Reagan on June 2; and what official gifts were given to the President.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* Since President Reagan came on 2 June as a special visitor rather than as a guest of Her Majesty's Government, the Americans were responsible for most of the costs. Her Majesty's Government's expenditure amounted to about £14,600.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about United Kingdom contributions of aid to Ethiopia during the last five years.

Mr. Chris Patten: United Kingdom public expenditure on aid to Ethiopia through bilateral and multilateral channels, over the calendar years 1983 to 1987, has been as follows:

£ thousands

	Bilateral	*Multilateral*[1]
1983	3,433	11,920
1984	7,004	14,150
1985	28,058	23,200
1986	9,627	n/a
1987	8,554	n/a

[1] United Kingdom share.
n/a—not available.

The bulk of this aid has been in the form of assistance for famine relief and rehabilitation. Information on the United Kingdom share of multilateral expenditure in Ethiopia in 1986 and 1987 is not yet available. Since January 1987 the United Kingdom has committed over £45 million for famine relief in Ethiopia, including our share of European Community assistance.

Budget

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current Overseas Development Administration budget expressed as a percentage of gross national product.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of overseas development spending.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Overseas Development Administration budget for overseas aid for the current financial year is £1,337 million. What proportion of gross national product this will represent depends on developments in the economy during the year.

Project Evaluation (Women)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department will institute the practice of evaluating the development projects it supports for the impact they have on women.

Mr. Chris Patten: Since 1986 it has been the practice when evaluating projects to consider their impact on women. The terms of reference for all projects evaluations include this issue.

WALES

Public Library Service

46. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on his Green Paper entitled "Financing our Public Library Service" from individuals or organisations in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: At 1 June comments had been submitted by six individuals and organisations in Wales.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many unemployed people have started businesses in Wales in 1987 under the enterprise allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: In 1987, 6,438 unemployed people started businesses in Wales under the enterprise allowance scheme. Since the scheme began in August 1983, over 21,000 unemployed people have joined in Wales.

Long-term Unemployment (Clwyd)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to eliminate long-term unemployment in Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of long-term unemployed people in Clwyd has fallen in each quarter since January 1986. At April 1988 there were 6,358 long-term unemployed people in Clwyd, 3,770 less than in January 1986.

The reduction reflects the Government's comprehensive range of measures to help long-term unemployed people find jobs. In particular, employment training, which begins in September 1988, will offer a flexible training programme designed to meet individual needs, and is specifically aimed to give longer-term unemployed people the skills they need to get and keep jobs.

Channel Tunnel (Job Creation)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of jobs that might accrue to Wales-based companies in the building of the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: There are no available estimates of the total number of jobs directly resulting from construction of the Channel fixed link. I am keen that industry in Wales should be involved whenever possible and the Welsh Office is actively informing companies of construction opportunities that arise.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many manufacturing jobs have been lost in (i) Clywd and (ii) Wales since May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: While comprehensive information regarding jobs lost is not available, Department of Employment estimates show that there were 109,000 fewer employees in employment in manufacturing industry (SIC 1980 divisions 2-4) in Wales in June 1987 than in June 1979.

Equivalent information is not available for Clwyd, but my Department's regional data system (which is restricted to companies of over 10 employees and uses a slightly different definition of manufacturing industry) indicates there to have been a fall of 7,800 in the numbers employed in manufacturing in Clwyd between 1979 and the latest available results.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many young people who are in employment in (i) Clwyd and (ii) the Shotton travel-to-work area are participating in YTS.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information is available only at Training Commission area office level. The most recent information relates to the end of April 1988 when 6,688 trainees were participating in YTS in the Clwyd, Gwynedd and Powys area.

Restart

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales in the restart scheme are disabled and mentally handicapped; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not available.

Skills Shortages

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his plans to tackle skills shortages in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The strength of the economy is leading to increasing demand for skills. The Government have made a massive increase in investment in training since 1979, when the Training Commission's expenditure in Wales was £31 million. Estimated expenditure in the next two years will be over £200 million.

The Training Commission is continuing to develop its programmes, and employment training, which begins in September 1988, will provide unemployed adults with the skills employers need.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Singapore

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will review the use by the Singaporean Government of the internal radio transmitter formerly controlled by the British Forces Broadcasting Service.

Mr. Eggar: We are aware of no internal radio transmitter, formerly controlled by the British Forces Broadcasting Service, and now used by the Singapore Government. The former BFBS transmitter at Tanglin was handed over to the BBC in the early 1970s and replaced in 1987 by a new FM transmitter which is used exclusively to relay the BBC world service to Singapore listeners.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of Singapore concerning the statements made by the Prime Minister of Singapore concerning possible legal action against a former President of Singapore.

Mr. Eggar: This is a private matter between Mr. Lee and Mr. Devan Nair.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will review the instructions given to British diplomatic staff at the Office of the United Kingdom high commission in Singapore following the recent expulsion of the first secretary of the United States embassy in Singapore for alleged political interference.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Hendrickson's expulsion is a matter for the Governments of the United States and of Singapore. The British high commissioner and his staff will continue to discharge their duties in the normal manner.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make representations to the Government of Singapore concerning the arrest, detention and re-arrest of Singaporeans involved in political activities in the run-up to the 1988 Singapore general election;

(2) if he will make representations to the Government of Singapore concerning the use of the Internal Security Act during the 1988 Singapore general election.

Mr. Eggar: We are not aware that any date has yet been set for the next general election in Singapore. Singapore's record on human rights has in the past generally been good. However, the recent detentions have caused concern to friends of Singapore. In the margins of the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the countries of the European Community and the Association of South East Asian Nations in Dusseldorf on 2 and 3 May, the 12 EC countries made their concerns known to the Singapore authorities. We have since heard that three detainees were released on 18 May, although the others of course remain in detention.

Nicaragua (Arms Exports)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all approaches made to Her Majesty's Government since 1984 by the United States administration for help in securing the export of arms directly or indirectly to rebel forces in Nicaragua; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is our well established policy not to comment on matters of this kind. We have made it clear that we have never supplied arms to the Contras directly or indirectly, nor have we ever had any intention of doing so.

Hong Kong

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the import of worked ivory into Hong Kong in each of the last five years, by weight and value, and what were the countries of origin.

Mr. Eggar: The Hong Kong Government's records of the importation of worked ivory are currently collated on the basis of value and of the previous country of export. Imports, by value, in the last five years are:

	Hong Kong dollars million	*£ million*
1983	22	1·6
1984	26	1·9
1985	39	2·8
1986	55	3·9
1987	61	4·4

The bulk of this ivory was imported into Hong Kong from China, Macau, Japan and Singapore, all of which are party to the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to ensure that Hong Kong complies with the provisions of conf. 6.16 of the CITES regulation agreed in Ottawa in 1987.

Mr. Eggar: CITES resolution conf. 6.16 adopted in Ottawa in 1987 made a number of recommendations for the tighter control of worked ivory. The Hong Kong Government plan to introduce subsidiary legislation to implement these recommendations during July.

We are in close and regular touch with the Hong Kong Government about this matter.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Hong Kong authorities intend to ban the sale of all medicinal products containing rhino horn as from July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Hong Kong Government will ban the internal sale of rhino horn in July. They intend to implement a ban on the internal sale of medicinal products claiming to contain rhino horn as soon as possible. They have concluded that such a ban cannot be achieved administratively, as they had earlier intended, but will require new legislation, which they plan to introduce later this year.

Elephants

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being given to east African countries to combat the poaching of elephants; and what information he has about the current levels of the elephant population in Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Our aid includes the provision of Land Rovers for anti-poaching patrols in Tanzania, and three technical co-operation officers in the Kenyan Wildlife Department. We understand that wildlife experts put the current level of the elephant population in Africa at some 750,000.

ENVIRONMENT

Dangerous Emissions

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution has as to the number of sites in England and Wales that have dangerous emissions of carbon dioxide and methane.

Mr. Moynihan: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution has received replies to its letters on landfill gas of 18 December from the majority of English and Welsh waste disposal authorities, and is processing the responses. I await its report.

Hedgerows

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the interests of the preservation of the habitats of many species of wildlife, he plans to introduce measures to reduce the destruction of hedgerows.

Mr. Moynihan: We believe the preservation of hedgerows depends on the voluntary co-operation of farmers and others. Agricultural advisers from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food encourage farmers to retain hedgerows wherever possible and to manage them effectively. MAFF gives grants for the planting of new hedgerows and for hedgerow laying. Where appropriate, the Countryside Commission and Nature Conservancy Council can also offer assistance.

Local Authorities (Spending)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities whose budgeted total expenditure for 1988-89 exceeds their total expenditure for 1987-88 by more than 6 per cent. and those authorities whose budgeted total expenditure for 1988-89 exceeds their grant-related expenditure assessment by more than 5 per cent., ranking the authorities according to the amount by which their budgeted expenditure exceeds their grant-related expenditure assessment, and showing for each authority *(a)* the authority's grant-related expenditure assessment, *(b)* its budgeted total expenditure for 1988-89, *(c)* its total expenditure for 1987-88, *(d)* the percentage by which its budgeted total expenditure exceeds or falls below its grant-related expenditure assessment and *(e)* the percentage by which its budget total expenditure for 1988-89 exceeds or falls below its total expenditure for 1987-88.

Mr. Howard: I have today placed the information in the Library of the House. The total expenditure information for 1987-88 (revised budget) and for 1988-89 (budget) has been taken from the 1988-89 returns of expenditure and rates (RER89). Where these returns have not been received, the latest information available has been used and the figures are provisional.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department conducted any analysis of the achievements and difficulties of the London Docklands Development Corporation and the Merseyside Development Corporation, before deciding to establish more urban development corporations.

Mr. Ridley: My Department continuously monitors both London Docklands Development Corporation and Merseyside Development Corporation. I took account of their experience when I decided to establish more urban development corporations.

Right-to-Buy Forms

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will investigate the reasons why his Department has told Lichfield district council that it is out of stock of right-to-buy forms; how many other local authorities who are pursuing right-to-buy policies have been similarly informed; how long these forms have been out of stock; and what steps he is taking to have fresh supplies printed forthwith and to ensure that this situation does not recur.

Mrs. Roe: Supplies were unavailable between 6 May and 7 June, and local authorities which ordered forms during this period were so informed. The difficulty arose from a defect in the reordering system, which is being remedied, coupled with a greater than expected demand for the form earlier this year.

House Sales (Corby)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the sum raised by sales made by the New Towns Commission in Corby for each year since 1980.

Mrs. Roe: The sums raised from the sale of property in Corby by the Commission for the New Towns have been as follows:

Year ending 31 March	*£'000*
1980	615
1981	952
1982	580
1983	5,840
1984	2,517
1985	1,506
1986	1,826
1987	4,464
1988	10,564

Clinical Waste (Disposal)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what regulations govern the disposal by hospitals of clinical waste; what measures exist to prevent accidental infection being caused to waste disposal operatives by hypodermic syringes and similar articles; and if he has any proposals for establishing clinical waste incinerators as an alternative to the use of the normal public waste disposal arrangements.

Mr. Moynihan: Arrangements for the disposal of clinical waste from hospitals are a matter for health authorities. The Health and Safety Commission guidance document of 1982, and waste management paper No. 25, give guidance on disposal of clinical waste.

Member's Correspondence

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to provide a substantive reply to the letters dated 7 March and 9 May from the hon. Member for Slough to the Minister for Housing and Planning about a right-to-buy case.

Mr. Waldegrave: I sent my hon. Friend a substantive reply on 9 June.

Civil Servants (Outside Activities)

Mr. John: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Pontypridd of 23 May, *Official Report*, column *77*, he will list the names and Civil Service grades of the 16 civil servants appointed as directors of public liability companies, building societies or other outside bodies specified therein; and of which such companies or other outside bodies they have been appointed;

(2) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Pontypridd, *Official Report*, 23 May, column *77*, by what means and for what departmental purposes the 16 civil servants were appointed as directors of the outside bodies specified in the question.

Mr. Ridley: Following is the answer:

	Grade	*Company*
Mr. P. C. McQuail	2	Generation Securities Ltd.
Mr. F. A. Osborn	2	Trafalgar House Oil and Gas Ltd.
Mr. J. P. G. Rowcliffe	2	Bradford and Bingley Building Society
Mr. C. J. S. Brearley	3	John McLean and Sons Ltd.
Dr. D. J. Fisk	3	Hydraulics Research Ltd.
Mr. P. J. Fletcher	3	John Mowlem Homes Ltd.
Mr. R. J. Green	3	Butterley Brick Ltd.
Miss D. A. Nichols	3	John Laing ETE Ltd.
Mr. B. D. Ponsford	3	Smiths Industries Medical Systems Group
Mr. R. J. A. Sharp	3	ARC Concrete Ltd.
Mr. K. E. C. Sorensen	3	Balfour Beatty Construction International Ltd.
Mr. N. W. Summerton	3	Redland Bricks Ltd.
Miss E. C. Turton	3	Woolwich Equitable Building Society
Mr. A. G. Watson	3	Denco Ltd.
Mr. R. Johnson	6	Salveson Homes Ltd.
Mr. M. Tucker	7	Thamesmead Town

Dr. Fisk's appointment as a non-executive director of Hydraulics Research Ltd. arises directly from his official duties. The appointment of Mr. Tucker as a non-executive director of Thamesmead Town followed an approach to him by the directors of the company; he currently serves on secondment to the company. The other appointments as non-excecutive directors listed in the table were arranged by senior departmental officers with a view to providing opportunities for civil servants to obtain direct experience of the operation of the private sector.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the number of planning appeals made to his Department in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available, *(b)* the number of such appeals that were allowed and *(c)* the percentage that *(b)* represents of *(a)*.

Mr. Waldegrave: The table shows the number of planning appeals received, withdrawn prior to decision, decided and allowed. The success rate given is the number of appeals allowed as a percentage of the total number decided in each year.

Year	Appeals received	Appeals withdrawn	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Percentage allowed of those decided
1978	11,609	2,671	8,952	2,504	28·0
1979	12,990	2,485	8,933	2,602	29·1
1980	16,208	2,921	13,130	4,044	30·8
1981	16,637	3,305	14,451	4,721	32·7
1982	13,900	2,591	12,915	4,003	31·0
1983	13,699	1,611	11,221	8,633	32·4
1984	16,192	2,475	11,643	3,773	32·4
1985	17,053	2,110	14,639	5,477	37·4
1985-86	17,839	2,143	14,130	5,581	39·5
1986-87	19,856	2,533	15,613	6,208	39·8
1987-88	22,482	3,173	18,474	6,955	37·6

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether 19-year-olds still at school will receive any assistance with poll tax by way of rebates, student discount or total exemption; and from what resources he expects any residual liability to be met.

Mr. Ridley: Individuals aged over 18 who are still at school and in respect of whom child benefit is payable will be exempt from the community charge. Child benefit is not payable in respect of 19-year-olds still at school. They will be eligible for rebates of up to 80 per cent. of the community charge according to their incomes. The residual liability will be met from the same sources as their other living expenses.

Companies (Local Authority Involvement)

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals for regulating local authorities' involvement in Companies Act companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend has today published a consultation paper setting out proposals for a statutory framework for local authorities' involvement in companies. Copies of the paper have been placed in the Library.

The report of the committee of inquiry into the conduct of local authority business (the Widdicombe committee) highlighted a number of concerns about companies used by local authorities, under their control or influence, to conduct various activities. In the light of these concerns, the Government have examined the policy issues involved, with the help of specialist assistance from Coopers and Lybrand. As background to this work, my Department conducted a survey of local authorities about their involvement with companies, the results of which are set out in the paper. The survey found that companies are being used by authorities for a very wide range of activities and that their number and the scale of operation is tending to increase.

The Government do not wish to prevent local authorities from becoming involved in companies where there are operational advantages in doing so. Local authorities' use of companies has proved useful in a variety of cases, particularly in joint ventures with the private sector.

The Government have, however, concluded that it is anomalous that local authorities' interests in companies, and the control of influence that these can give, are outside various rules governing the conduct of local authority business, which are intended to ensure that local authorities demonstrably conduct their affairs in accordance with the principles which should govern all public authorities. The proposals set out in the consultation paper are designed to remove this anomaly.

The essence of the proposals is that where a local authority or authorities control a company or have a dominant influence on it, there should be, and should be seen to be, accountability and propriety in the conduct of its affairs; and that such companies should not be capable of being used as a means of avoiding the controls imposed by Parliament on local authorities. These objectives are more difficult to achieve in cases where local authorities do not control a company. It is therefore proposed that local authorities will be able to hold a minority interest in a company only in circumstances where an important policy end is served. The paper sets out the circumstances proposed by the Government.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is consulting separately on these proposals.

Plumbers

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that unvented hot water storage systems are installed by registered plumbers under the terms of the scheme operated by the British Board of Agrèment.

Mr. Trippier: The installation of an unvented hot water system is covered by the safety requirements set out in part G3 of the Building Regulations 1984. Guidance has been given that such a system should be installed by an approved installer, but there is no legal requirement to this effect, although there are requirements that the building control authority must be told whether or not the installer of a system has been approved. We have taken steps to make building control authorities aware of the dangers arising from improper installation, and we have actively encouraged plumbers to seek registration as approved installers. Nevertheless, I am aware that the British Board of Agrèment remains concerned about this issue and my officials will be meeting it shortly to consider whether the present arrangements need to be reviewed.

American Waste

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the danger of importing vermin with American domestic waste proposed to be dumped in the north-west and south-west of England.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 9 June, at column *654*.

Merseyside Task Force

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of the Merseyside task force.

Mr. Trippier: The task force has played a major role in the regeneration of Merseyside. My right hon. Friend has no plans to change this role.

Pollution

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list those landfill sites identified by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution officials as emitting methane and/or carbon dioxide; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will estimate how many homes have been evacuated because of concern at the level of methane and carbon dioxide gas given off at sites *(a)* where new housing has been built on landfill sites and *(b)* where housing is built close to landfill sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution has received replies to its letter on landfill gas of 18 December from the majority of English and Welsh waste disposal authorities, and is processing the responses. I await its report.

Rating Reform

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) *Official Report*, 1 March, columns *560-62*, he will retabulate those tables taking into consideration the 15 per cent. rebate taper and any other relevant modifications to the rebate scheme.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 9 June 1988]:* The tables give the requested update of the figures provided by my right hon. Friend on 1 March 1988. As before, the figures should be treated as indicative only. They show that, as a result of reducing the community charge rebate taper from 20p to 15p in the pound, around 400,000 extra households are expected to contain individuals entitled to a rebate. Households where someone is presently projected to be entitled to less than the maximum rebate will also benefit from the reduced taper, with a total of 5 million adults gaining. As before, the estimated value of rebates does not include the benefit of uprating of income support in respect of the 20 per cent. minimum contribution to rates in 1988-89. The net cost of community charges to tax unit types is not therefore simply the difference between gross community charges and the value of rates. These figures relate to England only and are in 1986-87 prices, like the earlier table.

Household type	*Number*[1] *millions*
Single pensioner	1·5
Other single adult	0·7
Two adults	2·7
Three plus adults	1·2
All	6·2

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.
[1] Households where individuals are expected to be entitled to a community charge rebate.

Tax unit type	*Number paying charge (millions)*	*Total gross community charge bills (£ millions)*	*Number entitled to community charge rebate (millions)*	*Total value of rebates (£ millions)*
Primary tax units				
Single pensioner	3·0	611	1·8	263
One parent family	0·7	147	0·3	56
Other single adult	2·4	514	0·5	77
Couple—no children	6·5	2,592	1·5	348
Couple—one child	2·2	863	0·3	81
Couple—two children	2·6	1,008	0·3	87
Couple—three or more children	1·0	404	0·2	68
All	18·4	6,140	5·2	980
Secondary tax units				
Single pensioner	0·4	85	0·3	40
One parent family	0·1	18	0·1	9
Other single adult	3·8	772	1·0	145
Couple—no children	0·1	35	0·0	7
Couple—one child	0·0	15	0·0	4
Couple—two children	0·0	9	0·0	3
Couple—three or more children	0·0	5	0·0	1
All	4·4	939	1·3	208

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give the asset value of the land, buildings and capital equipment for each of those categories at the National Engineering Laboratory, East Kilbride;

(2) if he will list the Government Departments and non-Government agencies permanently on site at the National Engineering Laboratory, East Kilbride, listing the work undertaken by each of the organisations on site.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has today placed in the Library an information pack which contains the requested information which is currently available.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the male and female rate of unemployment in each *(a)* development area and *(b)* intermediate area in April for Great Britain.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The tables show the number of unemployed male and female claimants, expressed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed for each development area and intermediate area in Great Britain on 8 April 1988.

Unemployment rate April 1988

Region and development areas	*Male*	*Female*
South West		
Falmouth	18·60	13·10
Helston	22·00	13·20
Newquay	23·10	17·30
Penzance and St. Ives	21·30	12·00
Redruth and Camborne	20·10	13·00
East Midlands		
Corby	11·70	9·30
Yorkshire and Humberside		
Rotherham and Mexborough	24·20	12·20
Scunthorpe	15·60	9·70
Whitby	21·10	10·30
North West		
Liverpool	24·50	10·90
Widnes and Runcorn	19·30	11·70
Wigan and St. Helens	20·00	10·50
Wirral and Chester	20·70	9·80
Workington	13·70	12·10
North		
Bishop Auckland	20·30	11·20
Hartlepool	26·10	12·10
Middlesbrough	24·60	10·70
Newcastle upon Tyne	18·30	8·60
South Tyneside	27·50	13·40
Stockton on Tees	18·60	10·70
Sunderland	22·90	11·20
Wales		
Aberdare	28·20	12·80
Blaenau Gwent and Abergavenney	21·50	9·60
Cardigan	22·50	20·90
Holyhead	22·10	16·70
Lampeter and Aberaeron	18·80	11·80
Merthyr and Rhymney	21·60	11·70
Neath and Port Talbot	15·30	11·20
Pontypridd and Rhondda	20·00	9·20
Shotton, Flint and Rhyl	16·10	10·10
South Pembrokeshire	24·70	16·90
Wrexham	14·60	9·80
Scotland		
Arbroath	21·50	14·50
Bathgate	19·50	10·80
Cumnock and Sanquhar	33·60	16·70
Dumbarton	21·40	14·50
Dundee	17·20	9·30
Glasgow	20·30	9·60
Greenock	25·10	11·70
Irvine	25·90	13·80
Kilmarnock	20·10	10·00
Lanarkshire	22·20	11·30
South West		
Bodmin and Liskeard	15·00	9·90
Bude	13·70	12·60
Cinderford and Ross on Wye	10·70	10·40
Plymouth	14·60	9·20
West Midlands		
Birmingham	14·60	8·60
Coventry and Hinkley	12·80	9·20
Dudley and Sandwell	14·20	9·60
Kidderminster	10·30	8·40
Telford and Bridgenorth	15·20	10·80
Walsall	14·40	9·00
Wolverhampton	—	—
East Midlands		
Gainsborough	15·30	10·70
Yorkshire and Humberside		
Barnsley	22·30	10·00
Bradford	14·20	7·20
Doncaster	20·70	12·40
Grimsby	16·40	8·20
Hull	16·30	8·80
Sheffield	17·10	9·20
North West		
Accrington and Rossendale	12·70	8·20
Blackburn	14·60	7·30
Bolton and Bury	16·50	8·80
Manchester	15·00	7·40
Oldham	14·80	9·10
Rochdale	15·00	9·00
North		
Darlington	14·70	9·00
Durham	14·30	7·60
Morpeth and Ashington	19·40	8·70
Wales		
Bangor and Caernarfon	19·70	10·80
Bridgend	17·40	8·90
Cardiff	15·20	6·70
Fishguard	18·70	19·30
Haverfordwest	19·90	11·60
Llanelli	17·90	12·00
Newport	15·40	8·70
Pontypool and Cwmbran	15·80	10·00
Porthmadoc and Ffestiniog	13·40	8·80
Pwhelli	21·00	15·70
Swansea	18·70	8·60
Scotland		
Alloa	22·50	12·50
Ayr	16·10	10·30
Badenoch	15·60	9·80
Campbeltown	22·90	13·70
Dunfermline	15·50	11·10
Dunoon and Bute	19·10	13·20
Falkirk	16·00	11·70
Forres	24·20	18·00
Girvan	29·90	16·50
Invergordon and Dingwall	29·90	12·70
Kirkcaldy	21·40	10·90
Lochaber	17·60	10·60
Newton Stewart	20·00	16·40
Skye and Wester Ross	20·90	14·90
Stewartry	11·40	9·60
Stranraer	19·50	14·10
Western Isles	28·00	11·40
Sutherland	22·00	13·10
Wick	24·50	7·10

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of job vacancies advertised in each *(a)* assisted development area and *(b)* intermediate area in April.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the number of unfilled vacancies, excluding vacancies on the community programme, registered at jobcentres approximately corresponding to each of the development areas and intermediate areas in Great Britain on 8 April 1988. Nationally only about a third of all vacancies are reported to jobcentres; this proportion is likely to vary between areas.

Unfilled Vacancies—April 1988

Region and Development Areas	*Number*
South West	
Falmouth	222
Helston	129
Newquay	522
Penzance and St. Ives	541
Redruth and Camborne	318
East Midlands	
Corby	566
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Rotherham and Mexborough	539
Scunthorpe	452
Whitby	87
North West	
Liverpool	2,907
Widnes and Runcorn	380
Wigan and St. Helens	1,077
Wirral and Chester	1,696
North	
Workington	167
Bishop Auckland	612
Hartlepool	199
Middlesbrough	982
Newcastle upon Tyne	3,642
South Tyneside	222
Stockton on Tees	648
Sunderland	1,331
Wales	
Aberdare	138
Blanau Gwent and Abergavenny	432
Cardigan	177
Holyhead	156
Lampeter and Aberaeron	61
Merthyr and Rhymney	488
Neath and Port Talbot	642
Pontypridd and Rhondda	618
Shotton, Flint and Rhyl	993
South Pembrokeshire	221
Wrexham	467
Scotland	
Arbroath	71
Bathgate	585
Cumnock and Sanquhar	178
Dundee	462
Glasgow	4,525
Greenock	262
Irvine	1,421
Kilmarnock	536
Lanarkshire	1,175

Unfilled vacancies—April 1988

Region and intermediate areas	*Number*
South West	
Bodmin and Liskeard	336
Bude	74
Cinderford and Ross on Wye	412
Plymouth	1,250
West Midlands	
Birmingham	8,284
Coventry and Hinkley	1,577
Dudley and Sandwell	2,705
Kidderminster	660
Telford and Bridgenorth	1,044
Walsall	853
Wolverhampton	675
East Midlands	
Gainsborough	135
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Barnsley	289
Bradford	1,875
Doncaster	382
Grimsby	335
Hull	1,431
Sheffield	772
North West	
Accrington and Rossendale	556
Blackburn	716
Bolton and Bury	6,194
Oldham	605
Rochdale	477
North	
Darlington	475
Durham	545
Morpeth and Ashington	553
Wales	
Bangor and Caernarfon	373
Bridgend	483
Cardiff	1,457
Fishguard	0
Haverfordwest	284
Llanelli	499
Newport	536
Pontypool and Cwmbrian	353
Portbmadoc and Ffestiniog	119
Pwhelli	171
Swansea	1,163
Scotland	
Alloa	148
Ayr	562
Badenoch	530
Campletown	25
Dunfermline	226
Dunoon and Bute	109
Falkirk	559
Forres	39
Girvan	101
Invergordon and Dingwall	70
Kirkcaldy	426
Lochaber	183
Newton Stewart	46
Skye and Wester Ross	154
Stewartry	48
Stranraer	67
Western Isles	69
Sutherland; Wick	163

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job vacancies were registered at jobcentres in Tameside at the most recent available date.

Mr. Lee: On 8 April 1988 there were 548 unfilled vacancies, excluding community programme vacancies, at jobcentres covering an area closely corresponding to the Tameside local authority district.

Engineering Industry

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his assessment of the effect of the removal of the Manpower Services Commission grant for industrial placement training on the engineering industry.

Mr. Nicholls: There need be no significant effect. This grant, which amounted to £850,000 in 1987-88, represented a small proportion of the total support the Training Commission gives to the engineering industry. Research indicates that many employers would have made a sandwich placement available without it. Moreover, I understand that the Engineering Industry Training Board has now introduced a modified scheme of grants for sandwich grant placement training for engineering undergraduates.

ENERGY

Oil and Gas (Field Development Approvals)

10. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many field development approvals there have been for *(a)* oil and *(b)* gas in each month since January 1987.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In 1987, 11 oil and two gas projects were approved. So far this year 11 projects have been approved; two oil projects in March, two oil and two gas in April, two oil and one gas in May and two gas in June.

Electricity Privatisation

11. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Scretary of State for Energy when he expects to complete his consultations about statutory obligations and supply regulations in the electricity supply industry following privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A large number of responses to the supply code consultation document have been received, and these are being considered.

40. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what effect he expects the privatisation of electricity will have on the numbers of people employed in the supply industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Manning levels after privatisation will be a matter for the industry, as is the case now.

41. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will have further planning discussions with representatives of the area electricity boards prior to presenting future legislation on privatisation, in respect of the forthcoming operational framework for the boards' respective retail outlets.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairmen of the area boards from time to time to dicuss a number of privatisation matters. The operational framework for the boards' retail outlets is still under consideration.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what further representations he has received about the proposals for privatisation of the electricity supply industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I continue to receive many representations on electricity privatisation.

24. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his answer of 9 May, *Official Report* column 3, he will itemise all additional costs arising from his proposals in relation to the operational control of the national grid; what estimates of each of these costs he has received from Lord Marshall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government believe that any additional costs arising from the transfer of ownership of the national grid to the distribution companies will be outweighed by the benefits from increased competition.

Power Stations (Gas Burn)

16. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what applications for permission to burn gas in power stations he has approved; and if he will make a statement.

32. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has received an application from Thames Power and the Central Electricity Generating Board to establish a 1000 MW gas-fired power station at Barking Reach in east London.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Proposals to establish gas-fired power stations have been made by Thames Power Limited and Leicester Energy Limited.

I am pleased to say that I have approved both the 990 MW combined cycle plant at Barking and the 290 MW combined heat and power plant at Leicester, in accordance with section 14 of the Energy Act 1976 and the relevant European Community directive.

Hinkley Point C PWR

18. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has received the outline statement of the case, published by the Central Electricity Generating Board, in advance of the public inquiry into the proposed Hinkley Point C pressurised water reactor to commence this October, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I received the Central Electricity Generating Board's outline statement of case on 13 May. I also received an outline statement of case, on the same day, from Somerset county council on behalf of itself, West Somerset district council and a consortium of opposing local authorities.

Oil and Gas Production (North Sea)

19. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what the current level of oil and gas production is in the British sector of the North sea; and for how long he expects the United Kingdom to maintain self-sufficiency.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Oil production from the United Kingdom continental shelf averaged 2·5 million barrels per day in the first quarter of 1988, while, according to provisional figures, gas production averaged 181·2 million cu m per day in the same period.

On current estimates, the United Kingdom is likely to remain self-sufficient in oil and gas well into the 1990s.

Coal Industry Privatisation

20. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has had meetings with the chairman of British Coal to discuss future investment in the light of his policy towards future privatisation of the coal industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I regularly meet the chairman to discuss the corporation's capital programme.

Fawley B Power Station

21. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has fixed the date for the public inquiry into the proposals by the Central Electricity Generating Board to construct the Fawley B power station and coal jetty.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In making arrangements for the inquiry my right hon. Friend is statutorily obliged to make a statement of matters which he considers likely to be relevant to his consideration of the application. It is therefore clear that he must study the objections he has received very carefully before announcing the inquiry.

Offshore Petroleum Licences

22. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he will announce a further round of offshore petroleum licences.

28. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he is now ready to launch the eleventh round of offshore petroleum licensing.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department is still consulting interested parties about our proposals for an eleventh round of offshore petroleum licensing. My right hon. Friend hopes to launch the round formally before the summer recess.

Power Stations (Coal Burn)

23. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has recently met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss future coal burn in power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I have regular meetings with the chairman of the CEGB to discuss all aspects of the electricity supply industry.

Coal Industry Dispute

25. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will now make it his policy to enter into discussions with the chairman of British Coal regarding the reinstatement of the miners sacked during the 1984-85 strike; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 15 February 1988, at column 695.

Paper Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has had recently with representatives of the paper industry concerning, and what steps his Department has taken to achieve, greater energy efficiency within Britain's paper manufacturing industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Departmemt, through the Energy Efficiency Office, continues to work closely with the paper industry to improve energy efficiency in paper manufacturing.

Offshore Supply Industry

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps his Department is taking to encourage the United Kingdom offshore supply industry to increase its share of overseas markets.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend and I are actively promoting the industry by visiting selected markets accompanied, where appropriate, by an industrial mission. In addition, my Offshore Supplies Office has substantially increased the resources it devotes to identifying export market opportunities and is encouraging and supporting the industry's efforts to increase its share of these markets.

31. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what action he has taken in the last year to provide work opportunities for the United Kingdom offshore supply industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Last year my Department approved development plans for a total of 13 projects including seven new offshore oil and gas projects. So far this year 11 offshore, onshore and incremental projects have been approved. These developments will provide our supplies and fabrication industries with considerable work opportunities over the next few years.

Fast Breeder Reactors

29. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his policy towards investment in fast breeder reactors and fusion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department funds a large programme of research and development on the fast reactor. This programme is currently under review. No decisions have yet been taken.

The United Kingdom is making a major contribution to the Community fusion programme, including the Joint European Torus (JET) project at Culham.

Energy Efficiency

33. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made in improving energy efficiency in cities.

Mr. Peter Morrison: A large proportion of the £700 million gross annual savings attributable to the Energy Efficiency Office's programmes arises in cities. The EEO has also helped to launch 11 energy action cities, which harness a variety of resources to a broad campaign aimed at improving energy efficiency throughout the local economy.

34. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what further efforts are being made to improve the energy efficiency of buildings.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Our research development and demonstration programmes in domestic buildings will

continue to sustain the momentum which has contributed to savings worth £1·1 billion per year. I have also recently asked the building societies to encourage investment in energy efficiency. In non-domestic buildings our programmes will continue to promote increased market awareness by developing energy targets and by supporting professionals in this field.

Sullom Voe (Oil Throughput)

35. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the volume of oil throughput at Sullom Voe in the first four months of 1988 and the first four months of 1987.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In the first four months of this year, Sullom Voe handled 18·2 million tonnes of crude oil, compared with 17·3 million tonnes over the same period in 1987.

Dounreay Fast Breeder Reactor

30. **Mr. Michael Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to take a decision in relation to future funding of the fast breeder reactor at Dounreay.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The fast reactor programme funded by my Department is currently under review. No decisions have yet been taken.

36. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the expected life of the prototype fast reactor at Dounreay; and what plans there are for constructing a commercial fast reactor on that site or elsewhere.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The design life of the prototype fast reactor at Dounreay, when commissioned in 1974, was about 30 years. The Government have received no application to construct a commercial fast reactor.

Fuel Disconnection

37. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received on the operations of the code of practice on fuel disconnection.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The code of practice is monitored by the electricity and gas consumers' councils, and by the Office of Gas Supply. In responding to the paper on a "Proposed Supply Code for the Electricity Supply Industry", a number of bodies have made general comments about the code of practice. These are being considered together with all other comments received on the paper.

Hinkley Point A Power Station

38. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the Hinkley A power station is likely to reach the end of its useful life.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the CEGB, and I have asked the chairman to write to my hon. Friend.

British Gas

39. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many British Gas shareholders have now paid the third instalment; and what is the total sum collected.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Of nearly 3 million payments due in the British Gas third instalment, 99·5 per cent. have been received. The total sum collected amounts to £1,589 million.

Continental Shelf (Gas Shares)

13. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the prospects for further sales of gas from the United Kingdom continental shelf; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: A number of gas sale contracts on the United Kingdom continental shelf have recently been agreed and others are under negotiation. There is a good prospect of gas from the United Kingdom continental shelf meeting our needs well into the second half of the 1990s.

Research and Development Projects

15. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many research and development projects were approved for support by the Offshore Energy Technology Board in the last financial year; what was their total value; and how much the Government will contribute to them.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In 1987-88, 41 new projects were approved for support. Their total cost was £17 million, and the Government contribution was £4·4 million.

Natural Gas Imports

42. **Mr. Prescott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy on imports of natural gas from Norway.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Gas imports can have a major effect on the rate and pattern of the development of the United Kingdom continental shelf. In recognition of this, and of the importance the Government attach to maintaining the rate of activity on the United Kingdom continental shelf, British Gas has undertaken to consult the Government on any import plans as these develop. Any imports from Norway would be subject to the normal consent requirements for laying pipelines on the United Kingdom continental shelf and, where appropriate, the conclusion of intergovernmental treaties.

Association of Independent Electricity Producers

43. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the Association of Independent Electricity Producers.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend last met the association on 28 October 1987. Our officials are in regular contact with the association.

Electricity Industry (Regulatory Framework)

44. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy, when drawing up the regulatory framework for the electricity industry, to require distributors to show that they have investigated all possibilities, including energy efficiency schemes, in order to meet their customers' requirements at the least cost.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The future regulatory framework for the electricity supply industry is still under consideration.

Dumping at Sea

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what efforts are being made by his Department to show that there are no practical land-based alternatives to dumping fluidised sea and that flyash does not cause harm to the marine environment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the CEGB. I understand that it has already embarked upon studies into alternative disposal methods for its wastes. If sea disposal is to continue beyond 1989, the CEGB will need to satisfy the licensing authority (MAFF) that there is no practical land-based alternative and that the waste will not cause harm to the marine environment.

Coke

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what were the total imports of coke for each of the last five years; and what were the amounts from each country of origin.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Imports of hard coke for each of the last five years by total and by country of origin are as follows:

'000 tonnes

Country of origin	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
German Democratic Republic	1	107	117	109	86
Belgium	9	102	29	17	72
United States of America	—	6	24	43	24
Federal Republic of Germany	20	943	101	—	22
Netherlands	—	11	1	9	17
Republic of South Africa	—	1	36	20	12
Norway	—	3	3	5	12
France	2	162	34	10	4
Japan	658	639	1	—	—
Other countries	13	24	29	—	—
TOTAL	703	1,998	375	213	249

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Plutonium (Japan)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what provision there is for review of the permission for the export of plutonium to Japan during the period of the proposed contract, should Japan decide that its proposed fast breeder reactor programme has no commercial future;

(2) if he has made an independent assessment of the quantity of plutonium required by Japan for its fast breeder reactor and MOx fuel programmes to ensure that the conditions for the export of fissile material to a non-nuclear weapons state are adhered to.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has not made such an assessment. The return of plutonium from the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel at THORP to its country of origin or to any other destination will not take place for several years and will be made only on receipt of assurances covering peaceful use, application of safeguards, physical protection and controls on retransfer in line with the statement by the then Foreign Secretary, now Lord Callaghan, on 31 March 1976, at columns 514-16.

Nuclear Safety

17. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to meet the chairman of the advisory committee on the safety of nuclear installations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of ACSNI from time to time.

Fluidised Bed Project (Grimethorpe)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much money was spent *(a)* from 1976 to 1984 and *(b)* from 1985 to date by British Coal and the Central Electricity Generating Board on the fluidised bed project at Grimethorpe; what proportion of this money was foreign investment; and from which country it came.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Between 1976 and 1984, under the auspices of the International Energy Agency, the United States of America, Federal Republic of Germany and United Kingdom each contributed £20 million to the fluidised bed combustion project at Grimethorpe. Of the United Kingdom share, British Coal contributed £3 million, and the Department of Energy £17 million. British Coal also made contributions in kind. From 1985 to date the project has been the responsibility of British Coal together with the Central Electricity Generating Board. I understand from British Coal that during this period the United States of America contributed £10 million, in addition to expenditure by British Coal and CEGB of £28 million.

SCOTLAND

Acute Beds

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the numbers of acute beds in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the table.

Average available staffed beds in acute specialties in National Health Service hospitals in Scotland, year ending 30 September 1987 (provisional figures)

	Number
Scotland	17,108
Argyll and Clyde	1,214
Ayrshire and Arran	1,065
Borders	347
Dumfries and Galloway	444
Fife	814
Forth Valley	672
Grampian	1,692
Greater Glasgow	3,958
Highland	695

	Number
Lanarkshire	1,564
Lothian	2,817
Orkney	60
Shetland	60
Tayside	1,622
Western Isles	86

Rating Reform

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence he has received on the usefulness of including dates of birth in helping assessors establish the community charge liability of individuals.

Mr. Rifkind: The requirement in section 13(1)(d) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 that dates of birth are to be included in the community charges register was added to the Bill as a result of representations made by local authority practitioners on the desirability of the provision being included and the information is being included in local authority systems as an aid to identification.

Power Stations (Coal Burn)

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the level of coal burned from pits in the Scottish coalfield in South of Scotland Electricity Board power stations.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board that coal burn in the fiscal year 1987-88 was about 5·6 million tonnes, all from indigenous sources, both British Coal and private workings. For the fiscal year 1988-89, the board estimates that the total coal burn could be at a similar level, but the quantity and sources will be dependent on a number of factors, including the competitiveness of coal prices and the level of electricity trading.

Social Workers

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions his Department has undertaken with the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work about the funding of social workers from voluntary organisations who wish to undertake professional training leading to the certificate in social services or the certificate of qualification in social work; and what is his policy towards provision for such students for the academic year 1988-89.

Mr. Rifkind: Since 1987 support of social workers from voluntary organisations undertaking professional training for the certificate in social services has been administered by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work. The level of resources allocated for this support is under review by my Department following representations by CCETSW. I cannot predict the outcome. Support is not available for social workers in voluntary organisations wishing to undertake the certificate of qualification in social work.

Radioactivity (Monitoring)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take on the recommendations of the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment in respect of *(a)* a series of detailed studies of leukaemia cases, *(b)* increased monitoring of diet, air, sea spray sediment and dust and *(c)* whole body monitoring and the measurement of radioactivity in placentae; and whether such action will relate to the areas around Chapelcross, Hunterston and Torness and those affected by the Sellafield drift, as well as Dounreay.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on 8 June. This set out the responses of the Government to the report of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) on the possible increased incidence of leukaemia in young people near the Dounreay nuclear establishment. So far as action relating to other areas containing nuclear establishments is concerned, we will continue to be guided by the advice of COMARE.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of beds per hospital for *(a)* each hospital completed since 1979 and *(b)* each hospital approved in principle since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

All projects completed since 1979

	Number of beds
Argyll and Clyde	
Johnstone Hospital	30
Dunoon and District General Hospital	30
Merchiston Hospital Phase I	120
Merchiston Hospital	30
Royal Alexandra Hospital, Paisley	720
Ayrshire and Arran	
Crosshouse Hospital	710
Biggart Hospital	30
Borders	
Hay Lodge, Peebles	50
Borders General	404
Dumfries and Galloway	
Annan Hospital (geriatric)	30
Fife	
Glenrothes Hospital	72
Whyteman's Brae, Kirkcaldy	180
West Fife District General Hospital	240
Forth Valley	
Royal Scottish National Hospital, Larbert	120
Sauchie Hospital	60
Falkirk Royal Infirmary	176
Grampian	
Woodend Geriatric Hospital	30
Inverurie Hospital	30
Spynie Hospital, Elgin	30
Ugie Hospital, Peterhead	30
Woodend Hospital—Glenburn Wing	24
Woodlands Hospital	120
Greater Glasgow	
Blawarthill Hospital	30
Canniesburn Hospital	30
Gartloch Hospital	30
Gartnavel Hospital	60
Mearnskirk Hospital	30
Stobhill Hospital	60

	Number of beds
Belvidere Hospital Phase I	30
Woodilee Hospital Phase I	60
Glasgow Royal Infirmary Phase I	214
Stobhill Hospital	90
Gartloch Hospital	120
Leverndale Phase I(a)	240
Lennox Castle	120
Lennox Castle (two intensive care units)	24
Highland	
Lochaber Hospital	30
Raigmore Hospital, Inverness	680
Caithness Hospital Phase II	121
Lanarkshire	
Kirklands Hospital Phase I	120
Kirklands Hospital Phase I(a)	120
Lothian	
Royal Edinburgh Phase I	120
Astley Ainslie Hospital	90
Herdmanflat Hospital	72
Royal Victoria Hospital, Edinburgh	180
Shetland	
Montfield Hospital	60
Tayside	
Irvine Memorial Hospital, Pitlochry	12
Murray Royal Hospital, Perth	60
Perth Royal Infirmary	60
Royal Liff Hospital, Dundee	60
Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital	30
Aberfeldy Cottage Hospital	12

All projects approved since 1979

	Number of beds
Argyll and Clyde	
Ravenscraig Phase III(a) (Alcohol and Rehabilitation Unit)	22
Oban Hospital	138
Campbeltown Hospital	62
Dunoon and District General Hospital	30
Merchiston Hospital	30
Ayrshire and Arran	
Dunlop House	60
Seafield Hospital	60
Acute Hospital, Ayr	288
Biggart Hospital	30
Dumfries and Galloway	
Services for the Mentally Handicapped	114
Annan Hospital (geriatric)	30
Forth Valley	
Bonnybridge (psychogeriatric)	90
Royal Scottish National Hospital Larbert	120
Sauchie Hospital	60
Falkirk Royal Infirmary	176
Grampian	
Royal Cornhill	564
Woodend Geriatric Hospital	30
Inverurie Hospital	30
Woodend Hospital—Glenburn Wing	24
Greater Glasgow	
Parkhead Psychiatric Development Phase II	120
Rutherglen (geriatric)	240
Lennox Castle (two intensive care units)	24
Woodilee three by 30 bed units	90
Leverndale Phase I(a)	240
Lennox Castle	120
Lanarkshire	
Geriatric, Psychogeriatric and Psychiatric Project:	
(a) Hairmyres	120
(b) Udston (including 30 place day hospital)	120
Kirklands Hospital Phase I	120
Kirklands Hospital Phase I(a)	120
Lothian	
Princess Margaret Rose Spinal Paralysis and Rehabilitation Unit	70
Orkney	
Balfour Hospital	30
Tayside	
Perth Royal Infirmary	236
Western Isles	
Stornoway Lewis Hospital	212

Lothian Regional Council

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many organisations have made representations to him regarding his decision to enforce a reduction in Lothian regional council's 1988-89 budget, showing how many *(a)* supported and *(b)* opposed his decision; and if he will list them.

Mr. Lang: The table lists 11 organisations that have written to my right hon. and learned Friend on his proposed rate reduction in Lothian region. Some opposed the proposal and some supported it. Others have written on points of detail and on what the consequences might be for them.

Lothian Region Joint Trade Union Committee
Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (and individual Bureaux)
Lothian Marriage Counselling Service
Edinburgh Council of Social Service
Edinburgh Chambers of Commerce and Manufacturers
Lothian RAGE
Wester Hailes Representative Council
Lothian Rights Group
Edinburgh and Lothian Women's Aid
Sneddi Merchandising Ltd.
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the implications for the Scottish economy of proposals to privatise the National Engineering Laboratory, East Kilbride; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Following the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's announcement on 7 June, interested parties now have until 22 July to submit proposals for taking the National Engineering Laboratory into the private sector. Each proposal received will be carefully assessed by my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in consultation with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards the expenditure of public funds through the Scottish Development Agency or any other Government supported agency in support of a management buyout of the National Engineering Laboratory.

Mr. Lang: Any approach to the Scottish Development Agency by the management of the National Engineering Laboratory for assistance in support of a management buyout will be dealt with by the agency in accordance with its industrial investment guidelines. A copy of these guidelines was placed in the Library of the House when they were issued in 1980.

THE ARTS

Public Library Service

53. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received on his Green Paper "Financing our Public Library Service."

55. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received from public librarians on his Green Paper "Financing our Public Library Service."

66. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received from local authorities on his Green Paper "Financing our Public Library Service".

Mr. Luce: I have received about 200 letters, including a large proportion from public libraries commenting on the Green Paper and I expect to receive many more by 30 June, the closing date for representations.

57. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many complaints he has received in the last 12 months from library users that public libraries are not sufficiently client-orientated.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) on Tuesday 7 June, at columns *512-13*.

59. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what external economic expertise was available to him in the preparation of the Green Paper on the financing of public libraries.

Mr. Luce: The financial and statistical data contained in the library Green Paper were obtained from sources published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The economic expertise available within Government was adequate for my purposes in relation to the Green Paper.

67. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what evidence he has on the extent of demand for competitive tendering for renting videos in public libraries.

Mr. Luce: Competitive tendering is, I suggest in my library Green Paper, one way of enabling library authorities to use their resources more effectively. No library authority in England has, I understand, put out to competitive tendering any direct service to its library users. I wish them to consider doing so.

69. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has met the Library Association to discuss the Green Paper "Financing our Public Library Service".

Mr. Luce: Yes. I met a delegation from the Library Association on 25 May and had a useful discussion with the association about the Green Paper.

70. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he consulted with the Library Association on the contents of his Green Paper on financing the public library service prior to publication.

Mr. Luce: No, but I met a delegation from the Library Association on 25 May to discuss, among other matters, my Green Paper on financing the public library service. The association intends, I understand, to make a substantive submission to me shortly on the Green Paper.

Public Libraries (Cost-effectiveness)

71. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what evidence he has on the cost-effectiveness of public libraries.

Mr. Luce: There are at present limited means for assessing the cost effectiveness of public libraries. However, my office has recently published a costing model, "A Costing System for Public Libraries". I am also currently funding, through the British Library, production of a manual of performance indicators for public libraries.

72. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether the premium book subscription scheme, proposed in the Green Paper "Financing our Public Library Service", will apply to new children's books.

Mr. Luce: No.

Haymarket Theatre, Leicester

54. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to visit the Haymarket theatre, Leicester.

Mr. Luce: I hope to visit the Haymarket theatre, and other arts bodies, when I visit the region this autumn.

Arts-History Link

56. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what initiatives are planned by his Department to promote greater appreciation of the links between the arts and British economic history.

Mr. Luce: The collections in our museums and galleries and the work of artists, both living and dead, are influenced by the social and historical contexts in which they were created, and may be used to illustrate many aspects of British history. Their contemporary interpretation is a matter for individual institutions or artists.

58. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether his Office has any plans for an arts festival to celebrate the year 2000.

Mr. Luce: I am sure that the nation will want to celebrate the year in some special way, but I have not yet embarked on detailed discussions with the arts world.

South Bank Board

60. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what assessment he has made of the effects of the recently completed independence of the South Bank Board Ltd.

Mr. Luce: It is too soon to be clear about the effects of independence, but first indications are encouraging. I am confident that the South Bank Board Ltd., under the chairmanship of Mr. Ronald Grierson, will continue to manage its affairs efficiently and economically and to present arts events of the highest standard.

Public Lending Right Scheme

61. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how much public funding has been allotted to the public lending right scheme in 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Funding for the public lending right scheme is as follows:

	£ million
1986-87	2·75
1987-88	2·75
1988-89	3·5

The 27 per cent. increase in 1988-89 brings the fund to its highest level in real terms since its inception.

63. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many authors are presently registered under the public lending right scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The number of authors currently registered for public lending right is 14,635.

Acceptances-in-lieu

62. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the outcome to date of the acceptance-in-lieu-of-tax scheme since its inception in July 1985.

Mr. Luce: In July 1985 the Government announced new arrangements which permit an annual call on the Reserve of around £10 million a year, taking one year with the next. This has greatly facilitated such offers. The table sets out the financial position and highlights those items whose acceptance was made possible by these arrangements. Additionally, the scheme has benefited from two further changes introduced in 1987. It is now possible to have interest charges on an offer waived while negotiations are proceeding towards acceptance of an item at the original agreed valuation, and it is also possible to offer an item whose "special price" is greater than the tax liability on the estate, if the institution for which the item is intended is prepared to make up the difference. Both the Picasso and the Gainsborough paintings were accepted in this way. There is no shortage of items in the pipeline—an indication that the scheme is proving an attractive one, and one which plays a vital role in preserving important items and land for future public benefit.

Year	*Amount of tax satisfied* £	[1]*Call on the Reserve* £	*Item*
1985-86	2,366,707	520,000	The Portland Archive
1986-87	2,947,842	440,000	Matthew Boulton Clock
		725,000	Bellini "Madonna and Child"
1987-88	8,627,464	1,200,000	Picasso's "Weeping Woman"
		5,500,000	Constable's "Stratford Mill"
		638,444	Gainsborough's "Captain Wade"

[1] Although the total agreed call on the Reserve since July 1985 was £9,023,444, because of underspends in each financial year on the annual Vote of £2 million the amount actually spent from the Reserve was £7,942,013.

Museums and Galleries Commission

64. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how much extra funding the Museums and Galleries Commission will receive in the next three years specifically for the purpose of promoting improvements in the management of non-national museums and galleries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Over the next three years I have provided £270,000 within the Museums and Galleries Commission's grant-in-aid to be used to encourage improved management and marketing in non-national museums and galleries. The commission recently announced an exciting programme of seminars, courses and studies for the coming year.

Good management and effective marketing skills are vital if museums and galleries are to make the best use of resources. In addition to my allocations to the Museums and Galleries Commission to encourage improvements in the management and marketing of museums, I have provided some £600,000 for this purpose this year in the grants-in-aid of the National Museums and Galleries. In March I announced also a major initiative on the training of museums staff, and a research study into the resource implications of collections management.

Industrial Archaeology

65. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what recent discussions he has had on those aspects of industrial archaeology and the heritage related thereto which engage his ministerial responsibilities.

Mr. Luce: A number of the national museums and galleries which I sponsor have an interest in aspects of the industrial heritage and these feature, accordingly, in my discussions with the institutions.

Arts Bodies

68. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what guidance he has given arts bodies on the benefits of participation in the community programme and job-splitting scheme.

74. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what guidance he has given to arts bodies on the benefits of participation in the business expansion scheme and youth training scheme.

Mr. Luce: I am encouraged by the amount of support given to arts bodies by my colleagues in other Departments. The directors of regional arts associations and their officers are always ready to advise arts bodies and individual artists on the details of the various schemes.

National Heritage Memorial Fund

73. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how much public funding has so far been awarded to the National Heritage Memorial Fund since its inception in 1980; and what assessment he has made of the outcome of the scheme to date.

Mr. Luce: The amount of public funding since the inception of the National Heritage Memorial Fund is £105,621,576. This is set out on an annual basis in the table. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I are jointly responsible for the operation of the fund. Lord Charteris and the trustees are to be congratulated on an outstanding record of achievement to date. The trustees have chosen carefully among the hundreds of applications for assistance, and I commend their annual reports to my hon. Friend for descriptions of the wide range of land, buildings, artefacts and works of art saved for the nation with contributions from the fund. I have every confidence in their continuing success.

Public funding of NHMF

	£	£
1980-81		
DOE	7,047,773	
OAL	7,047,773	14,095,546
1981-82		
DOE	1,244,404	
OAL	1,244,404	2,488,808
1982-83		
DOE	5,500,000	
OAL	5,500,000	11,000,000
1983-84[1]		
DOE	1,896,327	
OAL	593,327	
Inland Revenue	1,468	2,491,122
1984-85		
DOE	29,000,000	
OAL	4,000,000	33,000,000
1985-86		
DOE	12,000,000	
OAL	1,500,000	13,500,000
1986-87		
DOE	1,500,000	
OAL	1,500,000	3,000,000
1987-88[2]		
DOE	21,546,100	
OAL	1,500,000	23,046,100
1988-89		
DOE	1,500,000	
OAL	1,500,000	3,000,000
Total		105,621,576

[1] The 1983-84 figure represents a grant of £1,304 million from DOE, the unspent AIL allocations of DOE and OAL (£593,327 each) and £1,468 rebate from the Land Fund.

[2] The 1987-88 DOE figure comprises of £20 million cash injection, 1·5 million annual grant and £46,100 from the proceeds of Heveningham Hall.

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give the percentage charge in non-Exchequer receipts of the national museums and galleries between 1979-80 and latest available year.

Mr. Luce: Using the figures I gave in my written answer to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 26 May, at columns *259-62*, the percentage increase between 1979-80 and 1988-89 is expected to be some 800 per cent. in cash terms (393 per cent. in real terms).

NORTHERN IRELAND

Protestant Task Force

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to his Department as to the nature and activities of the Protestant Task Force.

Mr. Stanley: My Department is not aware of an organisation of this name.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Interest Rates

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the interest rates of the countries in the European monetary system, both nominal and real; and what equivalent information he has for the other countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Mr. Lilley: Various short and long-term interest rates are given for all the countries in question in "IMF International Financial Statistics", monthly. The same publication gives indices of consumer or wholesale prices which are often used to convert nominal interest rates into "real" terms.

Balance of Trade

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has made an estimate of the effect on the United Kingdom's balance of trade with European Economic Community countries if it remains outside the European monetary system in 1992.

Mr. Lilley: No. Britain is a member of the European monetary system. I imagine my hon. Friend is referring to the exchange rate mechanism of the system. There is no reason to suppose remaining outside the exchange rate mechanism will significantly affect the balance of trade between the United Kingdom and the European Community.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give a figure for general Government expenditure in 1988-89 equivalent to that in table 1.4 of Cm. 288-1, recalculated on the assumption that there is a sustained *(a)* 10 per cent. rise and *(b)* 10 per cent. fall in the trade-weighted exchange rate over a period of one year from the level used in the formulation of the above table.

Mr. Major: The impact of exchange rate changes on the economy would depend on assumptions made about the financial policies being followed at the time. The impact of the subsequent economic effects on public expenditure cannot be determined uniquely either as this depends on the control regime being operated. A large part of the planning total is subject to cash limits where the presumption is that no adjustments are made for variations in prices or costs. Furthermore, the rates of social security benefits are determined in relation to price levels known before the start of the financial year. There is no unique relationship between changes in the exchange rate and debt interest.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many households receiving housing benefit pay income tax.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 4 May 1988]*: I have been asked to reply.

Information drawn from the family expenditure survey suggests that some 1·7 million housing benefit recipients may also have paid income tax in 1985.

Tax Forms

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many more tax forms have been sent to pensioners in this financial year than last;

(2) if he plans to apologise to pensioners wrongly sent income tax forms;

(3) what is his estimate of the cost of sending 1 million tax forms.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 June 1988]:* I regret that due to a computer programming fault tax returns were issued to some pensioners who would not normally have been called upon to make a return. The Inland Revenue has taken steps to ensure that this will not recur.

No separate figures are kept of returns issued to pensioners, but the Inland Revenue estimates that the number of returns issued to them in April 1988 is approximately 500,000 higher than last year.

The estimated cost of sending 1 million tax returns is £137,250. This includes the cost of the returns, notes, envelopes and postage. The cost of issuing the 500,000 returns to pensioners is therefore £68,625.

Nationalised Industries (Fixed Assets)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the percentage increase in fares, prices and tariffs required for the British Railways Board, Electricity England and Wales, London Regional Transport, North of Scotland Hydro-Electricity board, Post Office, South of Scotland Electricity Board and Water England and Wales to meet the expenditure on fixed assets given for 1990-91 in table 4.4 of Cm. 288-I, assuming these industries financed all this investment internally from commercially generated funds.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* Hypothetical projections on the lines requested would not justify the costs involved in preparing them. Assumptions would need to be made concerning general market conditions, the responsiveness of revenues to price changes and a wide range of factors affecting cost performance such as wage settlements, fuel costs and productivity growth. For reasons of commercial confidentiallity, the Government do not publish estimates of internal resources for the later years covered by the public expenditure plans, the assumptions on which they are based, or the effects of varying those assumptions.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for 1978-79 and 1988-89 to 1990-91 at constant 1988-89 and cash prices local authority capital expenditure in Great Britain broken down as in table 3.6 of Cm. 288-I.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* The presentation used in table 3.6 of Cm. 288-I was introduced in the 1987 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 56 table 4.5). That table provides information back to 1981-82 and figures are not available in this form for earlier years. For 1988-89 to 1990-91 the cash figures are published in table 3.6 of Cm. 288-I; corresponding figures in real terms (base year 1988-89) are in the table.

Local Authority Capital Expenditure in Great Britain in real terms[1,2]

£ million (base year 1988-89)

	1988-89 Plans	*1989-90 Plans*	*1990-91 Plans*
DOE/LA1 Gross Spending			
Housing	2,934	2,710	2,550
Transport	800	770	750
Education	494	490	480
Personal Social Services	111	100	100
Other services:			
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food	31	30	30
Environment	627	610	590
Home Office	40	30	30
Other Departments	22	20	20
Total other services	721	690	680
Housing Association Grant	114	100	90
Total gross spending in DOE/LA1	5,173	4,860	4,650
Receipts			
Housing	−1,876	−1,850	−1,800
Transport	−62	−50	−50
Education	−105	−100	−100
Personal Social Services	−28	−30	−30
Other services:			
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	−10	−10	−10
Environment	−542	−520	−510
Home Office	—	—	—
Other Departments	—	—	—
Total other services	−552	−530	−520
Total receipts	−2,623	−2,570	−2,500
Total net local authority capital in DOE/LA1	2,437	2,190	2,070
Total DOE/LA1	2,551	2,290	2,150
HO/LA1	132	140	140
DOE/UA1			
Other environmental services	272	260	260
Other Departments	24	20	20
Other: Urban Development Corporations etc.	222	230	230
Total DOE/UA1	519	510	510
Memo item: Land drainage	7	10	10
England-Total	2,864	2,630	2,490
WO/LA1 Wales			
Transport	—	—	—
Employment	1	—	—
Home Office	1	—	—
Welsh Office	285	270	270
Other	73	80	80
Total local authority capital in WO/LA1	287	270	270
Total WO/LA1	360	350	350
Memo item: not in cash limit	1	—	—
Wales-Total	295	280	280
SO/LA1—non housing	438	470	470
SO/LA2—housing			
Local authority	343	390	390
Other	182	190	200
Total SO/LA2	525	580	590

	1988-89 Plans	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans
Memo item: not in cash limit	1	—	—
Scotland-Total	783	870	860
Total local authority capital expenditure in Great Britain			
Net	3,942	3,770	3,620
Gross	6,957	6,670	6,430

[1] Real terms figures are the cash plans adjusted to 1988-89 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator.
[2] See also footnotes to Table 3.6 in Cm. 288-I.

CIVIL SERVICE

Agencies

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement about current proposals for the creation of agencies within his Department.

Mr. Luce: I announced on 9 May that the Civil Service College and the occupational health service are promising candidates for agency status. We are now closely examining each of them to assess their suitability. Like other Ministers, I shall continue to review the functions of my Department to identify any other areas which might be suitable.

Funding

Dr. Marek: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if any extra funding will be made available to the Civil Service, in the light of recent policy announcements on *(a)* race relations and *(b)* the employment of women.

Mr. Luce: Civil Service equal opportunity policies on the employment of women and ethnic minorities form part of the normal personnel management work of Departments. Actions to implement these policies are taken within Departmental running costs. My Department is giving priority to increasing the effectiveness of Civil Service equal opportunity policies.

Polygraphs

Dr. Marek: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will place a copy in the Library of the independent scientific study about the validity of polygraphic techniques.

Mr. Luce: I understand that the study is currently being assessed. No decisions have yet been taken about its handling, but, as indicated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 24 May, at column 192, there will be an announcement to the House in due course.

AGRICULTURE

Hedgerows

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals to discourage the destruction of hedgerows and to encourage the planting of new hedgerows.

Mr. Gummer: The Government's voluntary approach to countryside conservation seeks to ensure that farmers are fully aware of the landscape and wildlife value of their hedgerows. This Department's Agricultural Development and Advisory Service encourages farmers to retain hedgerows where possible and provides advice both on their management and the planting of new hedgerows.

Grants are available to farmers under the agriculture improvement scheme at the rate of 30 per cent. (60 per cent. in the less-favoured areas) towards the cost of planting new hedgerows and hedgerow laying. In addition, as a special measure, grants are available to farmers at 60 per cent. for the replacement of hedgerows damaged in the storm of 15-16 October last year.

Set-aside Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he now expects to announce his proposals on the set-aside of agricultural land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall be making a statement shortly.

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will arrange for further sample monitoring of radioactivity levels in sheep in Devon and Somerset.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department has undertaken an extensive monitoring programme—the results of which have been placed in the Library of the House—that gives complete reassurance as to the safety of all produce entering the food chain. Monitoring continues outside the restricted area where necessary, but I see no need to carry out sample monitoring of sheep in Devon or Somerset.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will arrange for further sample monitoring of radioactivity levels in sheep in non-restricted areas which had high levels of precipitation on 2 and 3 May 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Live monitoring of sheep is continuing wherever it is necessary, but the significance of rainfall data has been superseded by the results of surveys of actual deposition and of monitoring.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to take, in the light of the research findings of Dr. Kenton Morgan, of the University of Bristol, on radiation contamination among sheep in Somerset and Devon following the Chernobyl disaster, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given today and on 1 December 1987 to the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), at column *542*. No further action is required and I understand that Dr. Morgan has now made it clear that his work implies no risk to the food chain and no long-term contamination.

Dumping at Sea

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the latest available figures for the amount of flyash dumped at sea at sites off the north-east coast of England.

Mr. Gummer: In 1987 just under 375,000 tonnes of flyash were deposited at approved sea dump sites off the north-east coast of England.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the latest available figures for the amounts of colliery spoil dumped at sea off the north-east coast of England.

Mr. Gummer: In 1987 a total of 2,014,000 tonnes of minestone were deposited under licence on the beaches at Seaham, Easington and Lynemouth; a further 1,572,000 tonnes were disposed of at the approved sea dump site off the north-east coast.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the latest available figures of the amounts and types of chemicals in industrial waste dumped at sea at each of the various sites around the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline the investigations being carried out to demonstrate that dumping liquid industrial waste at sea does not harm the marine environment; and whether these investigations are carried out in their laboratory or in the field.

Mr. Gummer: All liquid industrial wastes for which application for sea disposal is made are examined in the Ministry's laboratory. Toxicity testing and chemical analysis are undertaken to ensure that potentially toxic or persistent bioaccumulatable substances are within internationally agreed limits and pose no likelihood of causing damage to the marine environment in the short or longer term. The probable initial dilution of the waste, its degradeability and its longer term fate are assessed. The minimum initial dilution required to avoid toxic effects is determined and imposed if necessary as a condition of any licence granted.

Investigations at the disposal site are made by Ministry scientists to establish the nature of the marine species, water movements which may affect dilution and dispersion of the waste, and water quality. Once disposal commences, monitoring is conducted to confirm the absence of harm to the marine environment; this will usually include assessments of actual dilution, field bioassays, analysis of water and sediments and examination of fish and other species, including those living on the seabed.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline the efforts being made to find environmentally acceptable alternatives to dumping colliery spoil in the North sea and adjacent beaches.

Mr. Gummer: Each application for a licence under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 to dispose of colliery spoil at sea or on beaches is thoroughly examined by my Ministry. I make a careful assessment of all potential alternative means of disposal, drawing on comments obtained from consultations held by my officials with local environmental interests and local authorities. The Government also have available the results of research into disposal options commissioned by the Department of the Environment in 1986.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of any investigations which have concluded that there are no practical land-based alternatives to dumping at sea.

Mr. Gummer: All applicants for licences to dump waste at sea are required to demonstrate that land-based alternatives to dumping have been carefully considered. The practicability of land-based disposal options is thoroughly assessed in every case by this Ministry,drawing, where appropriate, on the advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

The composition and volume of most liquid industrial wastes hitherto accepted for disposal at sea has generally rendered them technically unsuitable for other disposal methods. As regards colliery spoil, the Department of the Environment commissioned research by Ove Arup and Partners Ltd. into the availability and cost of means of disposal other than beach tipping at Seaham; the Government concluded from that work in 1986 that there was currently no practical land-based alternative to dumping.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list any details of any investigations demonstrating the level of risk to the marine environment posed by sewage sludge dumped at sea.

Mr. Gummer: Investigations in the laboratory and at sea are carried out for sewage sludge in a similar way to those undertaken for liquid industrial wastes described in my reply today to another question by the hon. Member. Sewage sludge is a dispersion of organic rich solids and other particulates in water. The water content is usually more than 95 per cent. The organic matter is largely readily degraded in the sea and limits are set to the trace levels of any persistent organic chemicals and metals to ensure that no harm to the marine environment can be caused by their presence.

Results of monitoring investigations at dump sites by this Ministry are published from time to time in the fisheries research technical report series. They show that disposal of sewage sludge at sea under controlled conditions has a minimal effect on the marine environment.

Pâté de Foie Gras

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to introduce a ban on the import of pâté de foie grass,; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department has no plans to impose a ban on the import of pâté de foie gras as I am advised that such a step would contravene the treaty of Rome. In any case, it is for individuals to decide whether or not to buy or consume foie gras.

Civil Servants (Outside Activities)

Mr. John: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Pontypridd of 24 May, *Official Report*, column 139, he will list the names and Civil Service grades of the two civil servants appointed as directors of commercial companies; and of which companies they have been appointed directors.

Mr. Donald Thompson: At present the following two officials hold appointments in commercial companies:

Mr. C. J. A. Barnes, Grade 5, as a non-executive director with Booker Food Services (Booker plc) and

Mr. G. M. Trevelyan, Grade 5, as an observer with Brooke Bond Oxo (Unilever).

Surplus Food

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether tenders for either *(a)* the packaging or *(b)* the transportation of surplus European Economic Community food have yet been issued; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The arrangements for the provision of beef and butter stocks for distribution to the most needy require designated organisations to invite tenders for processing or packaging and to make the necessary arrangements for transportation. A number have already done so. Others are grouping together in order to minimise costs. Group tenders for the packaging of butter and butter oil have been invited and are awaited. An invitation to tender for beef will be issued shortly. I understand that the first distributions to eligible beneficiaries are likely to take place towards the end of this month.

Lambs

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many lambs were marked blue and relased for further fattening in the United Kingdom between 28 September 1987 and 10 January 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A total of 6,497 lambs of not more than one year old were marked blue under the "mark and release" arrangements in the United Kingdom between 28 September 1987 and 10 January 1988.

Marked blue and released for further fattening from 28 September 1987 to 10 January 1988

	Lambs	*Sheep*	*Total*
Cumbria	248	135	383
Wales	1,546	209	1,755
Scotland	4,689	8,903	13,592
Northern Ireland	14	110	124
	6,497	9,357	15,854

Food Costs

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the additional cost in food per average family in consequence of the common agricultural policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him on 31 March, at column *638*.

Rhizomania Infection

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has made for the inspection of beet fields for rhizomania infection during the current season.

Mr. MacGregor: We will carry out a very extensive inspection programme throughout the country while the 1988 crop is growing. This will concentrate on sugar beet fields likely to be susceptible to rhizomania risk because of, for example, soil structure, poor irrigation or a history of low sugar yields. The fields will be identified by the local knowledge of inspectors, by British Sugar's records and by the results of aerial photography. Inspections will also be carried out on other fields of sugar beet and on fields of red and fodder beet.

To ensure that infection had not been spread from the farm in Suffolk where rhizomania was found last season, prior to the discovery, we will inspect all fields growing beet this year within 5 km of the site and also crops on the farms visited by the sugar beet contractor who worked on the farm between 1981 and 1987.

All these inspections will be carried out, under a joint programme, by the Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate, Ministry field staff and British Sugar staff. Sample beets will be taken from each field inspected. These will be tested by the Ministry's Harpenden laboratory.

We expect this inspection programme to cover about 2,000 fields. It is a formidable task, but I am sure that it is justified in order to maintain our protection against rhizomania disease. It follows widespread surveys last year and programmes of inspection in the three previous seasons, which found no sign of rhizomania infection.

I am grateful to British Sugar for its co-operation in the inspections carried out in previous years and for the help it will again be providing in the coming season.

Argentine Ant

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the dangers to native flora and fauna from the accidental import of the Argentine Ant.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

Incidents of accidental infestations of the Argentine Ant in the United Kingdom are very rare and have been confined to permanently heated buildings. All currently available evidence suggests that the species cannot survive in the wild in the United Kingdom.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Severely Mentally Handicapped People

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement concerning the benefit entitlement of the severely mentally handicapped who have undertaken a community programme placement for therapeutic purposes.

Mr. Scott: Anyone receiving an incapacity benefit who performs work for which an employer might reasonably pay shows that he is capable of work and his benefit may be affected. This may apply to severely mentally handicapped people who have undertaken a community programme placement. The decision whether in practice a person is capable of work is for determination by the independent adjudicating authority.

However, a person receiving any incapacity benefit may nevertheless earn up to £27 a week without loss of benefit provided he satisfies the adjudicating authorities that the work is therapeutic, by furnishing medical evidence to that effect.

A severely mentally handicapped person is not entitled to income support if he is working 24 hours or more a

week on a community programme. But benefit may be payable if the work averages less than 24 hours a week. The first £5 or £15, as appropriate, of his earnings are disregarded in deciding entitlement.

Departmental Offices (St. Helens)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current total social fund allocation for his Department's offices in St. Helens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current total social fund allocation for his Department's offices in the Manchester area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November 1987, at columns *774-81*.

Twenty-four Hours Rule

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the application of the 24-hours-per-week working rule in respect of a family's eligibility for benefit.

Mr. Portillo: Representations have been received in certain individual cases where supplementary benefit was previously in payment but where there is no entitlement to income support under the new rules because 24 hours a week, or more, are being worked. Families with children can claim the new family credit, and families facing substantial losses may also be eligible for help under the transitional arangements announced by my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled on 28 April, at columns *253-54*.

European Cancer Initiative

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what contribution the Government have made towards the European cancer initiative.

Mrs. Currie: We have made £100,000 available to provide full or part funding of United Kingdom cancer charities' activities in support of the Europe against cancer initiative. In addition, we have taken the lead in cancer prevention by implementing the European Community's first comprehensive cervical cancer screening service based on computerised call and recall, the world's first nationwide breast cancer screening sevice, and by setting up the DHSS cancer screening evaluation unit at the Institute of Cancer Research to monitor existing cancer screening programmes and to assess the possibility of screening for other cancers. The Health Education Authority has also published an updated guide for the general public on how to reduce the risk of cancer by a healthy lifestyle.

Meningitis

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the death rate from meningococcal meningitis.

Mrs. Currie: The table gives the number of deaths registered where meningococcal meningitis was the underlying cause of death and the crude mortality rate per million usually resident population for the latest five years.

Deaths with underlying cause as meningococcal meningitis (ICD(9)[1] 036·0): numbers and rates per million population England and Wales 1983-87

Year	Number	Rate per million
1983	20	0·40
1984	26	0·52
1985	36	0·72
1986	44	0·88
[2]1987	37	0·74

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.
[2] Provisional.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the incidence of haemophilus or pneumococcal meningitis.

Mrs. Currie: The table gives the numbers of notifications of haemophilus and pneumococcal meningitis for the latest six years available. In addition, the numbers of notifications where the organism was not specified on the notification forms are shown.

Number of notifications of (a) haemophilus (influenzal), (b) pneumococcal and (c) unspecified meningitis England and Wales 1982 to 1987

	Type of meningitis		
Year	Haemophilus	Pneumococcal	Unspecified
1982	177	87	145
1983	173	74	137
1984	217	78	149
1985	206	82	186
1986	268	143	232
[1]1987	250	109	171

[1] Provisional, January to September only.

Aspirin

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what conclusions have been reached by his Department on the use of aspirin as preventive medicine for those who have suffered a heart attack and for those in the age categories where they are most vulnerable to such an attack; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The use of aspirin in the prevention of heart attack is an area in which there have recently been some interesting research studies. Research is continuing.

The best preventive measures against heart disease continue to be lifestyle changes such as stopping smoking and changes in diet.

Household Income

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a set of figures for 1979 on the same basis as contained in "Households Below Average Income 1981-1985".

Mr. Portillo: I have no plans to publish a full set of "Households Below Average Income" figures for 1979. However, "Low Income Statistics—Report of a Technical Review" proposes that data for an earlier year (perhaps 1971) might be included in a future edition. Copies of this report are available in the Library.

Social Fund

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the figures allocated for the social fund to be claimed from the Seaham and Peterlee office of his Department for the financial year 1988-89 and the proportions of these which were *(a)* loans and *(b)* grants; and whether these figures will be revised if the demand for amounts from the fund exceeds the allocated amounts.

Mr. Portillo: Social fund allocations were announced by my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November 1987, at columns *774-81*. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) on 4 March, at column *746*, for details of the contingency arrangements.

Community Care

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what financial arrangements are made in each health region when patients are transferred out of long-stay hospitals into community care; and how many patients were transferred out under these arrangements in each health region since 1984.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients formerly resident in long-stay mental hospitals have so far been discharged into the community as part of the community care policy in each regional health authority; and what has been the total amount of cost savings accrued as a result.

Mrs. Currie: In response to local circumstances and needs, regions have a variety of financial arrangements for funding the transfer of mentally ill or handicapped patients from long-stay hospitals to more community orientated patterns of care. In some cases funds are transferred with individual patients ("dowries") according to regional guidelines or are directly negotiated by district health authorities; in others development monies are earmarked by the regional health authority to fund specific projects. General development funds are, of course, also used to meet the costs of community care. Dowries are often permanent revenue payments uprated for inflation each year. A number of regions have set aside specific sums to bridge the cost of continuing to run old long-stay institutions while developing new services, but such funds are not the only ways of meeting such costs. The broad details of regions' financing arrangements are as follows. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the regional health authority concerned for more detailed information.

Northern RHA. Health Service developments funded from regional priority service fund. Arrangements for patients transferred from NHS to local authority or voluntary care individually negotiated. Bridging arrangements but no specific fund.

Yorkshire RHA. Direct care costs transferred to patients "home" DHA. The balance of resources required to provide community care provided from general development funds. Arrangements for transfers to local authority and voluntary agencies separately negotiated at district level. Bridging fund.

Trent RHA. Regional guideline for dowries of £13,800 for patients transferred between health authorities and of £6,900 for transfer to local authority or voluntary care. Bridging fund. (Policy under review.)

North Western RHA. Dowry of £21,400 per patient for all patients transferred as part of district package of which £4,300 is non-recurrent. Dowry of £13,400 for transfers agreed on an individual basis. Bridging fund.

Mersey RHA. Financial arrangements negotiated by DHAs according to dependency level of individual patient. Bridging fund.

West Midlands RHA. Dowry of 50 per cent. of average cost of mentally handicapped patients and 100 per cent. of average cost of mentally ill patients. Targeted bridging fund.

East Anglian RHA. Funding arrangements negotiated individually by district health authorities. Bridging fund.

North West Thames RHA. Dowries ranging from £13,000 to £20,000 according to type of patient. Additionally, there are development fund moneys available from natural decline. Bridging fund.

North East Thames RHA. For health authorities, each DHA allocated funds either to pay for care in the existing long stay hospital or to provide its own service. Transfers to local authorities and voluntary agencies separately negotiated. Strategic reserve to top up costs of care in the community where necessary with ad hoc bridging finance provided by RHA to existing providing districts.

South East Thames RHA. Dowry of £13,000 (plus London weighting if necessary) for mental handicap patients. For mental illness patients costs of hospital care apportioned to districts on the basis of numbers to be transferred. Bridging fund.

South West Thames RHA. For health authorities dowries of £13,477 for mental illness and £11,334 for mental handicap patients admitted before December 1982. Separate negotiations for patients admitted after that date and for transfers to local authorities, voluntary agencies and across regional boundaries. Bridging fund.

Oxford RHA. Development funds earmarked for specific projects.

Wessex RHA. Dowry of £14,000 per patient for all agencies. Mental handicap bridging fund.

South Western RHA. Dowry of £13,700 for mental handicap patients available for community provision by health authorities. Separate negotiation for mental illness patients and for all transfers to other agencies.

Information is not available centrally on the numbers of patients discharged from long-stay care specifically under these arrangements. The tables show the number of discharges from NHS mental illness hospitals and units and mental handicap hospitals and units in England where the depth of stay was five or more years. Tranfers to other hospitals and special hospitals are excluded. 1986 is the latest year for which this information is available centrally.

Information on cost savings is not available centrally.

Discharges from Mental Illness hospitals and units where there was a stay of five or more years[1]

Regional health authority	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
England[2]	981	987	1,082
Northern	48	48	54
Yorkshire	74	67	85
Trent	102	105	113
East Anglian	32	29	38
North West Thames	96	65	83
North East Thames	76	76	77
South East Thames	75	70	83
South West Thames	65	59	81
Wessex	53	67	99
Oxford	34	39	46
South Western	97	110	101
West Midlands	117	114	111
Mersey	65	81	50
North Western	46	56	61
Special health authority hospitals	1	1	0

Source: MHE.

[1] Excludes deaths, transfers to a special hospital, transfers to a

hospital psychiatric bed and transfer to a hospital non-psychiatric bed.

[2] Excludes special hospitals.

Discharges from Mental Handicap hospitals and units where there was a stay of five or more years[1]

Regional Health Authority	*Year 1984*	*1985*	*1986*
England[2]	1,375	1,523	1,951
Northern	63	58	81
Yorkshire	71	148	175
Trent	129	150	300
East Anglian	58	66	60
North West Thames	50	65	58
North East Thames	72	83	53
South East Thames	148	201	275
South West Thames	119	171	277
Wessex	82	75	143
Oxford	38	57	74
South Western	304	155	133
West Midlands	70	100	104
Mersey	98	72	102
North Western	73	122	116
Special Health Authority hospitals	0	0	0

Source: MHE.

[1] Excludes deaths, transfers to a special hospital, transfers to a hospital psychiatric bed and transfer to a hospital non-psychiatric bed.

[2] Excludes Special Hospitals.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if his Department currently issues any guidance to health authorities on the consultations which should be undertaken with patients, their parents and their relatives before individuals are discharged into the community from long-stay mental hospitals;

(2) if his Department currently issues any guidance to health authorities on the consultations which should be undertaken with patients, their parents and relatives, and local residents before long-stay mental hospitals are run down as part of the implementation of the policy of care in the community.

Mrs. Currie: The Government's response to the report of the House of Commons Social Services Committee on "Community Care with Special Reference to Adult Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People", circulated to all health authorities, reminded them of the need to consult patients and their families about discharge from long-stay hospitals. We will be considering the question of consultation with local residents as we review reports from the Health Service Commissioner which bear on this issue.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what mechanisms his Department has established to oversee the transfer of residents of long-stay mental institutions to the community.

Mrs. Currie: The development of mental illness and mental handicap services, including the shift to community-based services, is a regular feature of the annual review meetings which Ministers and the NHS Management Board hold with each regional health authority. The Department's Social Services Inspectorate maintains liaison with local social services departments and monitors the development of personal social services, including those for patients discharged from mental institutions.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards health authorities being required to consult neighbours before mentally handicapped people are moved into the community; what representations he has received in this respect for the Health Service Ombudsman, Mr. Anthony Barrowclough; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 10 June, at column *727*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the cases of former long-stay hospital residents who are ineligible for community care grants on discharge because they do not qualify for income support; what was the nature of these representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Long-stay Hospitals

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what minimum standards exist for long-stay hospitals; when these standards were laid down; whether they are under review; and what steps he has undertaken to enforce these standards.

Mrs. Currie: Minimum standards for long-stay hospitals were first laid down in 1969, and other guidance bearing on various aspects of physical standards of provision for long-stay patients was issued between 1979 and 1982. The minimum standards were used by the national development team for people with a mental handicap and by the health advisory service, but there has always been a danger that these standards would be regarded as norms rather than minima. They fall well below current expectations in terms of services for long-stay patients and for this reason are now little used. Local managers are expected to look critically at the operation of services using quantified information, such as Health Service indicators, and using check lists of questions designed to expose poor quality of services.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many wards in long-stay hospitals do not meet the 1971 minimum standards of 8ft between bed centres and 70 sq ft of bedroom space per resident; and in which health districts these wards are located;

(2) what proportion of wards of long-stay hospitals in each health region fail to meet the standards of 8ft between bed centres and 70 sq ft of bedroom space per resident.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information is not available.

Disabled Child Premium

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what financial provision he has made to assist single parents, unable to work because of the needs of their handicapped children, to supplement their income support, other than the £6·15 additional disabled child premium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The income support of a single parent with a disabled child would normally include, in addition to the disabled child premium, an age-related personal

allowance for the claimant and each child, the lone parent premium (of £3·70) and the family premium (of £6·15). In addition, attendance allowance, mobility allowance as well as invalid care allowance might be payable. A person on income support would receive maximum housing benefit, free prescriptions, dental treatment, free school meals and other benefits in kind.

Cranage Hall Hospital

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any recent representations concerning the proposed closure of the Cranage Hall hospital.

Mrs. Currie: No.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to meet residents of the Cranage Hall hospital or their parents and relatives.

Mrs. Currie: We have received no requests to meet them and therefore we have no plans to do so.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will call for a report from the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority and Crewe district health authority into the handling of the proposed run-down of Cranage Hall hospital.

Mrs. Currie: Proposals for Cranage Hall hospital are being formulated by the Crewe health authority in collaboration with the Cheshire social services department. These proposals are still at an early stage, but we will be monitoring progress through the review and planning processes.

Crewe Health Authority (General Manager)

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will call for a report from the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority into the resignation of the former general manager of the Crewe health authority, the ex-gratia payment and the subsequent re-employment of the ex-general manager by the Mersey regional health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Employment and contractual matters are entirely the responsibility of individual health authorities.

Post-abortion Stress Disorder

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to publish the results of the investigation currently being conducted at his request by the Manchester branch of the Royal College of General Practitioners into post-abortion stress disorder.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on 30 March, at column *540*.

Physiotherapy (Data)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the arrangements which health authorities have made for the calculation of data for physiotherapy services under the revised arrangements recommended by the fourth and sixth Körner reports; what he estimates the cost of this to be; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We are satisfied that those health authorities which are not already doing so, will begin the collection of the full Körner data requirements on physiotherapy services during 1988-89. Authorities currently without computer systems have made interim arrangements to collect basic statistics. The cost of collecting the Körner data will vary between health authorities, depending upon the particular system in operation, the size and number of departments and existing data collection arrangements. This costing information is not available centrally.

Child Guidance Units

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards the continuance of multi-professional, multi-agency work for children with emotional difficulties, through child guidance; what proposals he has to secure the future of child guidance units in inner London; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Our current policy is that children with emotional difficulties should be able to look for help from professional staff, including psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers, who spend most of their time working in the child and adolescent fields. The organisation of these services in London after the proposed abolition of the Inner London education authority is a matter for consideration by the health and local authority services concerned.

Wakefield DHA (Inquiry)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to prevent the Yorkshire regional health authority from proceeding with its inquiry into the management of Wakefield district health authority; and if he will establish an independent public inquiry in its stead.

Mr. Newton: No. Where problems occur within a district health authority our expectation is that matters will be settled locally by the authority putting its own house in order. If the DHA concerned proves to be unable to resolve its problems internally the regional health authority, as the next management tier, and the one to which the district is accountable, has a duty to act. I therefore support the decison of the RHA to establish its own inquiry.

Nurses (Prescribing)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his policy towards the prescribing of medicines by nurses.

Mr. Newton: As we made clear in "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249), we see merit in giving nurses more freedom to prescribe some items and use their professional judgment in other related matters. A joint working group (mainly members of the Standing Medical, Nursing and Midwifery and Pharmaceutical Advisory Committees) has recently been appointed to help us take this forward.

Nurses (Grading Structure)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in respect of the implementation of the clinical grading structure for nurses.

Mr. Newton: Management guidance on the implementation of the new clinical grading structure has been issued to all health authorities and they have been asked to complete the regrading exercise by 31 October.

Social Security Management Board

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many meetings of the Social Security Management Board he has attended in the last year.

Mr. Scott: The Social Security Management Board is a body chaired by the permanent secretary which reports to Ministers as required. We would not therefore expect to attend meetings of the board.

Project 2000

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the ratio of qualified nurses to nursing auxiliaries being sought under the recently announced Project 2000 proposals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his assessment of the likely funding requirements for the implementation of Project 2000.

Mr. Newton: The implementation of Project 2000 will be phased over a number of years. The final cost will depend upon the final shape of the whole package of proposals, in which much detail remains to be settled.

The number of qualified nurses and support workers will be decided by district health authorities, which must determine their own requirements for staff.

Social Services (Private Companies)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many local authority social services departments currently allow private companies to undertake their statutory services.

Mrs. Currie: Information about contractual arrangements between local authorities and private companies for the provision of social services is not collected centrally.

Social Work Staff

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many local authority social service departments offer additional incentives over and above basic grade salaries in order to assist their recruitment of social work staff.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Conductive Education

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take, in the light of Warwick university applied social studies department's report entitled "Come Wind, Come Weather," about conductive education, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I am aware of the recommendations contained in the report to assist British families at the Peto Institute in Budapest. The Peto method of conductive education is one of a wide range of services for disabled children and adults. Proposals for its introduction in Britain would have to take into account existing health and education provision as well as the evaluation being undertaken by Birmingham university of the research project of the foundation for conductive education. I have arranged to visit a number of organisations to look at the range of services available in these fields. A team of officials from DES and DHSS recently visited Budapest to obtain more information about the difficulties faced by the British families at the Peto Institute and the part that conductive education plays in the provision of services in Hungary.

Inquest (Carlisle)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if the Registrar General has yet determined whether the requirements of the legislation governing the registration of births and deaths should be applied to the case which was the subject of a recent request to the Secretary of State for the Home Department by the coroner in Carlisle for the holding of an inquest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Following the decision made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department not to direct that an inquest should be held, the Registrar General has made her own inquiries and these indicate that the requirements of the legislation governing the registration of births and deaths do apply in this case.

Hospital and Community Health Service

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a table showing *(a)* current spending and *(b)* capital spending per tax unit on the hospital and community health service in England and the United Kingdom in 1988-89.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

	Current (gross) £	*Capital (gross)* £
United Kingdom	750	60
England	700	60

These figures are based on the estimated number of tax units who pay income tax.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his future plans for financial support to the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association; and why financial assistance has not yet been given.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 7 June 1988]:* In recognition of the valuable work of the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association we have decided to make a grant for the first time of £5,000 for the current financial year.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Upper Waiting Hall (Exhibitions)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Lord President of the Council why it is necessary for an hon. Member to obtain the agreement of the appropriate Government Department before applying to the Serjeant at Arms to arrange an exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Wakeham: This measure has been approved by the Services Committee to ensure that exhibitions mounted by right hon. and hon. Members do not contain items of advertising or commercial interest nor material explicitly intended to further the aims of any political party or group. It was considered that by using their background knowledge of the subjects of exhibitions the Government Departments could help meet the wishes of the House.

In addition, the Services Committee recently resolved that Members' applications for exhibitions should be submitted to the Chairman of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee as well as to the relevant Government Department.

Sittings of the House

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will publish in the *Official Report* a consolidated list of the occasions on which the House has sat later than 1.30 am since 1958.

Mr. Wakeham *[pursuant to his reply, 10 June 1988, c. 714]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to his previous written question on 13 April 1988, *Official Report*, columns *166-68*. It would be inappropriate to republish this information in a consolidated form.

The following tables set out the revised figures for the current Session (1987-88) to date and also the total number of occasions in each Session since 1958 when the House sat after 1.30 am.

Table I
House sits after 1.30 am

Session	*Number of occasions*	*Time at which adjourned (am unless stated)*	*Date*
1987-88 (to date)	24	1.34	14 July 1987
		1.40	17 February 1988
		1.45	27 April 1988
		1.50	9 February 1988
		1.53	6 July 1987
		1.53	7 July 1987
		1.53	15 December 1987
		1.57	13 April 1988
		2.11	10 May 1988
		2.20	8 February 1988
		2.23	30 March 1988
		2.29	23 May 1988
		2.31	2 December 1987
		2.47	2 March 1988
		2.55	29 March 1988
		2.56	3 February 1988
		3.27	20 July 1987
		4.01	21 October 1987
		4.07	9 March 1988
		5.58	25 May 1988
		8.30	10 March 1988
		9.24	8 December 1987
		9.27	13 July 1987
		[1]8.55	10 November 1987

[1] pm.

Table II
Occasions when the House sat after 1.30 am

Session	*Number*
1959-60	8
1960-61	16
1961-62	10
1962-63	9
1963-64	4
1964-65	27
1965-66	7
1966-67	40
1967-68	21
1968-69	24
1969-70	9
1970-71	33
1971-72	30
1972-73	24
1973-74	4
1974	10
1974-75	35
1975-76	39
1976-77	23
1977-78	21
1978-79	8
1979-80	41
1980-81	28
1981-82	22
1982-83	13
1983-84	34
1984-85	35
1985-86	18
1986-87	6
1987-88[1]	24

[1] To date.

DEFENCE

Southampton University (Contracts)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the contracts for research and development that have been awarded to Southampton university by his Department for each of the last five years, together with the purpose and cost for each contract.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence has currently 805 research agreements and 76 contracts with a wide range of United Kingdom universities, polytechnics and other institutions of higher education.

It is not our policy to give details of these arrangements. It is for the universities themselves to confirm their involvement.

Departmental Costs

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he proposes to make any changes to the 1988-89 running costs limit for his Department.

Mr. Younger: The running costs limit for the Ministry of Defence will be reduced by £50,000 from £5,407,883,000 to £5,407,833,000. The reduction falls on class 1, vote 1 and reflects an agreement by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) to take over responsibility for producing some analytical work required by the MOD. This reduction will be matched by a corresponding increase in the OPCS's running cost limit to be shown on class 20, vote 16. The transfer of this work will not affect the MOD block cash limit, nor the cash limit on class 1, vote 1, as the MOD will be charged on the non-running cost part of the Vote for the work undertaken by OPCS.

Woolwich Arsenal

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what proposals he is presently considering for major housing development on land at Woolwich Arsenal;

(2) what consultations he has undertaken with the London borough of Greenwich concerning redevelopment of land at Woolwich Arsenal.

Mr. Freeman: The royal arsenal west and royal arsenal east sites are principally occupied by the directorate general defence quality assurance. The future location of the directorate general is under study and, until this has been concluded, we cannot determine what land disposal may be possible on these sites. I can, however, confirm that we would expect to discuss plans for the development of any land to be released with the planning authority at an early date. Any such plans would need to take account of the nature of the area and, in particular, of the historic buildings on the royal arsenal west site.

Procurement (Overspending)

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all overspending by his Department on defence procurement as identified by the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information in the form requested is not held by my Department. However, the following is a list of reports by the Committee of Public Accounts since 1979, most of which have been based on reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General, and which have addressed aspects of defence procurements:

Session	*Report Number*	*Description of PAC Report*	*Related C&AG Reports*
1979-80	16th	Matters Relating to the Ministry of Defence: Paras 17-30 Class 1 Vote 8 Defence Procurement: Sea Systems	Appropriation Account 1978-79 Volume 1 Class 1 Vote 8
1980-81	3rd	Matters Relating to the Ministry of Defence: Paras 18-54 Class 1 Vote 2 Defence Procurement	Appropriation Account 1979-80 Volume 1 Class 1 Vote 2
1981-82	9th	Chevaline improvement to the Polaris missile system	No C&AG report
1981-82	16th	Ministry of Defence: Provision of Army Vehicles; Estimating, monitoring and control of Expenditure; Pricing and post costing of non-competitive contracts. Paras 17-29	Appropriation Account 1980-81 Volume 1 Class 1 Votes 1, 2, 4 and 5
1982-83	5th	Matters relating to the Ministry of Defence: Paras 42-53 Class 1 Vote 2 Defence Procurement	Appropriation Account 1981-82 Class 1 Vote 2
1983-84	19th	The United Kingdom Trident Programme	HC 287
1983-84	33rd	Economy of Stores Support	HC 359
1984-85	1st	Maintenance of major RAF equipments	HC 481
1984-85	16th	Major Projects Statement 1983-84	No published C&AG report
1984-85	25th	Profit Formula for non-competitive Government contracts, etc	HC 243 1984-85
1984-85	28th	The Torpedo programme	Hc 291
1984-85	35th	Design and Procurement of Warships	HC 423 1984-85
1985-86	18th	Supplies for the Armed Forces	HC 465 1984-85
1985-86	23rd	Production Costs of Defence Equipment	HC 505 1984-85
1985-86	35th	International Collaborative Projects for Defence Equipment; Major Projects Statement	No published C&AG report
1986-87	6th	Control and Management of the Development of Major Equipment	HC 568 1985-86

Note:

In addition to the reports referred to above:

(1) The PAC have taken evidence in their current session on the following procurement subjects although the reports have yet to be published:
The Torpedo Programme and Design and Procurement of Warships; Control and Management of the Trident Programme
Annual Statement on Major Defence Projects; Control and Management of the Development of Major Equipment
Procurement Irregularities; Demountable Rack Offloading and Pick-up System (DROPS)
The Profit Formula
EH 101

(2) The Appropriation Accounts (Volume 1 Class 1) for the period 1983-84 to 1986-87 also contain reports on defence matters by the C&AG.

Rally Sport

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much income has been derived in each of the last five years by the use of his Department's land in Epynt, Otterburn and Salisbury Plain for all forms of rally sport.

Mr. Freeman: Income derived from all forms of rally sport on defence land at Epynt in Brecon, Otterburn and Salisbury Plain over each of the last five years is as follows:

	Epynt £	*Otterburn* £	*Salisbury Plain* £
1983-84	3,342	967	4,121
1984-85	4,202	1,485	7,092
1985-86	5,729	1,518	9,815
1986-87	7,268	1,379	7,253
1987-88	4,360	2,066	5,259

Service Personnel (Taxation)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, in any country in which they are stationed, members of the armed forces pay any form of local taxation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Members of the armed forces who are operating abroad under the provisions of the NATO status of forces agreement are exempt, under article X of the agreement, from any local taxes that result from residence or domicile in the receiving state, or on the salaries and emoluments paid to them in respect of their employment as members of the armed forces. Outside NATO, we always seek to ensure that similar arrangements apply. The armed forces do not, however,

enjoy any exemption from taxes or duties relating to purchases and services chargeable under the fiscal regulations of the receiving state.

Low-flying Areas

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what geographical area, expressed *(a)* by county and *(b)* by parliamentary constituency, is covered by low-flying area 4.

Mr. Freeman: Low-flying area 4 covers *(a)* the county of Hereford and parts of the counties of Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and the west midlands and *(b)* the parliamentary constituencies of Cheltenham, Worcester, Mid-Worcestershire, Worcestershire South. Wyre Forest, Leominster, Gloucester and Hereford and parts of the parliamentary constituencies of Ludlow, Staffordshire South, Bromsgrove, Stratford-on-Avon, Warwick and Leamington, Banbury, Witney, Cirencester and Tewkesbury, Stroud and Gloucestershire, West.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what geographical area, expressed *(a)* by county and *(b)* by parliamentary constituency, is covered by low-flying area 6.

Mr. Freeman: Low-flying area 6 covers *(a)* the county of Northamptonshire and parts of the counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire and Warwickshire and *(b)* the parliamentary constituencies of Rutland and Melton, Leicester, East, Leicestershire, South, Leicester, West, Harborough, Peterborough, Corby, Mid-Bedfordshire, Bedfordshire, North, Huntingdon, Wellingborough, Kettering, Northampton, North, Northampton, South, Blaby, Milton Keynes, and Luton, North, and parts of the parliamentary constituencies of Loughborough, Rushcliffe, Gedling, Sherwood, Newark, Grantham, Stamford and Spalding, Holland with Boston, Norfolk, North-West, Norfolk, South-West, Cambridgeshire, North-East, Cambridgeshire, South-East, Cambridgeshire, South-West, Saffron Walden, Stevenage, Hertford and Stortford, Hertfordshire, North, Hertfordshire, West, Bedfordshire, South-West, Buckingham, Daventry, Banbury, Stratford-on-Avon, Rugby and Kenilworth, Nuneaton and Bosworth.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the restrictions on use of afterburners by military jet aircraft flying at low level *(a)* in the United Kingdom low-flying system as a whole and *(b)* in the central Wales, Borders and northern Scotland tactical training areas.

Mr. Freeman: Aircrew are instructed to use engine reheat (or afterburners) as little as possible when flying overland at low level, particularly over inhabited areas. Where use is necessary, for example, during take-offs and properly authorised display and trials flying, and emergencies and related training, it is discouraged at levels below 1,000 ft minimum separation distance (msd) or 500 ft msd for Jaguar aircraft. These instructions apply to the United Kingdom low-flying system as a whole, including tactical training areas.

Ex-Service Personnel (Rejoining)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy concerning Army ex-service men and women rejoining the Army when they have a criminal record.

Mr. Freeman: Whether or not an ex-service man or woman with a criminal record is allowed to re-enlist into the Army would depend on the individual nature of the offence. However, a person who has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment is normally ineligible for re-enlistment.

RAF Feltwell

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which unit of the United States Air Force space command at Falcon air force station, Colorado, will control the proposed deep space tracking station at RAF Feltwell.

Mr. Freeman: The 18th space surveillance group from Falcon air force base, Colorado, will have operational control of the deep space tracking station at RAF Feltwell.

Maritime Concepts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation concept of maritime operations his Department is producing for the Eurogroup maritime concepts sub-group; what the timetable is for the review of maritime operations by the Eurogroup; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Ministry of Defence contributes fully to the work of the Euro long-term working group. Details of this are classified.

B-52 Bombers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose and function of exercises of B-52s at (i) RAF Fairford, April to May, (ii) RAF Fairford, June and (iii) RAF Marham, June.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Five United States Air Force B-52 aircraft deployed to RAF Fairford for the second of this year's Busy Brewer exercises, between 3 and 13 June. Such exercises, which involve deployments within the United Kingdom and continental Europe, are designed to rehearse the aircraft's wartime role in conventional support of NATO. The previous Busy Brewer exercise was held at Fairford between 29 April and 16 May. Two B-52 aircraft will deploy to RAF Marham between 15 and 24 June to participate in joint training exercises with the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force.

Exercise Tristar

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many ground troops and vehicles will be taking part in Exercise Tristar; what is the role in their exercise; and in what areas they will be exercising;

(2) what is the purpose of Exercise Tristar; how many and what types of aircraft will be participating; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Exercise Tristar 88 is a routine training exercise which is being held in southern Scotland

and northern England from 10 to 26 June and involves a small number of troops, vehicles and aircraft. It is not our general practice to give details of such exercises in advance.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations have taken place with the National Farmers Union and local authorities concerning Exercise Tristar.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The usual consultations for an exercise of this size have taken place with the various authorities concerned. No consultations have taken place with the National Farmers Union, although, in the usual way, there have been consultations with individual landowners as necessary.

Search and Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has yet made a decision about the future deployment of search and rescue helicopters at RAF Leuchars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will announce his decision over the future deployment of A flight, 22 Squadron, RAF Chivenor.

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friends will be aware that the Ministry of Defence has been conducting a detailed study, in consultation with the Department of Transport and other interested Government Departments, into the deployment of military search and rescue helicopters in the United Kingdom. Certain aspects of that study, as they affect deployment on the east and south coasts of England, have been completed and announced.

I am well aware of the concern felt by my hon. Friends and other hon. Members about the future of search and rescue helicopter services as they affect the remaining areas of the country. To enable all these concerns to be further considered by the Government, no decisions will be taken until later this year.

TRANSPORT

LRT (Chairman)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to appoint a new chairman of London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: No.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what route trains from the north of England will be directed through London to the Channel tunnel; what infrastructure work will be required for this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a matter for the British Railways Board. I understand it intends initially at least to use the existing west London line, which will be upgraded and electrified for this purpose.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what additional evidence about the east London river crossing he has received from the London borough of Greenwich in the light of his Department's decision to alter the criteria for assessing the economic performances of new road schemes; and what response he has made;

(2) if he will make it his policy to take into account his Department's revised criteria for assessing the economic performance of new road schemes when reaching a decision on the proposed east London river crossing;

(3) when he now expects to be able to announce his decision on the proposed east London river crossing.

Mr. Channon: The London borough of Greenwich has submitted its consultants' assessment of the effect of the revised values of travel time and accident prevention on the east London river crossing scheme. I have confirmed that my Department's reassessment, together with that of the London borough of Greenwich, will be taken into account by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and me in reaching our decision on the statutory orders for this scheme. We hope to announce our joint decision soon.

Driving Test Fees

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to assess the value for money of the service provided by the Driving Test Organisation in the light of the proposed increase in the driving test fee to £16·50.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The 10% increase proposed represents a total increase of 15% since 1984. This is below the increase in the retail prices index. The new driving test fee of £16·50 is required to cover increased costs and the move to a reduced examiner work schedule later in the year. Significant efficiency improvements are being made following the review of driver testing to improve the service provided to the public, improve productivity and reduce unit costs.

Drivers (Minimum Age)

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his assessment of the effect on the number of serious injuries and deaths of raising the minimum age requirement for the driving of *(a)* motor cars and *(b)* all motor vehicles to 18 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1986 a total of 266 deaths and 5,697 serious injuries occurred in accidents where the driver or rider of a motor vehicle was under 18 years old. It is impossible to predict how many of these casualties might be saved by raising the minimum age to 18, because a significant factor in accidents to this group is lack of driving experience rather than simply a question of age. We have no plans to raise the current minimum age requirement.

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his assessment of the effect on the volume of traffic of raising the minimum age requirement for the driving of *(a)* motor cars and *(b)* all motor vehicles to 18 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The effect on the volume of traffic of raising to 18 years the minimum age requirement for the driving of both *(a)* motor cars, and *(b)* all motor vehicles,

DAMAGED ORIGINAL

would probably be a reduction of about one quarter of 1 per cent. There is no intention at present of altering the age requirements for driving licences.

Toxic Waste (Switzerland)

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what special measures his Department is taking to monitor the transportation in the next few weeks of toxic waste from Switzerland to the ReChem plant at Pontypool.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The transport of the waste will, I understand, take place under the terms of the European agreement covering the international carriage of dangerous goods by road (ADR). Special monitoring is unnecessary. In addition to the requirements of the agreement, a consignment note must be raised at the port of entry in Great Britain when imported waste is special waste under the terms of the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980.

Manor Drive, Kirkham

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department proposes to take in order to determine the ownership of Manor drive, Kirkham, Lancashire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Lancashire county council has agreed with us that the land off Manor drive in which the Department once had an interest now vests in the council.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Japan (Imports)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what he estimates to be the annual cost to the consumer of the car industry's voluntary agreement to limit car imports from Japan.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to the written answers I gave on 26 April, *Official Report*, columns *92-93*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) and on 7 June, *Official Report*, column *429*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon).

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what items from Japan are subject to import quotas or voluntary restraint agreements by the European Community or the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: There are no quantitative restrictions on imports into the United Kingdom from Japan. There are, however, some informal inter-industry voluntary arrangements with Japanese producers, details of which were given in the written answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, columns *478-79*, to a question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon).

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what imports from Japan are subject to European Community tariffs.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to the common customs tariff of the European Communities. There are no preferential arrangements with Japan.

Net Book Agreement

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what he estimates to be the annual cost to the consumer of the net book agreement.

Mr. Butcher: Although there have been several studies of the effect of the net book agreement, I have not been able to establish that any estimates have ever been made. Any attempt to quantify the cost would be dependent upon so many uncertainties that its usefulness would be limited. I therefore have no such estimate.

Hearing Aid Council

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the chairman and members of the Hearing Aid Council, together with the dates upon which their appointments expire.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested is as follows:

	Date appointment ends
Chairman	
Mr. N. Grant	December 1990
Members	
Mr. R. S. Eldridge	December 1988
Mrs. M. B. Nobbs	December 1988
Mr. A B. Day	December 1988
Mrs. I. Gilbert	December 1988
Mr. D. P. Ormerod	December 1989
Mr. A. J. Douglas	December 1989
Miss A. Spokes	December 1989
Dr. D. N. Brooks	December 1989
Dr. S. Bellman	December 1990
Mr. N. J. King	December 1990
Mr. I. E. Munro	December 1990

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the bodies he consulted before appointing two members of the Hearing Aid Council capable of representing the interests of registered dispensers until December 1990.

Mr. Butcher: There are only two trade bodies which represent the interests of hearing aid dispensers, the Hearing Aid Industry Association and the Society of Hearing Aid Audiologists. Both were consulted before the appointments referred to by the hon. Member were made.

Manufacturing Output

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to the percentage change in manufacturing output in each of the European Economic Community countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada and Japan, taking the 1979 level as 100.

Mr. Atkins: The information is in the following tables:

Changes in manufacturing output between 1979 and 1987

	Per cent.
Belgium	4·4
Denmark	..
France	−1·6
Federal Republic of Germany	7·8
Greece	−0·8
Ireland	46·2

	Per cent.
Italy	8·8
Luxembourg	21·5
Netherlands	13·1
Portugal	[1]36·9
Spain	11·3
United Kingdom	0·2
United States	20·9
Canada	19·3
Japan	28·4

.. = not readily available
[1] estimate
Sources: Central Statistical Office. OECD.

Polyurethane Foam

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what ignition tests on polyurethane foam were carried out or arranged by his Department in preparation for the proposed Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations.

Mr. Butcher: Manufacterers of polyurethane foam, independently and in co-ordination under the British Rubber Manufacturers Association, have been involved in more or less continuous fire testing of their products. As a result, claims were made during 1987 about new combustion-modified types of foams and their resistance to BS 5852 ignition source 5.

One of these manufacturers also undertook work in 1987 on a possible weight loss test in connection with envisaged regulations.

Following a statement by my hon. Friend the then Minister for Consumer Affairs on 11 January 1988, at column 23-24, my Department requested that the industry should concentrate on a test to distinguish "combustion modified" foam from the standard foam and high resilience foam, which we proposed to ban. This work was then drawn together by a BSI technical committee which first met on 5 February. Agreement on the requirements for an ignition test to indentify combustion-modified foam was announced in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) on 10 May, at column 69. In parallel with this, some confirmatory testing was incorporated into a study of the fire behaviour of the various foams arranged at the fire research station of the Department of the Environment. The results of this study are not yet available.

Fire Safety

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list the programmes currently being pursued by the Department of Trade and Industry to promote consumer awareness of the need for greater domestic fire safety;

(2) if he will list the sums allocated in 1986, 1987 and 1988 by the Department of Trade and Industry to promote consumer education in domestic fire safety.

Mr. Butcher: Publicity on fire safety in the home other than fire safety of consumer goods is the responsibility of the Home Office. But my Department does promote home safety awareness campaigns which include some safety messages on how to avoid the dangers from fire in the home, for example, Electricity Can Kill, Electric Blankets, Nightwear and Fire, Fireworks, Furniture and Fire.

It is not possible to separate the element of expenditure on fire safety from the total costs of these campaigns.

Contracts (Cancellation Forms)

Mr. Madel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the light of the changes in the law after 1 July relating to contracts signed away from business premises and in particular to that part of the contract that deals with cancellation forms, he will state how this law will be enforced, with particular regard to those firms which are not members of trade associations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The new regulations (SI 1987/2117) provide that if the consumer does not receive a written notice informing him of his right of cancellation the contract will not be enforceable against him. My Department has taken steps to alert traders to the new legal requirements by publishing a guidance booklet which has been distributed to trading standards departments throughout the United Kingdom as well as to interested trade associations. The Office of Fair Trading will also be alerting consumers to their new rights in a revised version of its leaflet "How to cope with doorstep salesmen" to be published shortly.

Companies

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was *(a)* the total cost of administration of companies registration offices in Great Britain in the year 1987-88, *(b)* the total revenue from fees charged by companies registration offices in Great Britain in the year 1987-88, and *(c)* the sum of profit or loss resulting from the difference between *(a)* and *(b)*.

Mr. Maude: Provisional figures for 1987-88 show that expenditure on a memorandum trading account basis at the companies registration offices amounted to £21 million. Fees and charges to cover these costs, together with a contribution towards the costs of running a system of registered companies, amounted to £28 million in the same period.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total number of company searches carried out at each of the public search rooms in Great Britain, and by the postal search services at each office, during the year 1987-88.

Mr. Maude: The number of searches carried out during the period at the London, Cardiff and Edinburgh search rooms was 3,021,000, 872,000 and 206,000 respectively. In addition, the Cardiff and Edinburgh offices handled 58,000 and 8,000 postal searches respectively.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total of inspection fees collected for inspections carried out at each of the public search rooms of companies registration offices and at each of the postal sales units.

Mr. Maude: The total of inspection fees collected in 1987-88 was £3·8 million of which £0·8 million was collected at Cardiff, £2·9 million at London and £0·2 million at Edinburgh. Income from postal searches amounted to £130,000 at Cardiff and £20,000 at Edinburgh.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the postal sales service of

company information which was introduced by companies registration offices in December 1983 is accommodated within the existing buildings of companies registration offices.

Mr. Maude: Yes.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what additional recurring costs, apart from staff costs, have been incurred by companies registration offices as a result of the introduction of the postal sales service for company information in 1983.

Mr. Maude: The introduction of the postal search service has resulted in recurring non-staff costs to cover postage, stationery, printing, micrographics equipment, office machinery and departmental overheads.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the total cost of maintaining the Companies House facility in London during the year 1987-88.

Mr. Maude: Provisional figures for 1987-88 show that the cost of maintaining the Companies House facility in London on a memorandum trading account basis was £4·4 million. These costs exclude those services at Cardiff which support this facility.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the number of company searches carried out at each of the companies registration offices in Great Britain on behalf of Departments of Her Majesty's Government during the year 1987-88; if such services are charged to the requesting Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: In 1987-88 some 176,000 searches were carried out for the CROs' own working purposes and those of other parts of the Department of Trade and Industry. Searches for other Government Departments attract the normal search feee and are, therefore, not always separately identified, but total at least 68,000.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the number of staff employed in directly meeting the requests for company information, as opposed to collecting and collating company records, at *(a)* each of the public search rooms and *(b)* each of the units handling the postal sales services.

Mr. Maude: The number of staff (full-time equivalents) employed in the CROs, as at March 1988, in meeting requests made for company information at London, Cardiff and Edinburgh were 282, 68 and 12 respectively. For postal sales services from Cardiff and Edinburgh the numbers were 18·5 and 2 respectively.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total number of live limited companies registered at each companies registration office in Great Britain at the end of the year 1987-88.

Mr. Maude: The number of companies registered in England and Wales and in Scotland at the end of the financial year 1987-88 was 1,063,811 and 53,706 respectively. A number of these were either in liquidation or in course of removal from the register, leaving the number regarded as "active" as 880,000 and 47,000 respectively.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total number of new companies registered at each companies registration office in Great Britain in the year 1987-88, and the total number registered in each case with a total paid-up capital of £100 or less during the same period.

Mr. Maude: The number of new companies registered at the Cardiff and Edinburgh offices in 1987-88 was 120,000 and 6,300 respectively. An analysis of paid-up capital is not yet available, but the number of new companies with a nominal capital of £100 or less is estimated to have been 47,600 and 3,200 respectively.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the number of microfiches required to carry the average company records at companies registration offices in Great Britain; and what is the material cost of reproducing a single microfiche at companies registration offices.

Mr. Maude: An average of five microfiches carry each company record. The cost of film and processing materials for each microfiche is about 3p.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the significant elements in his calculation that an increase in company search fees is necessary at companies registration offices; and how each proposed new charge for the company search services was arrived at.

Mr. Maude: The main elements of search service costs include staff, equipment, accommodation and overheads. The new fees have been set at a level to ensure that the income received will cover the full costs of providing the services.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster why, in relation to the company registration offices, an increase in search charges is proposed.

Mr. Maude: Search fees have remained unaltered since 1981. For some time the income from these services has fallen short of the costs of delivering them. The new fees have been set at a level designed to ensure that, taking one year with another, the income received will cover the costs of the services involved.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the level of the statutory search fee at each of the companies registration offices' public search rooms in 1978 and 1983; and what is the proposed figure for 1989.

Mr. Maude: The statutory inspection fees were 5p (formerly one shilling) in 1978 (as it had been since 1844) and £1 in 1983. The proposed £2·50 fee from 1 July 1988 will be subject to annual review.

Aerospace (Launch-aid)

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the total amount of support from his Department to aerospace companies for launch aid since 1979, project by project and year by year.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Since 1979 lauch aid has been provided by the Department of Trade and Industry to aerospace companies as follows:

£ million

Project	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	[1]1988-89	Total
British Aerospace											
A320	—	—	—	—	—	46·5	73·0	86·0	44·5	[2]−0·7	[3]249·3
Rolls-Royce											
RB211-22B	3·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·4
RB211-524B	—	—	0·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·3
RB211-524	29·5	34·7	32·3	15·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	111·5
Growth programme											
RB211-535	45·9	32·4	60·3	38·6	14·6	—	—	—	—	—	191·8
RB211-535E4	—	—	—	—	60·0	10·0	—	—	—	—	70·0
V2500	—	—	—	—	—	10·0	22·7	27·3	—	—	60·0
Total Rolls-Royce	78·8	67·1	92·9	53·6	74·6	20·0	22·7	27·3	—	—	437·0
Westland											
W30	—	—	—	10·0	10·7	14·0	4·6	—	—	—	39·3
EH101	—	—	—	—	—	3·7	3·9	5·7	8·1	0·3	[4]21·7
Total Westland	—	—	—	10·0	10·7	17·7	8·5	5·7	8·1	0·3	61·0
Total payments	78·8	67·1	92·9	63·6	85·3	84·2	104·2	119·0	52·6	−0·4	747·3
Receipts[5]	5·2	9·6	8·6	12·9	8·0	10·2	14·6	18·8	25·2	[6]0·1	113·2
Net Total	73·6	57·5	84·3	50·7	77·3	74·0	89·6	100·2	27·4	−0·5	634·1

[1]To date.
[2]Relates to the repayment by British Aerospace to DTI of an overpayment of aid.
[3]Up to £450 million is also expected to be made available to British Aerospace between 1988 and 1992 in connection with its participation in the Airbus A330/A340 programme.
[4]Total launch aid for this project will be £60 million.
[5]Levies received so far relate only to Rolls-Royce, including contracts where launch aid was paid prior to 1979-80.
[6]Yet to be notified.

British Shipbuilders (Cuba Order)

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to respond to the request by British Shipbuilders for intervention fund support for the potential order from Cuba.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have not yet received a formal application for support for this order, but I have told British Shipbuilders in response to inquiries that I would consider any application from it with great care in view of the considerable losses over and above agreed support that the corporation has made on other orders.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on what occasions and for what purposes his Department has made formal complaints to the European Community Commissioner concerning breaches of the fifth or sixth directives on support for shipbuilding by other member states of the Community.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have asked the European Commission to investigate the use of state aid in the following bids: from the Netherlands for a floating crane in April 1985 and two trawlers in October 1985; from France for a cross-channel ferry in January 1987; from Portugal for a fishing boat in May 1987; and from Spain for a stern trawler in March 1988. We have been concerned to ensure fairness of competition for United Kingdom yards with others within the Community.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has about the accrued losses of *(a)* the Italian, *(b)* the West German and *(c)* the French merchant shipbuilding industries since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This information is not available to us. The losses owners are prepared to bear is a matter for them.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has about the accrued losses of the South Korean shipbuilding industry since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There is no reliable information.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been, year by year since 1979, the amount of money provided by his Department to British Shipbuilders as intervention fund under the fifth and sixth directives of the European Community.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Payments of intervention fund to British Shipbuilders since 1979 have amounted to £259 million. Year by year totals from 1979-80 have been £31 million, £40 million, £46 million, £44 million, £34 million, £18 million, £22 million, £14 million and £10 million, respectively. The figures include payments made under the fourth directive, which was effective until 27 April 1981. No payments have yet been made in 1988-89.

British Shipbuilders (Losses)

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give his estimate for the accrued losses of British Shipbuilders since 1979, excluding those mixed and naval yards that are now in the private sector.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The total cost to the taxpayer of keeping British Shipbuilders merchant shipbuilding business alive since 1979 has been over £1,850 million. The

accrued losses on a profit and loss basis, excluding the warship yards and Scott Lithgow, have been approximately £1,050 million.

Manufacturing Trade

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recent 12-month surplus or deficit in manufacturing trade with the EEC and the rest of the world, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest information is in the following table:

United Kingdom Balance of Trade in Manufactures [1]

£ billion

	Balance of payments basis		*Overseas trade statistics basis*	
	European Community	*Rest of world*	*European Community*	*Rest of world*
Twelve months to:				
March 1988	[2]10½	[2]2	−11·6	+0·7
April 1988	. .	. .	−11·9	+0·2

[1] Standard International Trade Classification (Rev. 3) Sections 5 to 8
[2] Estimate
. . Not available
Note: Figures on a balance of payments basis are available only quarterly. On the overseas trade statistics basis imports, but not exports, include the cost of insurance and freight charges.
Source: United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.
Department of Trade and Industry.

Departmental Research Establishments

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will place in the Library a copy of the review study undertaken into his Department's research establishments.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. The review was part of my Department's advice on the policy that my right hon. and noble Friend should adopt towards by Deprtment's research establishments. His conclusions were explained to the House in the answer I gave on 7 June.

Furniture Safety

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received on the Draft Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations, issued by his Department on 1 March; and if he will consider implementing these regulations sooner than 1 March 1989.

Mr. Butcher: I have received approximately 260 seperate representations on the draft Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Relugations. A number of these contain suggestions about the dates for them to come into operation both for manufacture and for retail sale. I am considering proposals for an earlier date of implementation for one of the requirements.

Civil Servants (Outside Activities)

Mr. John: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Pontyridd of 24 May, *Official Report*, column 114, are the names and Civil Service grades of the seven civil servants appointed as directors of public liability companies; of which companies they have been appointed directors; and how much expenses they received in the last full year of such directorships.

Mr. Butcher: The following is the information on the seven civil servants referred to in the earlier answer:

	Grade	*Company*
Mr. J. V. Hagestadt	5	British Aerospace Flying College Limited, a subsidiary of British Aerospace plc.
Mr. R. A. C. Hewes	3	Comforto-Vickers, a Division of Vickers plc.
Miss M. T. Neville-Rolfe	3	Rolls Royce Motors Limited, a subsidiary of Vickers plc.
Mr. R. Priddle	3	Film and Television Division of Rank Organisation plc
Mr. P. Salvidge	5	Marine Engineering Division of Vickers plc
Mr. N. R. Thornton	5	Medical and Scientific Equipment Division of Vickers plc
Dr. A. J. Wallard	5	Rank Cintel, a subsidiary of the Rank Organisation plc.

Since that time Mr. Thornton has resigned from that appointment and Mr. J. P. Spencer, a grade 5, has been appointed to the board of GEC Avery, a division of GEC plc. The only expenses received are the expenses which the individuals incur in attending board meetings and otherwise visiting the companies.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the actual or estimated staffing levels for each category of staff employed at the National Engineering Laboratory, East Kilbride, for the period 1979 to 1990 inclusive.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The staffing levels of industrial and non-industrial staff at the National Engineering Laboratory on 1 April for the years 1979 to 1988 were:

	Industrials	*Non-industrials*	*Total*
1979	294	531	825
1980	267	523	790
1981	246	495	741
1982	237½	468½	706
1983	226½	456½	683
1984	193	458½	651½
1985	185	461	646
1986	186	448	634
1987	168	463	631
1988	156	472	628

The projected level for 1989 and 1990 is a total of 620 staff.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from which firm his Department commissioned a study into the future of the Government-run research establishments, including the National Engineering Laboratory; and on what date it was submitted to his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No such study has been commissioned by my Department.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster under what authority he proposes to effect the sale of the National Engineering Laboratory at East Kilbride; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The National Engineering Laboratory is a division of the Department of Trade and Industry. Its transfer will be effected under the prerogative power to determine the organisation of the Department which is exercised as Secretary of State by my right hon. and noble Friend.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will give details and dates in the last 12 months of discussions his Department has had with representatives of *(a)* the British Hydromechanics Research Association and *(b)* the Production Engineering Research Association on the future of the National Engineering Laboratory;

(2) on what date the British Hydromechanics Research Association lodged an interest with his Department in an optics paper drawn up by the firm of Cooper and Lybrand on the future of the National Engineering Laboratory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The British Hydromechanics Research Association and the Production Engineering Research Association independently approached the Department to express an interest in the National Engineering Laboratory during the course of the review of the research establishments. Following normal practice, details are commercially confidential. The BHRA subsequently sent the Department a paper giving its views on the future development of NEL.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the British Hydromechanics Research Association was notified of the Government's intention to sell off the National Engineering Laboratory in advance of the public announcement in the answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, columns 431-32.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. However, the British Hydromechanics Research Association was informed of the likely timing of an announcement because it had expressed a close interest in the future of NEL. It was given no advance information about the content of the announcement and the results of our review of research establishments.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 14 June 1988

WALES

Perinatal Mortality

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to announce his response to the perinatal mortality initiative survey group recommendations.

Mr. Grist: The response to the recommendations of the perinatal mortality initiative survey group was announced in Welsh health circular (86)69 issued in December 1986. Those recommendations relating to the provision of a regional perinatal intensive care service which have been the subject of consultation with district health authorities in Wales are actively being considered, and an announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Cervical Smears

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average time taken by each Welsh health authority to process cervical smear tests and provide the results for the patient and her general practitioner; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Information about the average time taken to provide results of cervical smear tests in 1987 is as follows. In November 1987, a further £400,000 was allocated to district health authorities to help improve the cervical screening service. I hope that this additional funding will contribute to a reduction in waiting times in those districts where women had to wait more than the recommended maximum of eight weeks in 1987.

	Days
Clwyd	1-35
East Dyfed	16-88
Gwent	35
Gwynedd	30
Mid Glamorgan	56
Pembrokeshire	112
Powys	19
South Glamorgan	21
West Glamorgan	56

Pembrokeshire was dependent on the laboratory at West Wales general hospital to process its cervical smear tests in 1987. The turnaround time at that laboratory increased significantly in 1987 due to staffing problems, although I understand that remedial action taken earlier this year should have eased the situation. Following Welsh Office funding, Pembrokeshire plans to establish its own laboratory service to evaluate cervical smear tests from 1 July. The authority has advised that this will substantially reduce the time taken to notify results.

WINVEST (Government Contribution)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the Government contribution to WINVEST for the financial years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89; and what staff numbers this contribution supported.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89 budget*
Gross expenditure (£ million)	1·784	1·825	2·181
Staff numbers[1]	35	36	39

[1] Including seconded Welsh Office staff.

New Factories

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what sums were spent by the Welsh Development Agency on new factory building in the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88; what sum is projected for 1988-89; and how many square metres of additional factory space become available in each year.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89 budget*
Gross expenditure (£ million) land and buildings	26·7	32·7	43·2
Factory space completed (square metres)	47,982	78,890	[1]139,000

[1] Forecast.

Tritium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many sites in Wales, excluding the nuclear plants at Wylfa and Trawsfynydd, are licensed for the handling, storage or disposal of tritium or tritium contaminated wastes; and if he will list them in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Grist: Ninety-one premises are identified in registrations specifically permitting the keeping and use of tritium, and 37 in authorisations specifically permitting the disposal of tritium contaminated waste. The list is as follows:

	Premises
British Oxygen Company Ltd. Longlands Lane, West Glamorgan	Port Talbot
British Oxygen Company Ltd., Queensway Spencer Works, Gwent, NPF 0UP	Newport
British Steel Corporation, Llanwern Works, Gwent, NPT 0XN	Newport
Air Products Ltd., Spencer Works, Llanwern, Gwent	Newport
British Steel Corporation, Welsh Laboratory, West Glamorgan, SA13 2NG	Port Talbot

	Premises
British Steel Corporation, BSC Tinplate Ebbw Vale Works, Gwent, NP3 6XD	Ebbw Vale
British Steel Corporation, Trostre Works, Dyfed	Llanelli
Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School, Beddau Mid Glamorgan	Llantrisant
Mid Glamorgan County Council, The Courthouse, Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil
Youth Centre, Porthcawl Comprehensive School, Mid Glamorgan	Porthcawl
Youth Centre Ferndale Grammar School, Mid Glamorgan	Ferndale
Glamorgan College of Education, Buttrills Road, South Glamorgan	Barry
Caernarvonshire Technical College, Gwynedd	Bangor
Mr. I. E. Lloyd, Woodlands Hall Country Club, Llanfwrog, Clwyd	Ruthin
Lye Tinplate Ltd.,. Glynhir Works, Pontardulais, West Glamorgan, SA4 1QD	Swansea
Social Centre Woodland Road, Croesyceiliog, Gwent	Cwmbran
South Glamorgan County Council, Fire Service Headquarters, Adam Street, South Glamorgan, CF1 2FL	Cardiff
*University College Cardiff, Cathays Park, Newport Road, The Parade, South Glamorgan	Cardiff
Botwnnog Comprehensive School, Botwnnog, Gwynedd	Pwllheli
Ford Motor Company, General Products Operations, Treforest Industrial Estate, Mid Glamorgan	Pontypridd
Imperial buildings, Vaughan Street, Gwynedd	Llandudno
*University College of Wales, Edward Davies Chemical Laboratory, Dyfed, SY23 1NE	Aberystwyth
Gulf Oil Refining Ltd., Waterston, Dyfed, SA73 1DR	Milford Haven
New Council Offices, Cefn Coed-Y-Cymmer, Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil
Denis Ferranti Meters Ltd., Caernarvon Road, Gwynedd, LL57 4SP	Bangor
Rhos-on-Sea Methodist Church, Rhos-on-Sea Methodist Church Hall, Rhos Road, Rhos-on-Sea, Clwyd	Colwyn Bay
Inco Europe Ltd., Clydach Refinery, Clydach, West Glamorgan, SA6 5QR	Swansea
Ski Lodge, Fairwater, South Glamorgan	Cardiff
Lecture Theatre C[illegible]e of Librarianship, Wales Primros[illegible]l, Llabadarn Fawr, Dyfed	Aberystwyth
Trust House Forte (Leisure) Ltd., Grand Hotel, Happy Valley Road, Gwynedd	Llandudno
J. W. Lees Co. Ltd., Bull Bay Hotel, Bull Bay, Gwynedd	Amlwch
Gwernyfed Comprehensive School, Three Cocks, Powys	Brecon
Welsh National Water Development Authority, Taf Fechan Unit Pentwyn Road, Mid Glamorgan, CF46 6LY	Nelson
Delanair Ltd., New Road, Dyfed	Ammanford
St. Florence Voluntary Control School, Dyfed	St. Florence
North Wales Police, Glan Y Don, Clwyd, LL29 8AW	Colwyn Bay
David Morgan Ltd., The Hayes, South Glamorgan, CF1 1UG	Cardiff
*Amoco (U.K.) Ltd., Milford Haven Refinery, PO Box 10, Dyfed, SA73 3JD	Milford Haven
Afan Borough Council, Afan Lido Ballroom, Aberavon, West Glamorgan	Port Talbot
*University College of North Wales, Science Buildings, Deiniol Road, Gwynedd	Bangor

	Premises
*University College of North Wales, Department of Marine Science, Menai Bridge, Gwynedd	Anglesey
The Seabank Hotel, Marine Terrance, Dyfed	Aberystwyth
Royal Hotel (Caernarfon) Ltd., Royal Hotel Bangor Road, Gwynedd	Caernarfon
R.A.O.B. Social Club, Murray Street, Dyfed	Llanelli
Gwynedd County Council, Dyffryn Nantlle School, Penygroes, Gwynedd	Caernarfon
National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, South Glamorgan, CF1 3NP	Cardiff
Clwyd County Council, Shire Hall, Clwyd, CH7 6NB	Mold
Dyfed County Council, Local Authority Youth and Community Centre Argyle Street, Dyfed	Pembroke Dock
Midland Bank Ltd., 56 Queen Street, South Glamorgan	Cardiff
South Glamorgan County Council, Car Park Westgate Street/Quay Street South Glamorgan	Cardiff
West Glamorgan County Council, Dwr-y-Felin Lower Comprehensive School, West Glamorgan	Neath
Simbec Research Ltd., Merthyr Tydfil Industrial Park, Cardiff Road, Mid Glamorgan, CF48 4DR	Merthyr Tydfil
British Broadcasting Company, Broadcasting House, Llanrisant Road, South Glamorgan, CF5 888	Cardiff
Gwynedd County Council, Bodedern County Secondary School London Rd., Gwynedd	Bodedern
South Glamorgan County Council, Barry Fire Station, Port Rd., South Glamorgan	Barry
Tesco Stores Ltd., Tesco Supermarkets Ltd., Crescent Rd., Clwyd	Wrexham
Powys County Council, Montgomery College of Further Education, Llanidloes Rd., Powys	Newtown
Pontardulais Road, Fforestfach, West Glamorgan	Swansea
Tesco Stores Ltd., Wind St./Water St., West Glamorgan, SA11 3EG	Neath
Controls and Combustion Ltd., Power House Building, Fords New Factory, Mid Glamorgan	Bridgend
Cardiff City Council, City Public Health Department, City Analysts Laboratory, Croft St., South Glamorgan, CF2 3DY	Cardiff
Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust, The Bishops Palace (Flats), High St., Clwyd	St. Asaph
Wales Gas Board, Maelor Works, Marchwiel, Clwyd	Wrexham
Welsh Water Authority, Llanelli Area Laboratory, 19 Penyfai Lane Furnace, Dyfed, SA16 4CL	Llanelli
Ford Motor Company, Bridgend Plant Waterton Industrial Estate, Mid Glamorgan, CF31 3PJ	Bridgend
Xidex (UK) Ltd., Intermediate Road, Gwent, NP3 4YA	Brynmawr
Plessey Marine Ltd. Newport Industrial Area Spytty Road Gwent	Newport
Inmos Ltd. Cardiff Road Duffryn Gwent, NPT 1YJ	Newport
Wales Gas Wales Gas Headquarters Helmont House Churchill Way South Glamorgan, CF1 4ND	Cardiff
University College of North Wales Estates Department Dean Street Gwynedd, LL57 1UT	Bangor
3M UK PLC Reka DOM Pentrebach Mid Glamorgan, CF48 4BD	Merthyr Tydfil
British Steel Corporation Velindre Works Velindre West Glamorgan, SA6 7LT	Swansea
Cardill-Wales Airport Ltd. South Glamorgan, CF6 9BD	Near Cardiff

	Premises
*University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology King Edward VII Avenue Cathays Park South Glamorgan	Cardiff
*University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology Aberconway Building Colum Drive South Glamorgan, CF1 3XF	Cardiff
*University College of Wales Penglais Estate University College Dyfed	Aberystwyth
*Institute for Grassland and Animal Production, Welsh Plant Breeding Station, Plas Cogerddan, Dyfed SY23 3EB	Aberystwyth
Monsanto plc, Corporation Road, Gwent NP9 OXF	Newport
Gwynedd County Council, County Offices, Gwynedd LL56 1SH	Caernarfon
*Pembroke Cracking Company, Texaco Refinery, Dyfed SA71 5SJ	Pembroke
Gwynedd County Council, John Bright Sports Hall Extension, Oxford Road, Gwynedd	Llandudno
*BT Consumer Electronics Ltd., Cwmcarn Factory, Crosskeys, Gwent NP1 7ZB	Newport
*Mayer Cohen Industries Ltd., Newtown Industrial Estate, Cross Keys, Gwent NP1 7PZ	Newport
St. David's University College, Dyfed	Lampeter
**Mid Glamorgan Health Authority, Princess of Wales Hospital, Mid Glamorgan	Bridgend
*North East Wales Institute of Higher Education, Kelsterton College, Clwyd CH5 4BR	Connahs Quay
**South Glamorgan Health Authority, Cardiff Medical Teaching Centre, UHW Heath Park, South Glamorgan CF4 4XW	Cardiff
**South Glamorgan Health Authority, Velindre Hospital, Velindre Road Whitchurch, South Glamorgan CF4 7XL	Cardiff
*University College of North Wales, College Farm, Gwynedd	Aber
*University College of North Wales, Penyffridd Experimental Station, Penrhos Road, Gwynedd	Bangor
**South Glamorgan Health Authority, Llandough Hospital, South Glamorgan	Penarth
**Re Chem International Ltd., Pontyvelin Industrial Estate, New Road, Gwent	Pontypool
*University College of Swansea, Singleton Park, West Glamorgan, SA2 8PP	Swansea
*Welsh Regional Blood Transfusion Service, Rhydlafar, St. Fagans, South Glamorgan, CF6 6XF	Cardiff
**Mid Glamorgan Health Authority, East Glamorgan General Hospital, Church Village, Mid Glamorgan	Pontypridd
**Mid Glamorgan Health Authority, Bridgend General Hospital, Mid Glamorgan,	Bridgend
*Imperial Chemical Industries plc, Barry "Corvic" Plant, South Glamorgan, CF6 2YU	Sully
**Clwyd Health Authority, Ysbyty Glan Clwyd, Clwyd	Bodelwyddan
**South Glamorgan Health Authority, Cardiff Royal Infirmary, Newport Road, South Glamorgan	Cardiff
**Mid Glamorgan Health Authority, Prince Charles Hospital, Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil
**Gwent Health Authority, St. Woolos Hospital, Gwent	Newport
**Gwent Health Authority, Allt-yr-yn Hospital, Gwent	Newport
**West Glamorgan Health Authority, Singleton Hospital, Sketty West Glamorgan, SA1 8QA	Swansea
**West Glamorgan Health Authority, Morriston Hospital, Morriston, West Glamorgan	Swansea
**Amersham International plc, Cardiff Laboratories, Forest Farm, Whitchurch, South Glamorgan, CF4 7YT	Cardiff
**Gwynedd Health Authority, Gwynedd Hospital, Penrhosgarnedd, Gwynedd, LL57 2PW	Bangor
*Miles Laboratories Ltd., Western Avenue Industrial Estate, Mid Glamorgan, CF31 3TY	Bridgend

Unless designated as below the premises are covered by registration only.

* Premises covered by both registration and authorisation.
** Premises covered by authorisation but exempt from registration.

A full list of premises covered by authorisation under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to dispose of radioactive waste is included in the Department of the Environment/Welsh Office/Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution April 1988 publication, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Joint Funding Scheme

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to increase the budget for the joint funding scheme.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have decided to increase this year's budget for the joint funding scheme to £10·5 million, which is a 75 per cent. increase on the original allocation for last year. Under the joint funding scheme we support, on a 50:50 basis, voluntary agencies' projects which are aimed at some of the poorest and most disadvantaged communities in the developing world, and I am sure that this is money very well spent.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Car Theft

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has, for the last year for which figures are available, as to the number of private cars stolen from each police division or constabulary in the United Kingdom and the number recovered.

Mr. John Patten: The available information relates to all theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and is given in the following table. The figures for Scotland and Northern Ireland have been provided by the Scottish Home and Health Department and the Northern Ireland Office and may not be entirely comparable with those for England and Wales, although the differences are thought to be small. From records held centrally, it is not possible to distinguish thefts of private cars from thefts of other types of vehicle.

Notifiable offences of theft and unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and vehicles recovered
United Kingdom 1987

Police force area	*Offences recorded*	*Vehicles recovered*
Avon and Somerset	10,945	9,355
Bedfordshire	5,068	2,729
Cambridgeshire	2,512	2,172
Cheshire	5,441	3,630
Cleveland	5,832	4,294
Cumbria	1,603	1,178
Derbyshire	2,967	2,198
Devon and Cornwall	5,073	4,130
Dorset	4,037	2,902
Durham	4,311	1,035
Essex	8,404	5,437
Gloucestershire	2,539	1,906
Greater Manchester	37,936	29,812
Hampshire	8,453	5,771
Hertfordshire	4,017	1,998
Humberside	5,396	4,677
Kent	9,248	6,084
Lancashire	7,867	5,887
Leicestershire	4,931	3,864
Lincolnshire	1,929	1,343
London, City of	296	123
Merseyside	18,873	12,224
Metropolitan Police	77,642	47,191
Norfolk	3,964	2,857
Northamptonshire	4,821	3,684
Northumbria	19,488	12,824
North Yorkshire	2,817	2,138
Nottinghamshire	7,038	6,060
South Yorkshire	9,312	7,060
Staffordshire	4,376	2,681
Suffolk	1,863	1,059
Surrey	2,922	2,295
Sussex	5,262	3,741
Thames Valley	13,996	8,875
Warwickshire	2,638	2,168
West Mercia	3,875	2,986
West Midlands	34,206	26,810
West Yorkshire	16,363	11,964
Wiltshire	1,916	1,412
Dyfed-Powys	994	820
Gwent	2,134	1,114
North Wales	2,275	1,526
South Wales	13,996	11,059
England and Wales	389,576	273,063
Central	914	n/a
Dumfries and Galloway	234	n/a
Fife	1,164	n/a
Grampian	1,389	n/a
Lothian and Borders	4,433	n/a
Northern	500	n/a
Strathclyde	16,505	n/a
Tayside	1,044	n/a
Scotland	26,183	n/a
Royal Ulster Constabulary	7,873	n/a

n/a—Not available.

Election Expenses

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many candidates in each of the general elections of 1979, 1983 and 1987 failed to submit a return of their election expenses to the returning officer, and in how many cases prosecutions have been instituted as the result of such failures.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows:

	1979	*1983*	*1987*
Number of candidates who failed to submit a return within the statutory period allowed	19	21	15
Number of prosecutions	4	[1]—	[2]—

[1] None.
[2] Not yet available.

I understand that the Director of Public Prosecutions has not yet decided in every case whether to institute proceedings in respect of the candidates who failed to submit a return after the 1987 general election.

Radioactive Discharges

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will arrange, in conjunction with the

appropriate French authorities, for an evaluation of the concentration of radioactive discharges reaching the Channel Islands of Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney, Herm and Sark from the French nuclear reprocessing plant at Cap de la Hague.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Radioactive discharges reaching the Channel Islands are continuously monitored by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The concentrations of artificial radionuclides found in these waters has been negligible. Monitoring results are published annually by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food directorate of fisheries research in the "Aquatic Environment Monitoring Report on Radioactivity in Surface and Coastal Waters of the British Isles", copies of which are in the Library.

Category A Prisoners

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many category A women prisoners there were in Her Majesty's prison, Durham, in April and May; and how many strip searches were made on these prisoners in that month, indicating strip searches before and after consultation with legal advisers, after visits and after cell changes, wing searches and cell searches, and listing reasons for searches and illegal contraband or smuggled items found.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During April and May, there were three category A women prisoners in Durham prison. The number of occasions on which each was strip-searched during each month is shown in the table:

	Inmate A		*Inmate B*		*Inmate C*	
	April	*May*	*April*	*May*	*April*	*May*
After legal visits	—	—	—	—	—	—
After other visits	3	2	3	—	1	—
At the time of cell changes, and wing and cell searches	2	1	2	1	1	3

No unauthorised article was found on any of the three women. I set out the reasons for such searches in my reply to a question from the hon. Member on 15 January at column *446*.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many category A prisoners are at present held on remand at Risley detention centre; to how many strip searches they have been subjected in April and May, giving the number of persons involved, the number of times each person was searched and if any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while a search was being conducted; and what were the reasons for the search under each of the following headings: *(a)* making a remand appearance at court, *(b)* attending a trial, *(c)* inter-prison visit and *(d)* other reasons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 13 June, there were seven inmates on remand at Risley remand centre who had been placed in category A. Comprehensive records of strip searches are available only in respect of category A women prisoners, of whom there was one in Risley on the date in question. The records show that this prisoner was not strip-searched during April but was so searched on three occasions in May—twice in connection with her temporary transfer to another prison, and one at the time of a cell change. No unauthorised article was discovered on any of these occasions. On no occasion did the prisoner refuse to be strip-searched.

Haverigg Prison

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the daily routine in force at Haverigg prison prior to the recent disturbance, giving the times of *(a)* reveille, *(b)* slop-out, *(c)* meals, *(d)* recreation, *(e)* confinement and *(f)* lights out.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Prior to the disturbance on Sunday 5 June, the main daily routine for inmates at Haverigg prison was as follows:

	Weekday	*Weekend*
Unlocking[1]	07.30	07.30
Breakfast	07.50	07.45
Work commences	08.30	—
Church Service[2]	—	09.00
Association/Outside activities	—	10.30
Lunch	12.00	12.00
Work commences	13.00	—
Association/Outside activities/Visits	—	13.15
Tea	16.50	16.45
Association	[3]17.30	17.30
Supper	19.30	19.30
Association ends	20.30	20.30
Lock-up (Lights out)	22.30	22.30

[1] As inmates are housed in dormitories with access to night sanitation, there is no slopping out.
[2] Attendance voluntary.
[3] On weekdays, evening association includes education classes.

Gaelic and Welsh

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has as to the average audience figures achieved for the Gaelic programmes "Prosbaig", "Dotaman" and "Crann Tara" for *(a)* Gaelic speakers and *(b)* all viewers;

(2) what information he has as to the average audience figures achieved for the three most popular Welsh language programmes on S4C amongst *(a)* Welsh speakers, and *(b)* all viewers.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is not readily available, and I will reply as soon as possible.

Inquests

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests from coroners to hold an inquest in circumstances where their present powers are in doubt he has received in the last five years; and what consideration he has given to each of these requests.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* No central records are kept of requests from coroners for guidance where their powers are in doubt. All such requests receive careful consideration.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests from coroners he has received in the last five years to hold an inquest where the body of the deceased has been destroyed; and how many he approved.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* Sixty-four requests were received, of which thirty-eight were approved.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what evidence he refused permission to the Carlisle coroner to hold an inquest into the death of the Carlisle baby reported to him by the county coroner.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* My right hon. Friend's decision, that the public interest would not be served by an inquest in this case, was founded on the information given by the coroner.

ENERGY

Electricity Industry (Borrowing)

Mr. Leadbitter: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy under what powers borrowing is currently undertaken by the electricity supply industry; what is the current outstanding debt of the industry; what claims on capital he expects over the next three years; and whether he plans to increase the industry's borrowing powers.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The borrowing powers of the electricity supply industry are given by the Electricity Act 1957, section 15, the Electricity (Borrowing Powers) Order 1974, and the Statutory Corporations (Financial Provisions) Act 1974. The net outstanding debt at 31 March 1988 was £1,597 million. The ESI's capital expenditure is expected to be met wholly from internally generated funds in the next three years and my right hon. Friend has no plans to increase the industry's borrowing powers.

CEGB (Spending)

Mr. Leadbitter: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what applications for future capital expenditure he has discussed with the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Central Electricity Generating Board submits annual capital investment plans to my Department covering the whole range of activities carried out by the board. For 1988-89, I have given approval to total expenditure of £775 million.

Plutonium

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the expected annual cost to Her Majesty's Government for the protection of reprocessed plutonium from Sellafield to Japan in the 1990s; and how much will be recovered from commercial sources.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the two replies which I gave him on 24 February 1988, both at column *240*.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what guidance or advice he has given with regard to the use or deployment of agencies other than the police which are to be involved in the physical protection of plutonium transported from Sellafield to Japan; and on what basis such use is paid for at the cost of deployment recovered from commercial sources.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have nothing to add to the replies that I gave the hon. Member on 11 May 1988, at column *110* and on 24 May 1988, at column *102*.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy which airport is currently used in connection with the export of plutonium by air from Sellafield.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 9 June 1988 at column *633*.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his consent to British Nuclear Fuels plc to export plutonium to Japan is subject to any review in the event of that country reducing or increasing its fast breeder reactor programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The merits of all exports of nuclear materials are considered case by case within the guidelines set out in the statement by the then Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan, on 31 March 1976 at columns *514-516*.

No specific approvals have yet been given for the return to Japan of the plutonium that will result from the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel at THORP.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what conditions have been imposed in connection with the export of plutonium to Japan; and if he will indicate *(a)* the expected amount of plutonium to be exported by British Nuclear Fuels plc to Japan and *(b)* the maximum amount of plutonium that is permitted to be exported each year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Plutonium from spent fuel reprocessed in the United Kingdom is returned to its country of origin or to any other destination only on receipt of assurances covering peaceful use, application of safeguards, physical protection and controls on retransfer. I understand that no schedule has yet been agreed with the customers for the return of plutonium to Japan after reprocessing in THORP.

Parliamentary Questions

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many holding answers have been given to parliamentary questions for priority written answers to his Department *(a)* since May 1979, *(b)* since June 1983 and *(c)* since June 1987.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information on holding replies given *(a)* since May 1979 could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The number of holding replies to priority written questions *(b)* since June 1983, and *(c)* since June 1987 are respectively 109 and 50. The frequency with which holding replies are given depends to a large extent on the length of notice given when a question is asked.

Nuclear Materials (Exports)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy on how many occasions since May 1979 he, or his

predecessor, has given permission under the Nuclear Installations Act for the export of nuclear materials from United Kingdom facilities to the centre for nuclear studies at Mol in Belgium; and if he will set out the details in a table listing quantities and dates of exports, by separate material categories.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since May 1979, permission has never been given under section 2 of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 for the export of nuclear material to the centre for nuclear studies at Mol.

Exports of nuclear material by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, including those exports of plutonium referred to in my reply to the hon. Member on 16 March 1988, at column *595*, are not subject to the provisions of section 2 of the Act. Information on individual shipments is confidential.

Fusion Energy Research

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the agreements made at the recent United States of America-Union of Soviet Socialist Republics summit meeting in Moscow have any direct or indirect bearing on the future of fusion energy research at the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's Culham laboratories.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Moscow summit noted the commencement of work on the conceptual design of an international thermonuclear experimental reactor, which was endorsed by the United States, the Soviet Union, Eurotom and Japan at a meeting in Vienna on 21-22 April 1988 under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The work is limited to conceptual design and is not due to be completed until 31 December 1990; it is too soon to speculate about the outcome.

Nuclear Fuel (Reprocessing)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what information he possesses on the details of negotiations between the Japanese and United States Governments for United States permission for the reprocessing of United States-origin nuclear fuel, currently in Japanese nuclear plants, in British Nuclear Fuels plc's Sellafield reprocessing plant;

(2) what information he possesses on the progress in negotiations between the Japanese nuclear authorities and the United States Government on arrangements for the shipment of plutonium from British Nuclear Fuels plc's Sellafield reprocessing plant to Japan under United States licensing laws.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Transport and reprocessing arrangements for United States-origin nuclear material are dealt with in the agreement for co-operation between the Governments of the United States of America and Japan concerning peaceful uses of nuclear energy, which was signed on 4 November 1987. I understand the agreement has now been cleared by the United States Congress and the Japanese Diet.

Nirex

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans for the disbanding of Nirex and requiring British Nuclear Fuels plc to take over the radioactive waste management and disposal role presently undertaken by Nirex.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Atomic Energy (Safeguards)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will review the current financial contributions made by the United Kingdom to the safeguards activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency to assess its adequacy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The financing of the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards activities was explained in my reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on 10 February 1988 at columns *228-9*.

I am satisfied that the IAEA's 1988 programme and budget, which was adopted after thorough discussion in the agency's board and general conference, are adequate for the proper discharge of all the agency's functions in the current year.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he is satisfied with the progress made towards resolving issues described as problems, numbers 1 to 17, in paragraphs 46-62 of the 1986 International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards implementation report; and if he will make a statement on specific progress achieved through 1987 on each of the 17 problem areas.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards implementation report is confidential to the board of governors. I have full confidence in the effectiveness of the agency's safeguards system. The United Kingdom funds a substantial safeguards support programme on top of payments to the regular budget of the IAEA to assist the agency in the attainment of its safeguards goals in a cost-effective manner.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the conclusions of the 1987 International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards implementation report differ in any significant way from those contained in the 1986 safeguards implementation report.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A summary of the International Atomic Energy Agency's 1987 safeguards implementation report will be published in the agency's 1987 annual report which will be placed in the Library of the House. I am not aware that there is likely to be any significant difference in the general conclusions of the 1987 report.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to direct Her Majesty's Government's representative on the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency to seek the early public release of the 1987 International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards implementation report.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The 1987 safeguards implementation report of the International Atomic Energy Agency is confidential to the board of governors. A summary will be published in the agency's 1987 annual report which will be placed in the Library of the House. Any decision to publish the 1987 safeguards implementation report would be a matter for the board of governors and the general conference of the IAEA.

Nuclear Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what safeguards apply to *(a)* plutonium contaminated wastes and *(b)* enriched uranium contaminated wastes containing fissile nuclear materials, presently unrefinable using known extraction technologies.

Mr. Michael Spicer: All civil nuclear material is subject to Euratom safeguards and to the terms of the United Kingdom/Euratom/IAEA safeguards agreement. Discussions are currently taking place with the international safeguards authorities on the safeguards to be applied to waste containing civil nuclear material.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the costs to be incurred by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for the repackaging of nuclear wastes, currently stored at the authority's Harwell laboratories, originally destined for sea disposal but now planned for disposal by Nirex in the future land or sub-sea bed disposal strategy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The UKAEA is considering the options for repackaging the nuclear waste originally destined for sea disposal. This examination includes close consultation with Nirex, as the body responsible for disposal of the waste.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will make a statement on the proposal to build a central dry store for spent nuclear fuel rods from the AGR and Magnox nuclear plants;

(2) if he will make a statement as to the relative merits of a central dry storage site for nuclear waste being located as between *(a)* Chapelcross and *(b)* Heysham.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have received an investment proposal from the CEGB for a dry store for spent AGR fuel, to be constructed on their behalf and that of the SSEB. The SSEB has made a similar proposal to the Secretary of State for Scotland. The question of siting is a matter for the industry, subject to planning consents and other regulatory control by the NII and relevant authorising Departments.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecutors (Right of Audience)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Lord Chancellor has any plans to use his powers under the Prosecution of Offences Act to extend the right of audience of Crown prosecutors; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor has no current plans to use his powers under the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 to extend the rights of audience of Crown prosecutors. Under section 4 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, Crown prosecutors already have the rights of audience enjoyed by solicitors holding practising certificates.

Matrimonial Disputes

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Attorney-General what information he has as to the percentage of solicitors' practices undertaking legal aid in respect of matrimonial disputes in the Cheshire area, in the years 1979-80 and 1987-88.

The Attorney-General: No information is available in respect of Cheshire alone or, as yet, for 1987-88. In 1986-87, the last year for which information is currently available, in the south-west and Wales region, which includes most of Cheshire, 1,831 solicitors' offices received legal aid payments for matrimonial proceedings in the county court; and 792 for High Court proceedings. The information available from 1979-80 cannot be analysed in this form. No information is collected by the Lord Chancellor's Department on the total number of solicitors' practices, so it is not possible to say what proportion of solicitors' practices these figures represent.

Evictions

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases which related to eviction from the family home were recorded in the Cheshire area during the current year; and how many of those received legal aid.

The Attorney-General: During 1987, a total of 3,914 actions for possession of residential premises were entered at county courts in Cheshire, although only some of these will have resulted in a subsequent application for a warrant of eviction. Information on how many of the parties to these actions received legal aid is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

European Court of Justice

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Attorney-General what guidance is issued by the Lord Chancellor to the judiciary concerning references to the European Court of Justice under article 177 of the treaty of Rome.

The Attorney-General: No formal guidance is given by the Lord Chancellor, since the decision whether or not to

make a reference under article 177 is for the court. However, there is case law, both in the European Court of Justice and in English courts, on the considerations to be taken into account in deciding whether to make a reference and upon its formulation.

Football Hooliganism

Mr. Latham: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will make a statement on the implications for the Crown Prosecution Service of the recent collapse of trials relating to alleged hooliganism at football matches.

The Attorney-General: Recently, three trials involving allegations of football hooliganism have collapsed. These matters are now the subject of a full investigation and at this stage it would be improper to say anything, beyond what has been said in court, which might prejudice those investigations and pre-empt any decision that might have to be taken when the inquiries are complete.

It is important to make it clear that the matters which came to light in those trials could not have been discovered during the normal course of the CPS review of the evidence submitted by the police. Once the issue of authenticity of documents had been raised, full and detailed examinations for authenticity were carried out and the Crown prosecution service acted promptly and professionally in discharging its duty.

There has been consultation between the police and the CPS at the highest level on these matters and everything possible is being done to minimise the risk of cases collapsing for similar reasons in the future.

"Spycatcher"

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 9 June to the hon. Member for Walsall, North, what additional total costs have been incurred but not yet discharged relating to the legal action on "Spycatcher".

The Attorney-General: The costs which have been incurred but not yet discharged, accounts not yet having been delivered, are legal costs for the hearing before the High Court of Australia, for the hearing before the Court of Appeal of New Zealand and for the hearings before Mr. Justice Scott and the Court of Appeal in this country. In addition, an order for costs has been made against Her Majesty's Government in Australia and New Zealand, and a similar order is under appeal in this country.

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Charles Powell

Q45. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister for how many civil servants in her private office Mr. Charles Powell is responsible; and what are the functions of those civil servants who report to Mr. Charles Powell.

The Prime Minister: None.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the Economic Council the impact on consumers in the EEC of the level of food prices resulting from the operation of the common agricultural policy; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: This point was raised by me during discussions at the last European Council. The whole question of agricultural support will be raised at the economic summit.

Child Benefit

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) of 17 May, *Official Report*, column 798, if her commitment to maintain child benefit includes maintaining its value in real terms.

The Prime Minister: No. The level of child benefit is reviewed each year as part of the annual social security uprating exercise.

Civil Service Procedures

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what steps she is taking to improve Civil Service procedures so that in future they can manage the Government data network; and whether she has plans to raise salaries to ensure that the Civil Service can attract the necessary skills.

The Prime Minister: The service to be provided by the Government data network is to be managed and provided by Racal Data Networks Ltd. I am satisfied that the Departments which join the network, and the Treasury, can make satisfactory arrangements for their responsibilities in relation to the operation and development of the GDN.

Engagements

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with the President of Malawi. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Governors

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the next round of appointment of school governors to begin.

Mr. Dunn: The provisions of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 concerning the reconstitution of school governing bodies come into effect for county and maintained special schools from 1 September 1988 and for voluntary schools from 1 September 1989. Within that framework, it is for local education authorities to determine the most appropriate timing for holding governor elections and making appointments to the reconstituted governing bodies.

Free School Meals

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children in Tameside received free school meals in each of the last three years; what percentage of the school population they were; and what is the percentage for England and Wales.

Mr. Dunn: Statistics on the take-up of school meals in each of the local education authorities in England are available in the annual school meals census, reports on which are available in the Library. Information was not collected in 1985 because of teachers' industrial action.

Matters relating to Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the number of children who have lost entitlement to free school meals in the area covered by the Bradford local education authority as a result of the Social Security Act 1986; what is his estimate of the number of these children whose parents will receive compensation through the family credit scheme; how many were previously receiving free school meals through the passport provided by family income supplement; and how many were receiving them under the local education authority discretionary scheme.

Mr. Dunn: In October 1987, the latest date for which data are available, about 3,281 pupils (or 4·4 per cent.) in Bradford received free school meals because their families were in receipt of family income supplement; a further 4,563 (or 6·2 per cent.) received them under the authority's discretionary scheme. From 11 April the families of those in the former category receive a cash benefit of £2·55 per week throughout the year under the new family credit scheme, which will also cover many in the latter category. Children from families in receipt of, or who are themselves in receipt of, income support (the successor to supplementary benefit) will continue to be eligible for free school meals. Nationally it is estimated that about 100,000 more school age children will benefit under the family credit scheme compared with those who previously received free school meals under family income supplement and local education authority discretionary schemes combined.

Temporary Classrooms (Bradford)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the number of temporary classrooms in use in Bradford and the steps he intends to take to alleviate the situation.

Mr. Dunn: According to information supplied by the Bradford local education authority earlier this year, the authority maintains a total of 451 temporary units housing 567 classes.

It is for the authority to consider any action that may be necessary in respect of this accommodation.

Research Reactor (Grenoble)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report*, 18 May, column *455*, on the ILL multilateral high flux test reactor in Grenoble *(a)* what has been the country of origin of the fuel for the reactor for each year since the United Kingdom joined the partnership, *(b)* what recent problems have arisen with the fuelling of the reactor and with what effects for the research programme and *(c)* what safeguards arrangements apply to nuclear fuel in the reactor.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is as follows.

(a) All fuel material for the high flux beam reactor originates from the United States of America; fabrication of the material into fuel elements has been carried out either in France or in West Germany.

(b) West German companies have been unable recently to fulfil their contracts to supply finished fuel elements to ILL, and the work has been transferred to alternative contractors in France. This change has not, however, led to loss of research time; the programme for ILL remains as planned.

(c) The reactor is licensed under stringent French safety regulations, and is inspected regularly.

Rugby League

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy, when approving the content of physical education courses at teacher training colleges, to require the inclusion of rugby league on the curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

Mathematics and Science

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *238*, if he will publish a table showing for each local education authority the amount of certified expenditure for which specific grant was claimed for 1985-86 and 1986-87 on *(a)*

in-service training of primary teachers of mathematics and *(b)* in-service training of secondary teachers of mathematics;

(2) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *238*, if he will publish a table showing for each local education authority the amount of certified expenditure for which specific grant was claimed for 1985-86 and 1986-87 on *(a)* in-service training of primary teachers of science and *(b)* in-service training of secondary teachers of science.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This information is not collected centrally as LEAs are not required to apportion their grant claims for in-service training between primary and secondary school teachers.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn of 26 May, *Official Report*, columns *236-37*, if he will estimate the cost at 1988 prices, including the cost of supply cover, of providing in-service training of one term's full-time equivalent duration such that every primary school would then have at least one teacher with identifiable knowledge of mathematics beyond GCE O-level; and if he will state the assumptions made in arriving at such an estimate;

(2) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn of 26 May, *Official Report*, columns *236-37*, if he will estimate the cost at 1988 prices, including the cost of supply cover, of providing in-service training of one term's full-time equivalent duration such that every primary school would then have at least one teacher with identifiable knowledge of science beyond GCE O-level; and if he will state the assumptions made in arriving at such an estimate.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I do not accept the hon. Member's assumption that identifiable knowledge of a subject beyond a particular level is necessarily associated with any particular form of training provision.

Link Project

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about progress on the Link project.

Mr. Jackson: The Government attach great importance to the Link initiative. I am pleased to be able to announce a new Link collaborative research programme in personal communications. The need for the programme is prompted by the convergence of telecommunications and radio technologies, which is generating a new industry of personal communications. The number of subscribers is increasing, with greater demand for accessibility both indoors and outdoors—whether stationary or mobile—and internationally. There is therefore a need to extend the range of services available and to integrate private mobile radio, cellular and satellite mobile systems. Much basic work needs to be done to achieve this. It will be a key technological development for the 1990s. This will be jointly funded by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Science and Engineering Research Council. £6·35 million will be available for a £13 million programme over three years initially, which will allow industry and academia to collaborate on the pre-competitive research necessary to develop a new, higher capacity, third generation personal communications system.

This is the eighth Link programme area to be announced, bringing the total planned expenditure by Government and industry up to £103 million. The Government will meet up to half of the cost of Link programmes.

Departmental Offices (Darlington)

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to transfer any of his Department's work from its headquarters in London to the Darlington site.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am pleased to inform my hon. Friend that four areas of work are being transferred this year. This will result in the creation of 30 new jobs in Darlington, only two of which will be filled by staff transferring from London. This move will create additional employment in Darlington and will enrich the range of jobs available to staff on the Mowden hall site. There will be no redundancies in London as the existing staff will fill vacancies in headquarters. This transfer will save the Department an estimated £600,000 over the next 10 years representing a significant efficiency saving.

SCOTLAND

Labour Statistics

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the percentage of *(a)* female and *(b)* male unemployment in 1985, 1986 and 1987 in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The annual average rate of female unemployment (the number of unemployed female claimants as a percentage of the estimated total female working population), and the annual average rate of male unemployment (the number of unemployed male claimants as a percentage of the estimated total male working population), for each of the years 1985, 1986 and 1987 in Scotland was as follows:

	Female Percentage	*Male Percentage*
1985	10·7	16·7
1986	11·0	17·1
1987	10·1	17·0

Playgrounds

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children suffered accidents resulting in death or major injuries as the result of playing in playgrounds with concrete or tarmac surfaces for each year since 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many local authorities have playgrounds with concrete or tarmac surfaces.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Alex Pagett

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what, pursuant to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *343*, was the purpose of the meeting in London between Mr. Alex Pagett and his special adviser.

Mr. Rifkind: My answer of 16 May to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) made it clear that the purpose of Mr. Pagett's occasional visits to the Scottish Office in London was to liaise with Ministers and my special adviser.

Conservative Party (Visits)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will enumerate and list the occasions since June 1987 on which employees or other officials of the Conservative party have visited his Department; and for what purpose.

Mr. Rifkind: No record is kept of the occasions on which officials of the Conservative party have visited my Department. Such visits are for the purposes of liaison with Ministers and my special adviser.

Electricity Boards (Borrowing Powers)

Mr. Leadbitter: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under what powers borrowing is currently undertaken by the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board; what is their current outstanding debt; what claims on capital he expects over the next three years; and whether he plans to increase the boards' borrowing powers.

Mr. Lang: The powers under which the Scottish electricity boards may borrow are set out in section 27 of the Electricity (Scotland) Act 1979. Outstanding debt as at 3 June 1988 was £2,632 million. The boards' proposed expenditure on fixed assets over the next three years is as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	237
1989-90	210
1990-91	190

The Electricity (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Bill, increasing the limit on the amount the boards may borrow from £2,700 million to £3,000 million, is currently before the House.

Plant Variety Testing

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from small businesses or their representatives and farmers or farming organisations on the effects of the plant variety testing and seed certification review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Representations have been received from the United Kingdom Agricultural Supply Trade Association (Scottish Council) and the Scots Timothy Seed Growers' Association; the National Farmers' Union of Scotland has made its initial views known by means of a press release. These representations, and others received in response to the invitation to interested parties to comment on the report of the review, will be given careful consideration before decisions are taken by the Government on the report's recommendations.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration has been given to the effects in Scotland of the implementation of the conclusions of the review of plant variety testing and seed certification.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The report of the review of plant variety testing and seed certification systems has been made available to interested organisations with a request for comments to be submitted within a three month period ending on 15 July. After the end of the consultation period consideration will be given to the effects of implementing the report's recommendations in Scotland, and other relevant issues arising out of the report, in the light of the comments received.

YTS

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people on YTS in Scotland are in receipt of assistance towards accommodation costs from the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Lang: This information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total cost for the provision of assistance from the Manpower Services Commission towards accommodation costs for those on YTS in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: In the financial year 1987-88 a total of £1,553,353 was paid in living away from home allowance to YTS trainees in Scotland.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the criteria used by the Manpower Services Commission when making awards of assistance towards accommodation costs for persons on YTS in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Lodging allowance is payable to those YTS trainees not covered by a contract of employment when:

a. a suitable training place is not available within daily travelling distance;
b. travelling daily is less economic than lodging allowance; or
c. travel time is excessive or prohibitive.

Milk Quotas

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the reasons for the exclusion of dairy farmers in Cowal from the increase in milk quotas announced earlier in the current year for producers in remote areas in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The limited volume of reserve quota available for allocation at 1 April this year was distributed to producers in remote areas where reductions in milk supply had created particular structural difficulties for production, processing or manufacturing, where the milk produced was effectively island or land-locked and where the addition of small volumes of quota could achieve the greatest benefit. There was insufficient quota for a more widespread allocation to Cowal and other peripheral areas within the mainland quota regions.

Rating Reform

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if Her Majesty's Government will introduce an amendment to the Local Government Finance Bill to grant an 80 per cent. reduction in community charge liability for all student nurses in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* The 80 per cent. reduction applies to persons undertaking a full-time course of education as defined by the criteria set out in regulations. Where courses undertaken by student nurses meet these criteria, as is likely to be the case for basic courses leading to registration following the implementation of the Project 2000 proposals for reforming nurse education and training, student nurses will qualify for the reduction.

Fire Safety

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider assisting local authorities to prepare programmes for the installation of fire detectors and alarms in houses and to give grants to tenants and home owners for the installation of fire detectors and alarms; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* Local authorities will wish to give serious consideration to the benefits to be obtained from the installation of fire detectors and alarms in houses. As far as their own housing stock is concerned, it is for authorities themselves to programme expenditure on such work within the resources which have been made available and in the light of their other priorities. Councils may include such programmes of work in their housing capital programmes and we shall take note of any such proposals in considering future levels of capital allocations.

As far as the private sector is concerned, our consultation paper, "Private Housing Renewal: The Government's Proposals for Scotland", issued on 19 May, proposed a discretionary grant by local authorities which would cover such devices in houses in multiple occupation only. However, the Government would be prepared, dependent on the responses on this point, to consider extending this to all houses in the private sector.

Forestry

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why the annual target rate for afforestation in Britain is set at 33,000 hectares; on what basis this figure is calculated; and for how long this target is projected to continue.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 June 1988]:* In their forestry policy statement of 10 December 1980, the Government saw scope for new planting to continue at broadly the rate of the previous 25 years, which had averaged some 30,000 hectares a year. In his statement of 9 February 1987 on the rural economy, the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) indicated that the Government proposed an expansion of the new planting programme by the traditional forestry sector to 33,000 hectares a year, with encouragement being given to a higher proportion of planting on low ground of better quality. This programme was confirmed by my right hon. and learned Friend on 16 March 1988, *Official Report*, columns *585-87* and will be reviewed from time to time.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he gives to the Forestry Commission regarding the expected rate of return on forestry investment from their plantations and from the grant-aided private sector; and whether he proposes to issue new guidelines in the light of the National Audit Office report on forestry objectives and achievements and in the light of his Budget changes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* The Forestry Commission is set a target rate of return of 3 per cent. in real terms on its forest estate assets. This target rate is reviewed periodically but there are at present no plans to change it. No target is set for private sector planning since the decision on whether or not to plant is a commercial one for each owner to take, although the Commission would withhold grant-aid for any planting proposals which were not silviculturally sound or eventually capable of producing a crop of utilisable timber.

Scottish Homes

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to direct the proposed Scottish Homes organisation to assist tenants with proceedings in cases of dispute with new landlords who have acquired public sector housing stock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Clause 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Bill provides Scottish Homes with wide-ranging powers of assistance. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to direct Scottish Homes as to the use of those powers in relation to tenants involved in disputes with their landlords. We anticipate that Scottish Homes will use its discretion wisely in such circumstances.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make it his policy to direct the proposed Scottish Homes organisation to ensure that bodies which acquire public sector housing stock apply principles of rent setting which will keep rents within the reach of those in lower paid employment;

(2) if he will make it his policy to direct the proposed Scottish Homes organisation to ensure that bodies other than housing associations which acquire public sector housing stock will offer the same or similar guarantees to their tenants as those offered by housing associations;

(3) if he will make it his policy to direct the proposed Scottish Homes organisation to take effective steps to require bodies which acquire public sector housing stock to guarantee proper treatment for tenants; and if he will provide for sanctions to enforce such conditions;

(4) if he will make it his policy to direct the proposed Scottish Homes organisation to ensure that bodies which acquire public sector housing stock allocate houses to let to those who need them most, including disadvantaged groups;

(5) if he will make it his policy to direct the proposed Scottish Homes organisation to make approval of landlords seeking to acquire public sector housing stock conditional on undertakings given by such applicants;

(6) if he will make it his policy to direct the proposed Scottish Homes Organisation to take effective steps to require bodies which acquire public sector housing stock to retain such stock in the rented sector.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Where public sector tenants transfer to new landlords, Scottish Homes will be involved directly only where such transfers take place under the tenants' choice provisions in part III of the Housing (Scotland) Bill. Such transfers cannot proceed without the approval of the individual tenant who will wish to consider all aspects of the transfer and ensure that the transfer occurs only under conditions with which he is satisfied.

Where local authorities seek to make large-scale transfers of their stock to private sector landlords, including housing associations or housing co-operatives, the approval of my right hon. and learned Friend, not of Scottish Homes, will be required.

Scottish Homes' approval to landlords becoming receiving landlords for the purposes of tenants' choice will not be given lightly. As the hon. Member will recall from discussions during the Commons stages of the Bill, I have emphasised that Scottish Homes will be expected to ensure that landlords to which it gives approval are sound financially and have the management capability to provide a good service to tenants; and Scottish Homes will be expected also to monitor approved landlords' performance.

Scottish Homes will also have to approve first subsequent disposals of property transferred under the tenants' choice provisions in the Bill. In exercising this approval power, Scottish Homes will again take into account such factors as the suitability and viability of the proposed new landlord, and tenants' views.

No Scottish local authorities have as yet applied to my right hon. and learned Friend for approval to dispose of substantial proportions of their housing stock. However, he proposes later in the summer to issue guidelines on the general criteria which he expects to adopt in Scotland when considering applications for consent to any such disposals. As indicated in a letter of 8 June 1988 from the Scottish Development Department to chief executives of district and islands councils, the matters to which the Secretary of State may have regard in determining whether to give consent, and the conditions he may propose on consents, will include the extent to which the new landlord is independent of the disposing council, the extent to which the proposed disposal would result in the intending purchaser becoming the predominant or a substantial owner of housing to let in any area, the terms of the proposed disposal and any other matters which the Secretary of State considers relevant. In giving consent to a disposal, the Secretary of State may also give directions as to the purpose for which any receipt from the disposal is to be applied. I expect that the guidelines to be issued later on large scale disposals will be generally similar to those issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment last week, and will cover such matters as tenants' rights, allocation policies and rent levels, and the desirability of stock transferred continuing after a subsequent disposal to be available for renting at rents within the reach of those in lower-paid employment.

Housing

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to develop the case for a wider concept of social housing in Scotland in the context of Her Majesty's Government's policies concerning such a concept for Britain as a whole.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The creation of wider choice is one of the main aims of the Government's housing policies. There are accordingly many aspects of current policy towards housing in Scotland which contribute towards that aim. In relation to the provision of housing for rent we have emphasised the need to develop alternatives to traditional patterns of renting from local authorities. These include tenant co-operatives and housing associations. In addition, a range of other landlords may emerge in response to the Government's extension of tenants' rights through the tenants' choice proposals contained in part III of the Housing (Scotland) Bill.

My right hon. and learned Friend and I are furthering these developments through the Housing (Scotland) Bill, through increased funding for housing associations and co-operatives and through our general efforts to encourage diversity and choice.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to ensure that new owners of council housing under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Bill do not realise short-term profits through the use of these assets for purposes other than meeting urgent housing needs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under the tenants' choice provisions in part III of the Housing (Scotland) Bill, landlords will require Scottish Homes' approval before they can exercise the right conferred by that part to acquire a house from a public sector landlord. Scottish Homes will approve only reputable landlords under these powers. The approval of Scottish Homes will also be required to the first disposal of any property acquired by a landlord under the tenants' choice provisions. Scottish Homes will take into account all relevant information and local circumstances, including the local renting market, before deciding whether to approve such a disposal. These safeguards will effectively prevent abuses of the type suggested.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Companies (Research and Development)

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to require the annual accounts of companies to disclose expenditure on research and development.

Mr. Maude: As the Government's White Paper "Civil Research and Development" (Cm. 185 published in July 1987) made clear, we accept that there is a need to emphasise to shareholders and managers the value of research development. It is for companies to ensure that their bankers and major shareholders understand the advantage of R and D. The reporting of R and D expenditure in annual accounts will promote this understanding. The case for disclosure is, however, mainly relevant to public companies. I therefore very much

welcome the decision of the Accounting Standards Committee to recommend a standard which would require such companies to disclose expenditure on R and D. Such a standard, if adopted by the accountancy bodies and complied with by public companies, would be preferable to legislation on this subject. I therefore hope that the ASC's recommendation will be acted on promptly.

Single European Market

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what financial contribution from the European Economic Community his Department is receiving towards the cost of its advertising campaign to promote the single European market; and what proportion of the total cost is covered by such subsidies.

Mr. Maude: We are receiving no European Community funding for our single market campaign.

NEDC/NDC (Government Contribution)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the Government contribution to NEDC/NDC for the financial years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89; and what staff numbers this contribution supported.

Mr. Atkins: The following table sets out the Government's contribution to the funding of the NEDC/NDC and this in part supported the staff numbers also detailed as follows:

	Government Contribution £	[1] *Staff*
1986-87	868,000	25
1987-88	1,118,000	30
1988-89	1,165,000	47

[1] As at 31 March of the preceding financial year.

English Estates North (Expenditure)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what sums were spent by English Estates North on new factory building in the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88; what sum is projected for 1988-89; and how many square metres of additional factory space become available in each year.

Mr. Atkins: Expenditure by English Estates on behalf of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Rural Development Commission in the north-east and Cumbria in the last two financial years was as follows:

1986-87
Expenditure £19·1 million
Floorspace completed 19,384 square metres

1987-88
Expenditure £25·0 million
Floorspace completed 75,335 square metres

Estimated figures for 1988-89 are as follows:
Expenditure £18·0 million
Floorspace completed 20,000 square metres

Note.
The bulk of expenditure for a particular project often falls in a different year from the one in which the project is completed. There is no direct correlation therefore, between the level of expenditure and the volume of floor space completed in a financial year.

Insurance (EC Proposals)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the effects of the European Economic Commission proposals for the liberalisation of insurance services, in respect of *(a)* the separate proposals for the covering of mass and large risks and *(b)* the proposal for member states to prohibit an undertaking from calling upon its establishment in the country of the risk to carry out the provision of services in that same state.

Mr. Maude: We hope that the non-life insurance services directive, when it is implemented, will offer significant new opportunities for United Kingdom insurers in the European Community market. Because of the different regimes laid down in the directive for large and mass risks it is likely that most, if not all, of these opportunities will lie in the former area. Insurance companies will not be prohibited from carrying out business on a services basis in a member state where they already have an establishment where this business relates to large risks. Member states may impose restrictions in the case of mass risks where the local establishment of the undertaking is itself authorised to underwrite the class of risks in question.

Company Searches

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were *(a)* the costs and the revenue figures for public search facilities at the companies registration offices and *(b)* the costs and the revenue figures for services to companies for the six months periods from 1 July to 31 December for 1986 and 1987, and estimated for 1988, excluding those undertaken on behalf of Government and other public authorities.

Mr. Maude: Provisional figures for 1987-88, calculated on a memorandum trading account basis, show that costs of public search facilities at the companies registration offices were £8·1 million. Revenue amounted to £3·8 million. Information about services to companies or any other sector of users is not separately available.

Radio Frequencies (Defence Use)

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has received the report from the independent committee reviewing defence use of the radio frequency spectrum.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry have received from Sir Kenneth Corfield, the chairman of the committee undertaking stage 1 of the review, the report dealing with defence use of the radio frequency spectrum from 470 MHz to 3400 MHz. Because of the nature of the evidence submitted, the report is confidential but in view of the public interest in the review, we intend to publish an abridged version shortly.

The recommendations of the report will be carefully considered by the Government and the response will be made known as soon as possible.

Insurance Intermediaries

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the regulation of general insurance intermediaries.

Mr. Maude: In March 1986, my predecessor undertook to promote talks among interested parties aimed at improving self-regulation of the sale of general (non-life) insurance. I am grateful to the various interested parties who participated in the talks.

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has today outlined proposed improvements in both its code of practice for the selling of general insurance by intermediaries other than registered brokers and in its procedures for monitoring enforcement of the code. The improvements involve, among other things, the disclosure to the consumer of an intermediary's status as the agent of the insurance companies or as the agent of the consumer; a requirement that independent intermediaries take out adequate professional indemnity insurance; and the provision to policyholders of information on the procedures for making complaints. The ABI will also establish two committees to monitor the self-regulating system, one an ABI committee to deal with day-to-day enforcement and the other a wider committee with an independent chairman and four other independent members to report annually on the system and to review its operation after three years.

I warmly welcome these proposals. There are details still to be filled in, but when the system is in operation, I believe it will offer a substantial improvement in consumer protection. It will also bring the requirements placed on non-registered intermediaries closer to the existing requirements on registered brokers.

It is up to the ABI to enforce its code effectively. It will need to show that, as well as being tough on paper, it is tough in practice. I shall be keeping the effectiveness of the system under close review. When the monitoring committee makes its report after three years, I shall be looking again at how the regulation of the selling of general insurance is operating.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) whether his Department was warned by the National Association of Security Dealers and Investment Managers about possible illegal trading by the Barlow Clowes group of companies prior to issuing a securities licence to it; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when his Department first knew that Barlow Clowes was operating in a manner likely to give concern to investors;

(3) whether his Department made any inquiry into the claims made by Barlow Clowes to investors that the income from funds invested in Gibraltar could be paid to them tax free.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State has today appointed Sir Godfray Le Quesne QC to carry out an investigation into the facts of his Department's handling of matters relating to the Barlow Clowes Group. He has the following terms of reference:

"On behalf of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to investigate and establish the facts relating to the exercise by the Department of Trade and Industry since 1 January 1983 of its regulatory functions in respect of the carrying on of investment business by Barlow Clowes & Partners (a partnership) and its successors, Barlow Clowes & Partners Limited and Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Limited, and, if appropriate, by Barlow Clowes International Limited, with particular reference to the need for licences under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958, the granting and renewal of such licences and the monitoring of the activities of the licence holder; and to provide a report as soon as possible to the Secretary of State."

NORTHERN IRELAND

Vehicle Testing (Waiting Times)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the present approximate waiting time for an MoT test at *(a)* Downpatrick, *(b)* Newtownards and *(c)* Belfast; and what proposals he has to ensure that the waiting time does not vary between these three locations.

Mr. Needham: The waiting times for private car test appointments at Downpatrick, Newtownards and Belfast vehicle inspection centres on 3 June 1988 were five, eight and a half and eight weeks, respectively. These present extended waiting times reflect the demand in each of these locations and all three centres are working at maximum capacity. It is not possible to ensure similar waiting times at all centres when there are different levels of demand but measures have been taken, with the agreement of car owners, to divert tests to less busy centres.

Strip Searches

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry, in April and May, giving the number of persons involved and number of times each person was searched; if any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and what were the reasons for the search under each of the following headings *(a)* making a remand appearance at a trial, *(b)* attending trial, *(c)* inter-prison visit or *(d)* other reasons.

Mr. Stanley: The information requested is as follows:

	April	*May*
Number of searches		
Total number of searches carried out	18	30
Total number of inmates searched	14	22
Number of prisoners searched once	10	14
Number of prisoners searched twice	4	8
Number of prisoners searched more than twice	—	—
Reasons for search		
First admission on remand/awaiting trial	3	8
First admission on sentence/final discharge	15	14
Attending remand court	—	—
Attending trial	—	—
Inter-prison visits	—	2
Pre-release home leave scheme	—	6
Visits to outside hospital	—	—
After a visit	—	—

DEFENCE

Military Lands Act 1892

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 18 May, for what purposes the 17 byelaws made under the Military Lands Act 1892 were made in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The purpose of all byelaws made under the Military Lands Act 1892 over land belonging to the Secretary of State for Defence is to regulate the use of that land for the purposes for which it is appropriated and for securing the public against danger arising from that use.

Polaris

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communication with the Soviet authorities took place prior to the recent surface deployment together of three out of the four submarines in the United Kingdom's Polaris force, depicted on the cover of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988".

Mr. Ian Stewart: None.

Plutonium (Exports)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the manpower implications of the use of members of the armed forces in assisting British Nuclear Fuels plc in the export of plutonium to Japan.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are no current plans for members of the armed forces to assist in the export of plutonium to Japan.

Uranium and Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy in subsequent Defence Estimates to include details of requirements of *(a)* uranium for submarine propulsion, *(b)* uranium for tank protection armour, *(c)* uranium for anti-tank shells, *(d)* uranium for warhead production and *(e)* plutonium for warhead production in terms of quantities and planned sources of procurement.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Nuclear Tests

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy in future defence Estimates to give details of planned *(a)* United Kingdom nuclear warhead tests and *(b)* United Kingdom-United States joint nuclear warhead tests at the Nevada test site.

Mr. Sainsbury: All tests of United Kingdom nuclear devices at the Nevada test site are conducted jointly by the United States and United Kingdom. It continues to be the policy of Her Majesty's Government not to announce these tests in advance.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contingency plans, and in what locations, exist for the test detonation of United Kingdom nuclear warheads in somewhere other than the continental United States in the event of legislation currently in Congress to halt United States nuclear testing being passed into United States law.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, following the agreement between the United States of America and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the Moscow summit to give prior notification of their respective nuclear tests and yields, the United Kingdom will now adopt the same policy for its nuclear warhead tests in Nevada.

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken; the agreement for notification reached at the Moscow summit was in respect of flight tests of ballistic missiles, not nuclear tests.

Trident

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on progress in the A-90 plutonium processing and fabrication facility at atomic weapons research establishment Aldermaston in support of the Trident warhead programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Members for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) and Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 26 April.

Drigg Dump Site

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution has been made by his Department, towards the capping of the near-surface trenches of the Drigg dump site near Sellafield, containing wastes arising from nuclear processing for defence programmes.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence, in common with all users of the Drigg depository, pays British Nuclear Fuels plc a charge per unit volume of waste deposited. These charges, which are a matter for commercial decision by BNFL, cover all aspects of site services.

Nuclear Warheads

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley), *Official Report*, 24 May, column 181, what has been done with the nuclear materials contained in the more than 2,000 warheads removed unilaterally, to which he makes reference.

Mr. Ian Stewart: All the 2,400 warheads removed from NATO's land-based nuclear stockpile in Europe since 1979 were wholly the property of the United States Government; the disposal of the nuclear materials contained in them is therefore a matter for the United States Government.

Cruise Missiles

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), *Official Report*, 24 May, column 181, what is the basis for the statement that the Soviet Union is planning shortly to launch two types of sea-launched cruise missiles; and what protective measures are being taken against this launch.

Mr. Ian Stewart: As paragraph 615 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988 explains, the Soviet Union is

developing a range of strategic cruise missiles for launch from ground, sea and air platforms. As part of this, the SS-N-21 submarine-launched land-attack cruise missile is now believed to be operational and the longer-range SS-NX-24 is at an advanced stage of development. For security reasons I am not able to comment on sources of information. We shall continue to maintain the minimum level and range of forces necessary to deter aggression of all kinds effectively.

Nuclear Weapons (Accidents)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), *Official Report*, 24 May, column 161, if he will give details of the date of entry into force and the lifetime of the arrangement covering the roles and responsibilities of the United Kingdom and United State authorities in the event of an accident on United Kingdom territory involving a United States nuclear weapon.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Arrangements covering the roles and responsibilities of the United Kingdom and United States authorities in the event of an accident involving a United States nuclear weapon have evolved over many years, by a process of continuous dialogue and review. The current arrangement was signed last year and is without time limit.

Psychological Operations

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 6 May, *Official Report*,column *622*, to the hon. Member for Brent, East concerning psychological operations, what has been his policy since 1982 towards holding courses on psychological warfare and psychological operations at the joint intelligence centre.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* I have nothing to add to the answer I gave on 6 May 1988 at column *622*.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations have been received from 1971 to the current date from the British Institution of Professional Civil Servants as to information concerning psychological operations warfare principles and techniques.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* Correspondence from the Institution of Professional Civil Servants is not held centrally. I also refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 11 December 1987 at column *312*.

Army Information Services

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 6 May, *Official Report*, column *616*, to the hon. Member for Brent, East concerning the Army information services, how many officials were interviewed about these matters.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* I have nothing further to add to the answer I gave the hon. Gentleman on that occasion.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the precise duties and responsibilities of the Army information services in Northern Ireland; and when they were last altered.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* The role of the Army information services in Northern Ireland is to represent the Army (including the UDR, TA and Cadets) in Northern Ireland in all matters relating to publicity and the media.

Clockwork Orange

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the reply of 6 May, *Official Report*, column *623*, to the hon. Member for Brent, East, who initiated the project known as Clockwork Orange; and for what purpose.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* I understand that the term "Clockwork Orange" has been used to refer to certain allegations about illegal activities in Northern Ireland. I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 6 May 1988 at column *623*.

Low-level Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what representations he has received from the West German authorities in 1988 requesting an increase in low-flying training flights over the United Kingdom by West German military aircraft;

(2) what recent communications have been received from the Federal German authorities requesting his Department to examine the feasibility of ceasing Royal Air Force low-level training flights over the Federal Republic of Germany; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what restrictions he has asked the United States Air Force to impose on flights of its F-16 aircraft over the United Kingdom pending the outcome of investigations into the two recent United States Air Force F-16 crashes in West Germany.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 May 1988]:* None.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reduction has taken place in the number of low-flying training sorties conducted by the Royal Air Force over the Federal Republic of Germany since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 May 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) on 7 June at columns *542-43*. The reduction since 1984 is approximately 15 per cent.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Safety

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any current plans to arrange the placing of a research contract with the European Proliferation Information Centre to make an independent evaluation of the present adequacy of nuclear safeguards in European Economic Community member states.

Mrs. Chalker: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply to the

hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report*, 23 May, column *26*, if he will make a statement on the official findings of the European Commission investigation into the transfer of nuclear materials within the European Community; and whether he is satisfied with the conclusions.

Mr. Mellor: The result of the European Commission investigation has not yet been published. However, I understand that it found no evidence of any breach of the safeguards regime and no serious irregularities in the shipment of radioactive waste. It has identified some management failures at the Belgian reprocessing plant at Mol involving the accounting and monitoring of radioactive waste. I am satisfied that the investigation as thorough.

Signals Stations

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the future of the composite signals organisation station, Hawklaw.

Mr. Mellor: As GCHQ management has already made clear to the staff concerned, the station will close on 12 August, although most of the staff will in fact leave on 31 July. Dismantling work is likely to continue until the end of September.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his plans for the replacement of manned composite signals organisation stations by unmanned signal intelligence receiver installations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It is not our practice to comment on matters relating to the security and intelligence services.

Refugee Camp, Hong Kong

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about his recent visit to the Vietnamese refugee camp in Hong Kong.

Sir Geoffrey Howe *[pursuant to the reply, 9 June 1988, c. 655]:* The recent sharp increase in the rate of arrivals in Hong Kong of boat people from Vietnam has been a matter of very great concern to the British and Hong Kong Governments. The number of Vietnamese boat people in camps in Hong Kong now stands at over 16,000, the highest level since 1980 and double the number last year. The flow of arrivals shows no sign of abating.

The Hong Kong Government have acted with commendable efficiency to establish emergency facilities to accommodate the recent influx. But their resources are stretched to the limit. I visited these facilities at the end of last month. I came to the conclusion that the burden was becoming intolerable and that things could not go on as they were.

The overwhelming majority of the new arrivals are ethnic Vietnamese. Most come from North Vietnam and have no family links outside Vietnam. They cannot be described as political refugees as defined by UNHCR. Their prospects for resettlement in the West are virtually non-existent. It was clear to me that Hong Kong could no longer offer itself to this stream of people as a transit point to a future that does not and cannot exist.

In view of the rapidly deteriorating situation, Her Majesty's Government have been considering urgently with the Hong Kong Government what should be done. The Hong Kong Government announced earlier today, with the endorsement of Her Majesty's Government, that with effect from 16 June a new policy will be introduced. From then on, the great majority of boat people arriving in Hong Kong will be detained as illegal immigrants, pending their eventual return to Vietnam. Only those few who can show that they are genuine refugees will be treated as such and will be accommodated in Hong Kong to await resettlement. All arrivals will be screened on the basis of UNHCR criteria, according to procedures which UNHCR will be able to monitor.

In taking this decision we are sending the clearest possible signal to those in Vietnam who may have purely economic motives for contemplating unauthorised departure by sea. They must understand that this is a voyage that can only lead to detention in Hong Kong and ultimately to their return to their own country.

Her Majesty's Government are pressing for arrangements with the Vietnamese authorities to enable those who are found not to be genuine refugees to be sent back to Vietnam under suitable guarantees about the treatment they will receive. In New York on 7 June I urged the Vietnamese Foreign Minister to take steps to reduce unauthorised departures and to take back those who have no prospect of resettlement elsewhere. I saw the Chinese and Soviet Foreign Ministers in New York and stressed the gravity of the problem of the boat people with both of them.

This is not, of course, a complete solution. There is a limit to what can be done until economic policies, official attitudes and other circumstances change in Vietnam itself. We are now in touch with all the resettlement countries, UNHCR and the countries of the region about the change of policy and the way forward. We are impressing upon the international community the need for concerted action to deal with the problem at source and to find a lasting solution to this human tragedy. Her Majesty's Government will devote their unceasing efforts to this end.

EMPLOYMENT

Southwark

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of job vacancies currently available in the London borough of Southwark.

Mr. Lee: On 8 April 1988, the latest available date, the number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres covering an area closely corresponding to the London borough of Southwark was 574. Vacancies at jobcentres do not represent the total number of vacancies in the economy. Estimates suggest that nationally about a third of all vacancies are notified to jobcentres, but equivalent local estimates are not available.

Skill Shortages

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he intends to take to ease skill shortages in the north-west.

Mr. Cope: Our training programmes support employer efforts to train to meet their growing skill needs. In

1987-88 in the north-west region the Training Commission spent over £170 million on training for over 110,000 people. From September the £1·5 billion employment training programme will provide training for up to 600,000 unemployed adults nationally. I hope that employers in the north-west will take full advantage of this major new opportunity to meet their demand for skills. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State also announced recently our intention to extend Government support to a second year of local employer networks, bringing total spending to over £5 million, to involve employers throughout the country including the north-west in local training provision.

Trade Union Ballots

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to how many trade union ballots have been held under the Employment Act 1982; and what percentage were in favour, and what against.

Mr. Nicholls: The Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service is aware of 124 closed shop ballots which have taken place, the majority of which have been held since the requirements of the Employment Act 1982 came into force. Seventy-eight per cent. of the ballots were in favour of the agreement, 18 per cent. were not in favour and in 4 per cent. of the ballots the results are unknown.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much has been allocated from the European social fund towards the cost of employment training on an annual basis; and what amount was requested by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Cope: For 1987, the latest year for which figures are available, the European Commission allocated £435,562,257 from the European social fund to applications submitted by Her Majesty's Government for the United Kingdom for employment and training measures. This compares with a bid of £1,105,391,991 for these measures.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether unemployed claimants who leave the proposed employment training scheme before the end of their agreed training period and sign on again as unemployed will be referred to adjudication officers for assessment.

Mr. Nicholls: All those who make a fresh claim to benefit, including people who have left employment training without completing their action plan, are required to be available for work, and may be referred to an adjudication officer if their availability is in doubt. Leaving the programme early will not by itself be grounds for referral to an adjudication officer.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment under what circumstances those who leave the employment training scheme will be subject to benefit penalties for leaving the scheme without good reason.

Mr. Nicholls: People who leave employment training without completing their training will not be liable to benefit penalties for that reason alone.

Equal Pay

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *498*, when he expects to have completed his consideration of the House of Lords decision in Hayward v Cammell Laird Shipbuilders, relating to equal pay for work of equal value, with a view to deciding whether further legislation is required.

Mr. Nicholls: I cannot make any predictions. Careful consideration needs to be given to all the potential effects of the decision.

Wages Inspectors

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many (i) factory and (ii) wages inspectors were employed in Wales *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* On 1 June 1979 there were 33 factory and seven wages inspectors employed in Wales. On 1 June 1987, the numbers were 24 and three respectively. The Health and Safety Executive plans to increase factory inspector numbers nationally during 1988-89 and recruitment is currently underway. I consider the number of wages inspectors to be adequate.

JTS Allowance

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing how many people dependent on supplementary benefit received the old job training scheme allowance; and what proportion of these had dependent children, broken down by the sex of the adult.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* The information requested is not available. Allowances of trainees on the "old" job training scheme are not related to benefit entitlement. Figures concerning the benefit position of trainees are not therefore gathered. As separate allowances are not paid for child dependants, no records are kept of the numbers of trainees with dependent children.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the latest figures of the number of people claiming the old job training scheme allowance, *(b)* how many of these had dependent children and *(c)* how many were lone parents, breaking each category down by the sex of the adult.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* The number of people currently receiving the old job training scheme allowance is approximately 7,000. As separate allowances are not paid for child dependents, no records are kept of the numbers of trainees with dependent children or of the number who have the status of lone parents.

TRANSPORT

East Coast Motorway

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the

construction of an east coast motorway, extending the M11 northwards to Newcastle; what studies have been undertaken by his Department to establish the feasibility of such a motorway; and what priority he attaches to achieving a new north-south road link.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received a number of representations about the provision of an east coast motorway. We have no plans for the construction of such a route nor have studies been undertaken into its feasibility. Our aim is to ensure that the trunk road network continues to meet current and future traffic needs. There is a large number of schemes in the programme for improving the existing routes.

British Rail

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman and board members of British Rail, he will seek clarification of the amendment of rule 1.14 of the British Rail rule book in so far as it relates to trade union rights and the freedom of employees to express views on safety and other matters in public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. This is a management matter for the Railways Board.

Heathrow (Passengers' Cameras)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for how long it has been necessary for outgoing passengers' cameras at Heathrow, which are not submitted for X-ray examination, to be emptied of film for manual inspection; why this requirement was imposed,; what information he has as to what other British airports and which other countries require this procedure; what international agreement has taken place on this procedure; and what discussions were held with *(a)* the National Union of Journalists and *(b)* the film industry before the requirement was imposed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The United Kingdom aviation security programme, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State administers, has required for many years that security staff at United Kingdom airports must ensure that all items of passengers' hand luggage are either screened by X-ray machine or examined physically to the extent necessary to satisfy the staff that the article does not contain any weapons or explosive. This is entirely in accordance with the international aviation security standards drawn up by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. In some cases it may be necessary for the staff to open the film compartment of cameras in order to meet this requirement. The requirement is such a fundamental part of the aviation security programme that it is unlikely to be possible to relax it significantly in the near future. I am, however, prepared to consider any proposals which interested organisations might have for ways to reduce the likelihood of it being necessary for the security staff to open the film compartment in cameras in order to meet the requirement.

Roads (Traffic Growth)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his forecast of annual traffic growth on *(a)* the national trunk road system and *(b)* motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Forecasts are made for road traffic generally and for individual motorway and trunk road schemes where appropriate. The forecasts of growth in traffic on all roads were given to my hon. Friend in my answer of 11 May 1988 at column *160*.

Traffic Forecasts

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what he estimates traffic levels to be by the year 2000; and what steps have been taken to ensure that the road system will absorb the additional growth.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies I gave him on 11 May 1988 at columns *160-61*.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the criteria on which traffic forecasts are based.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: National traffic forecasts are based on relationships between traffic and GDP, fuel prices and changes in people's behaviour over time. They are prepared on high and low assumptions about future growth in GDP and fuel prices, to reflect the uncertainty in these factors.

Local traffic forecasts are prepared where necessary for use in the appraisal of specific schemes. They allow for expected local changes in car ownership, population and economic activity.

Ferries (Stability)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many ferries have had their stability recalculated as a result of his Department's safety review; and if he will list them by class and by age.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department called for damage stability data relating to 62 United Kingdom registered ro/ro passenger ships built before 1980 to be provided not later than April this year. This information is now being analysed.

Roads

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what ways he is considering of encouraging county councils to spend more money on roads; and if he will consider making grants directly to district councils, particularly to those cities which were county boroughs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: If, having examined local highway authorities' 1988-89 maintenance budgets, we decide that measures are required beyond further exhortation we will be examining possible solutions with the local authority associations concerned. We have no plans to pay grant for road maintenance direct to non-metropolitan district councils.

Roads and Footpaths

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to take action in relation to those county councils which do not allocate sufficient funds for the proper maintenance of highways and pavements.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have frequently urged local highway authorities to spend up to the overall provision

for highway maintenance. We are currently examining their 1988-89 budgets to see whether further action is needed.

The Audit Commission report on highway maintenance recommends that allocations from highway authorities to their agents should be based on an authoritywide assessment of need linked to overall policy. We are encouraging authorities to proceed on this basis.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider a review of agency arrangements, along the lines suggested by the Audit Commission, in order to assist district councils in the proper maintenance of roads and footpaths in their areas.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Audit Commission recommended that each highway authority and its agents should review their arrangements. We have made it clear that the Department fully support this. We shall be monitoring implementation in concert with the local authority associations.

Highway Authorities

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the differing priorities and needs of those shire counties which contain within their boundaries a large urban concentration or former county borough, he will review the policy of using counties as highway authorities, and districts as their agents.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The Audit Commission report on highway agency arrangements (September 1987) found that county councils are, in general, better placed than the vast majority of districts to exercise the full range of highways authority responsibilities. It recommended that the way forward was to place agency arrangements on a more systematic and businesslike footing. The arrangements made in particular cases can and should reflect the capabilities of individual district councils.

Cyclists (Personal Stereo Equipment)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide figures, for the most recent years for which they are available, showing the number of road accidents involving cyclists who were using personal stereo equipment at the time of the accident.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The STATS 19 accident report form used by the police does not record whether cyclists were using personal stereos.

Plutonium Exports

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice was offered to British Nuclear Fuels plc with regard to which airport should be used from which to fly plutonium exports to Japan; and what matters were considered.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No such advice has been given. The decision will be for British Nuclear Fuels plc, whose arrangements will have to comply with the international regulations.

Nuclear Materials

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what specific arrangements currently exist for the recovery of spent nuclear fuel casks and containers from the Channel following an accident and subsequent sinking of a cargo ferry carrying such radioactive assignment to or from United Kingdom ports.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department's marine pollution control unit maintains a national contingency plan for combatting pollution or threatened pollution arising from spillages at sea of oil or other hazardous substances following an accident.

In any incident involving nuclear fuel casks and containers it would first be for the owners of the ship to consider commercial salvage of the vessel and its cargo. The marine pollution control unit would be closely involved in the establishment of any such salvage operation and would arrange for the provision of radioactive expertise and the monitoring of any consequential environmental hazards. Within United Kingdom territorial waters, the Secretary of State's statutory powers of intervention would, if necessary, be used to give directions to the owners of the vessel or to the salvors on the action to be taken to prevent pollution. If such directions proved inadequate, those powers could be used to allow direct action to be taken which could extend to taking control of the ship and recovering its cargo.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what safety arrangements exist for the extinguishing of fires on cross-Channel cargo ferries by emergency teams under severe storm or hurricane conditions.

Mr. David Mitchell: There are no special arrangements for use only in storm or hurricane conditions, and fires on cargo ferries would be dealt with in the same way, whatever the weather conditions. In cargo spaces the fixed fire extinguishing systems required by legislation would be used if emergency teams using hand-held equipment thought conditions to be hazardous.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to arrange a special emergency planning exercise to evaluate the capability of presently positioned safety and fire fighting teams to put out an extreme fire on board a cross-Channel cargo ferry carrying spent nuclear fuel to or from the United Kingdom, before the fire exceeds the fireproof package limits for the spent fuel casks; and if he will further invite his French and Belgian counterparts to co-operate on such an exercise.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. Adequate and well-rehearsed arrangements already exist to cope with maritime disasters, including fires on ships, and which are exercised on a regular basis. In the case of the Dover strait the contingency plan and exercises involve the appropriate French and Belgian authorities.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the seaworthiness and security of the SNCF-owned Channel cargo ferries, St. Germain, St. Eloi, Seaway and Seafreight Highway for the transport of spent nuclear fuel to Channel ports in the United Kingdom under international arrangements.

Mr. David Mitchell: There are no regulations either international or national which require ships carrying spent nuclear fuels to be specially constructed or equipped.

Regulations require that the cargo is shipped in containers designed and tested to meet the stringent standards laid down by the International Atomic Energy Agency. These containment standards apply to all modes of transport including rail, road, air and sea. Other regulations specify the number and location of packages containing radioactive material permitted on board ships.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if any instances have come to his attention of cross-Channel ferries carrying toxic or radioactive materials to or from the United Kingdom without the appropriate carriage certification.

Mr. David Mitchell: As far as toxic material is concerned, I know of one consignment in recent months as being incorrectly declared. This matter is being followed up.

With regard to the transport of radioactive material, I am aware of no instances where such shipments have been made without the required certificates of approval.

New Road Schemes

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on his Department's criteria for assessing the economic performance of new road schemes coming forward from 1988-89 onwards for *(a)* East Anglia and *(b)* Suffolk and Norfolk.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's criteria for assessing the economic performance of all new trunk road schemes are based on the Department's computer system of cost benefit analysis, COBA9, which compares the costs of road schemes with the benefits to road users from time savings, reductions in the number and severity of accidents, and changes in vehicle operating costs.

Airports (Fees)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to (i) the landing fee, (ii) the navigation fee and (iii) passenger taxes for *(a)* Glasgow, *(b)* Edinburgh, *(c)* Heathrow and *(d)* Gatwick airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has is as follows:

(i) Landing charges (from 1 April 1988)

Domestic and international (charge based on aircraft maximum total weight authorised)	*Glasgow*	*Edinburgh*
Not exceeding 50 metric tonnes	£2·73 per metric tonne or part thereof	£2·73 per metric tonne or part thereof
Over 50 metric tonnes	£136·50 plus £5·45 per metric tonne or part thereof in excess of 50 metric tonnes	£136·50 plus £5·45 per metric tonne or part thereof in excess of 50 metric tonnes

Domestic and International (Charge based on aircraft maximum total weight authorised)	*Heathrow*		*Gatwick*		
	[1]*Peak* £	*Off-peak* £	[1]*Peak* £	*Shoulder* £	*Off-peak* £
Helicopters	25	25	25	25	25
Fixed wing aircraft not exceeding 16 metric tonnes	290	50	135	60	48
Fixed wing aircraft over 16 metric tonnes but not exceeding 50 metric tonnes	290	100	143	75	50
Aircraft over 50 metric tonnes	290	175	143+1·40[2]	75+1·30[2]	50+0·75[2]

[1] Peak period for charge on landing
Heathrow: 0700-0959 and 1700-1859 GMT, 1 April to 31 October.
Gatwick: 0600-1059 and 1700-1859 GMT, 1 April to 31 October.
[2] Per metric tonne or part thereof in excess of 50 metric tonnes.

ii) *Navigation Service Charges* (from 1 April 1988)
Charges based on maximum total weight authorised

Standard Charge

Aerodrome	*International per tonne*	*Domestic per tonne*
Glasgow	£2·85	£2·40
Edinburgh	£3·85	£3·25

	International		*Domestic*	
	First 100 tonnes	*Additional Tonnes*	*First 100 tonnes*	*Additional Tonnes*
Heathrow	£1·40	£0·60	£1·18	£0·49
Gatwick	£1·40	£0·60	£1·18	£0·49

Minimum Charge
£10 per landing on international flights.
£5 per other flights.
Source: Civil Aviation (Navigation Services Charges) (Third Amendment) Regulations 1988 SI 1988 No 388.
These charges are subject to detailed conditions set out in SI 1986/403 as amended by SI 1986/2170, 1987/269 and 1988/388.

(iii) Passenger charges (from 1 April 1988)

Charge payable per terminal departing passenger.

Glasgow and Edinburgh

Applies to all aircraft with a maximum authorised weight in excess of 2 metric tonnes.

	Domestic £	*International* £
Over 2 metric tonnes not exceeding 5 metric tonnes	5·80	7·80
Over 5 metric tonnes, not exceeding 10 metric tonnes	5·80	8·50
Over 10 metric tonnes	6·05	£8·50 off peak
Glasgow		[1]£10·50 peak
Edinburgh		[1]9·75 peak

[1] Peak charges apply at Glasgow and Edinburgh to international air transport movements over 10 metric tonnes departing Friday to Sunday inclusive, 1 May to 30 September 1988.

Heathrow and Gatwick
(Applies to all aircraft operated with a maximum authorised weight in excess of 5 metric tonnes)

Airport and time period	*Domestic* £	*International* £
Heathrow		
Peak: 1 April-31 October	5·50	11·05
Peak: 1 November-31 March	5·00	n/a
Off-peak	1·45	1·45
Gatwick		
Peak	4·70	9·52
Off-peak	1·45	1·45

Time periods for peak and off-peak passenger charges

	Peak	*Off-peak*
Heathrow		
Domestic	1 April-31 October Departures 0700-0829 GMT and 1830-1959 GMT (Monday to Friday only) 1 November-31 March Departures 0800-0929 GMT and 1930-2059 GMT (Monday to Friday only)	1 April-31 October All other times 1 November-31 March All other times
International	1 April-31 October Departures 0900-1529 GMT	1 April-31 October All other times and 1 November-31 March
Gatwick	1 June-30 September Departures 0001 GMT Thursday through to 2059 GMT Monday	1 June-30 September All other times and 1 October-31 May

Source of (i) landing charges; and (iii) passenger charges: BAA Scottish Airports Ltd. and BAA Heathrow and Gatwick Airports Ltd. Conditions of Use.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the level of landing and other charges at *(a)* Glasgow, *(b)* Edinburgh and *(c)* Gatwick airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Landing and related airport charges at these airports are matters for BAA plc subject to compliance with the United Kingdom's international obligations in respect of such charges. Navigation service charges at these airports are set at a level sufficient to recover the costs of the Civil Aviation Authority in providing the services, including an average rate of return of 7 per cent. on the relevant net assets, on a current cost basis.

Car Registration E167 HLK

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to whom the car with registration number E167 HLK is registered.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* Information of this kind may by law only be provided to a law enforcement agency, or, on payment of the prescribed fee, to a person who can show reasonable cause for having it. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Dartford Tunnel

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next proposes to meet the general manager of the Dartford tunnel joint committee; and if on that occasion he will discuss the case to escort tankers through the tunnel in view of the delay this occasions to other traffic.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[pursuant to his reply, 7 June 1988, c. 455-56]:* The answer should have included the following end paragraph.

"The need for escorting will continue in view of the large number of such vehicles which use the tunnels. The Health and Safety Executive supports this view. But the provision of a new bridge, which the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Bill would authorise, will further reduce delays from this cause to northbound traffic and eliminate them altogether for southbound traffic."

THE ARTS

Theatres Trust

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister for the Arts what grant was given by his Department to the Theatres trust in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement concerning the future of the trust.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* The figures of support from my Department are as follows:

	£s
1983-84	11,000
1984-85	11,000
1985-86	11,000
1986-87	5,000
1987-88	nil

From April 1986 the Theatres trust has been in receipt of rental income from the freeholds of the Lyric and the Garrick theatres, which were vested in it following abolition of the GLC. It is my hope that using this and other income it will continue to be self-financing.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Brewery Tenancy Agreements

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is contemplating in view of the representations he has received from the National Licensed Victuallers Association regarding brewery tenancy agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement outlining the nature of the recent representations which he has received from the National Licensed Victuallers Association about the code of practice on tenants' security; and if he will indicate what action he is taking as a result of this approach.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The NLVA has expressed concern about the way in which some brewers have handled their tenancy agreements and has urged that the provisions of the Brewers Society's code of practice on tenants' security should be given legal effect in tenants' contracts. I am seeking the views of the Brewers Society.

Dry Sow and Tether Stalls

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he has taken over the past five years to reduce the proportion of pig farmers employing dry sow and tether stalls; and when he expects the use of such stalls to be extinguished.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government's welfare code for pigs, revised in 1983, strongly recommends the use of alternative systems to the dry sow and tether stall for the housing of sows and gilts. The Ministry, through the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, has encouraged farmers to use alternative systems and has led the industry in developing and promoting the computerised loose housed feeding system. The Farm Animal Welfare Council has recently completed a review of pig production systems which makes a number of recommendations to ensure that future trends in housing the dry sow are away from the use of stalls and tethers. We are currently consulting interested parties on the report and no decisions will be taken until their comments have been fully considered.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government (Review)

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department anticipates the next review of local government structures will take place.

Mr. Howard: We have no current plans to initiate a review of the structure of local government.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 18 May, *Official Report*, column *941*, what progress has been made in assessing the role of the public interest in his proposals for the privatisation of the Crown Suppliers.

Mr. Chope: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 18 May at column *940*.

Sewage Discharges

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of water authorities' reports for 1987 detailing works which failed to comply with discharge consent conditions.

Mr. Moynihan: I am arranging for copies of the returns of the water authorities for those sewage treatment works which failed to comply with their discharge consent conditions in 1987 to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions his Department has had with Thames water authority about the allocation of extra funds to bring all the authority's sewage treatment works up to the current discharge consent standard; and what funds have been allocated as a result over each of the next five years.

Mr. Moynihan: Expenditure on sewage treatment works features in the Thames water authority corporate plan which the chairman is due to discuss with my noble Friend the Minister of State before the summer recess. The Department sets a ceiling on each authority's capital expenditure in aggregate for the year ahead but does not allocate amounts to particular functional programmes.

Rating Reform

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if it is his intention, under the provisions of clause 6 of the Local Government Finance Bill, to require local authority social workers to provide changes of their clients' addresses to community charge registration officers;

(2) what use will be made of social service department records in building up community charge registers.

Mr. Howard: Community charges registration officers will be able to request information from their own or any other local authority for the purpose of carrying out their functions. It is intended that regulations under schedule 2 will limit the information to be supplied about individuals to names and addresses and the dates on or between which they were known to the local authority. The regulations will not permit source documents, or the reasons for an individual being known to a local authority, to be passed to a registration officer; nor will they empower local authorities to volunteer information without a specific request from a registration officer.

Nuclear Waste

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his Department"s policy towards the relative merits of a central dry store facility for nuclear waste as against small storage systems above ground at the sites where the nuclear waste is created.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend shall form a view of the relative merits of a central dry store facility for nuclear waste as opposed to small storage systems above ground where the nuclear waste is created when proposals are made in sufficient detail for assessment of their respective environmental implications.

Housing

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that the process of tenant consultation required by the Housing Bill and described on pages 11 to 13 of his Department's paper "Tenants' Choice" will include *(a)* provision for a compulsory secret ballot, and *(b)* a ban on the offering of financial inducements and similar practices; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: The Government intend that regulations under clause 95 of the Housing Bill will provide for tenants to cast their votes in privacy by means including postal voting. Votes will be received and counted, and the outcome certified, by an independent teller paid for by the applicant. It will be necessary for votes cast to relate to identifiable tenancies because they will determine not only whether the transaction may proceed, but also which tenants have opted to remain tenants of their existing landlord.

We shall ensure that the adoption by applicants of corrupt practices would be inconsistent with approved status under clause 87 of the Bill. Revocation of approval before the completion of the proposed statutory procedures would cause applications in train to fall.

Floating Jetty, Coulport

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the awarding of a contract for the construction of a floating jetty at RNAD Coulport; if he will name the successful bidder and list all those companies which submitted tenders for the contract; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Property Services Agency plans to award a contract later this summer. On commercial grounds it is not the agency's policy to publish the names of tenderers while the tender evaluation is still in progress.

Hampstead Heath

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will accept the London residuary body's recommendation to transfer ownership and management of Hampstead heath to the City of London.

Mr. Chope: We have considered very carefully the London residuary body's proposal. My right hon. Friend is disposed to accept the LRB's main recommendations but before proceeding with making an order to effect a transfer of Hampstead heath to the corporation of the City of London by April 1989, my Department has issued today a consultation letter inviting comments on what the contents of such an order should be. I have arranged for a copy of the consultation letter to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Housing Sites, East London

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if a consultant has been appointed to undertake the studies of potential housing sites in east London.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 20 April I announced that the Department was commissioning studies into the scope for housing development on five large areas in east London. The Department has selected Coopers and Lybrand Associates as the consultant for the study. The study will start shortly and will be completed within four months.

Stratospheric Ozone Review Group (Report)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the second report of the stratospheric ozone review group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I expect the report to be ready for publication by August, but in view of widespread interest in protecting the ozone layer the group has agreed to release its executive summary in advance. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

The group, set up in 1985 by the Department of the Environment and the Meteorological Office, concludes that since its first report in August 1987 firm evidence has emerged of significant depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer as a result of man's activities. They say it is now virtually certain that the so-called Antarctic hole is caused by chlorofluorocarbons which are also implicated in ozone depletion over other parts of the globe, including the United Kingdom. The group gives clear warning that unless emissions are greatly reduced, and possibly phased out, more severe depletion of stratospheric ozone is likely to occur.

The Government will be studying the report carefully as soon as it is available, but we are already taking very careful note of this summary, and in particular its warning about the need to strengthen the provisions of the Montreal protocol. I shall bring this to the attention of my fellow Environment Ministers at the meeting of the Council on 16 June. Our first priority, however, shared with our partners in the European Community, remains that of ensuring that the protocol enters into force on 1 January 1989, as planned, and with the widest possible participation. This will allow the protocol's own review procedures to be put into effect.

Palace of Westminster (Microbiological Tests)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the results of all microbiological testing undertaken in the Palace of Westminster for the presence of legionella bacteria in air conditioning and all other water facilities.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 9 June 1988]:* No regular testing is undertaken specifically for legionella bacteria. Details of the microbiological testing carried out in the last 12 months were given in response to the hon. Member's question of 7 June at column *740*.

Storm Damage

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what expenditure has now been incurred or sanctioned by his Department for each local authority concerned on damage repairs and environmental resuscitation following the hurricane of 15 October 1987; how much of this is financed by *(a)* the National Exchequer, *(b)* local authorities themselves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* The Department has agreed to pay 75 per cent. of the amount

by which a local authority's eligible expenditure under the special financial assistance scheme announced on 21 October 1987 exceeds the specified threshold for the authority. Such thresholds are calculated for each authority by reference to penny rate products. The amounts shown in the following list have been derived from the initial, unaudited claims submitted by local authorities, and may be subject to revision on receipt of final, audited claims. The first column of figures shows the total amount of expenditure, net of receipts, that the Department has provisionally accepted as eligible under the scheme. The second column lists the threshold amounts, which have been applied by the Department. The 75 per cent. Exchequer grant applies to what is left after deducting eligible expenditure up to the threshold (in the second column of figures) from the total eligible expenditure (in the first column), and the third column of figures lists for each authority the amount to which the grant applies. The amount to be paid by the Department is therefore 75 per cent. of the amounts in the third column of figures. Three other local authorities, Hammersmith and Fulham, Waltham Forest, Welwyn and Hatfield, have submitted claims which at 13 June were still being checked by the Department.

	Total eligible expenditure net of receipts £	*Threshold* £	*Eligible expenditure attracting grant* £
Non metropolitan counties			
East Sussex	3,400,000	1,041,000	2,359,000
Essex	2,598,000	2,458,000	140,000
Isle of Wight	170,000	145,000	25,000
Kent	6,981,000	1,997,000	4,984,000
Suffolk	921,000	850,000	71,000
Surrey	5,770,000	1,872,000	3,898,000
West Sussex	6,728,000	1,087,000	5,641,000
London boroughs			
Barking and Dagenham	766,000	262,000	504,000
Bexley	834,000	319,000	515,000
Bromley	1,805,000	518,000	1,287,000
Greenwich	460,000	175,000	285,000
Hackney	576,000	227,000	349,000
Lewisham	394,000	189,000	205,000
Merton	639,000	309,000	330,000
Sutton	738,000	297,000	441,000
Tower Hamlets	729,900	280,500	449,400
Wandsworth	596,000	242,000	354,000
Non metropolitan districts			
Adur	235,000	13,000	222,000
Arun	91,000	26,000	65,000
Ashford	259,000	18,000	241,000
Babergh	86,000	15,000	71,000
Basildon	91,000	39,000	52,000
Basingstoke and Deane	78,000	34,000	44,000
Bournemouth	40,000	38,000	2,000
Bracknell	74,000	24,000	50,000
Braintree	175,000	24,000	151,000
Brentwood	332,000	20,000	312,000
Non metropolitan districts			
Brighton	302,000	38,000	264,000
Broxbourne	46,000	19,000	27,000
Canterbury	310,457	23,325	287,457
Castlepoint	66,000	18,000	48,000
Chelmsford	80,000	39,000	41,000
Christchurch	121,000	10,000	111,000
Colchester	56,000	30,000	26,000
Dover	57,000	18,000	39,000
Eastbourne	174,000	21,000	153,000
East Hampshire	38,300	20,000	18,300
East Hertfordshire	39,000	27,000	12,000
Eastleigh	55,900	23,500	32,400
Elmbridge	347,000	35,000	312,000
Epsom and Ewell	50,000	18,000	32,000
Fareham	92,000	21,000	71,000
Forest Heath	25,000	10,000	15,000
Gillingham	44,875	16,650	28,225
Gosport	153,000	15,000	138,000
Gravesham	96,000	19,000	77,000
Great Yarmouth	35,000	18,000	17,000
Harlow	24,000	21,000	3,000
Hastings	433,000	15,000	418,000
Havant	38,000	25,000	13,000
Hertsmere	62,000	24,000	38,000
Horsham	200,000	23,000	177,000
Hove	164,000	23,000	141,000

	Total eligible expenditure net of receipts £	Threshold £	Eligible expenditure attracting grant £
Ipswich	278,000	29,000	249,000
Lewes	70,500	19,000	51,500
Maidstone	247,000	27,000	220,000
Medina	59,096	12,630	46,466
Mid Suffolk	26,000	13,000	13,000
Mid Sussex	489,000	27,000	462,000
Mole Valley	97,000	19,000	78,000
New Forest	58,000	37,000	21,000
North Hertfordshire	47,000	29,000	18,000
Norwich	178,000	34,000	144,000
Poole	69,000	32,000	37,000
Portsmouth	136,000	41,000	95,000
Reigate and Banstead	76,000	30,000	46,000
Rochford	71,134	16,050	55,084
Rother	47,000	18,000	29,000
Non metropolitan districts			
Rushmoor	31,777	19,000	12,777
Sevenoaks	478,000	21,000	457,000
Shepway	233,250	20,920	212,330
Southend	454,000	41,000	413,000
South Wight	273,000	9,000	264,000
Spelthorne	42,000	34,000	8,000
Stevenage	38,000	21,000	17,000
Suffolk Coastal	49,000	23,000	26,000
Swale	246,000	19,000	227,000
Tandridge	382,000	16,000	366,000
Tendring	27,695	24,000	3,695
Thanet	286,000	23,000	263,000
Thurrock	93,000	41,000	52,000
Tonbridge and Malling	49,000	21,000	28,000
Tunbridge Wells	353,000	19,200	333,900
Waveney	24,000	19,000	5,000
Waverley	78,000	27,000	51,000
Wealden	92,000	23,000	69,000
Woking	43,000	25,000	18,000
Worthing	196,000	22,000	174,000

"The Way Forward"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations were received by Nirex, following the issue of the discussion document "The Way Forward," by 31 May; and if he will list all institutional responders in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that Nirex has received about 2,500 responses to the discussion document "The Way Forward". Details of the responders are a matter for Nirex, but this information will be contained in a report on the consultation exercise to be published by the university of East Anglia.

Radiochemical Inspectorate

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he plans to take to evaluate the importance for environmental health of the consignments of missing radioactive materials reported in the most recent annual report of the radiochemical inspectorate.

Mr. Moynihan: The importance for environmental health of the consignments of radioactive material whose loss was reported in the recent annual report of Her Majesty's radiochemical inspectorate was evaluated at the time the losses were reported to the inspectorate. In each case it was concluded that there would be no danger to any member of the public who might come into contact with any of the lost consignments.

Toxic Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy, at the next European Council of Environmental Ministers, to raise the export of toxic and radioactive wastes from the European Economic Community to Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Benin for disposal, by companies including Hobday Ltd. of the Isle of Man, BIS Import-Export of London and Inter-Contrat.

Mr. Moynihan: The question of exports of toxic waste to Third world countries appears on the agenda for the meeting of the EC Environment Council later this week.

Drigg Dump Site

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the radioactive wastes by radioactivity content, currently buried at the Drigg dump site near Sellafield, arises from contracts made with foreign companies or Governments.

Mr. Moynihan: Less than half of 1 per cent. of the radioactive waste currently disposed of at the Drigg site is estimated to have arisen from contracts made with foreign companies or Governments.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his replies to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conway, *Official Report*, 20 May,

columns 603-4, what nuclear materials in what bequerel measurements, respectively, account for the 470 terabequerel total disposed of at the Drigg dump near Sellafield.

Mr. Moynihan: The principal radionuclides comprising the 470 terabecquerels total activity currently disposed of at the Drigg disposal site are as follows:

Radionuclide	*Total activity in TBq at 1 January 1986*
Tritium	410
Carbon 14	2·6
Strontium 90	1·5
Technetium 99	$9·7 \times 10^{-5}$
Iodine 129	$1·9 \times 10^{-7}$
Caesium 137	1·8
Radium 226	10^{-2}
Thorium 232	3·4
Uranium 234	17
Uranium 235	0·56
Uranium 238	18
Neptunium 237	8×10^{-2}
Plutonium 238	$1·8 \times 10^{-2}$
Plutonium 239	1
Plutonium 240	0·6
Plutonium 241	11
Americium 241	1·1

American Waste

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to whether the American waste proposed to be dumped in the United Kingdom will include hospital waste or clinical waste.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 9 June at column *684*.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to whether the American waste proposed to be dumped in the United Kingdom will include polychlorinated biphenyls.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that the export of polychlorinated biphenyls is prohibited by United States law.

Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to take full account at the meeting of the Environment Council on 16 June of any findings and recommendations of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment with respect to *(a)* chlorofluorocarbons and ozone layer depletion, *(b)* large combustion plant emissions, *(c)* small car emissions and *(d)* acid deposition.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government will be carefully studying the Select Committee's report with a view to making a response in due course. At the Environment Council on 16 June my noble Friend the Minister of State will take note of the Committee's recommendations and of the views of the House when the debate is held on the proposed directive on large combustion plants.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Incomes

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average post-tax income now received by the wealthiest 2 per cent. of taxpayers.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The average post-tax income in 1988-89 of the top 2 per cent. of income tax payers is expected to be about £46,000.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average share of post-tax income now received by the wealthiest 1 per cent. of taxpayers.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The top 1 per cent. of income tax payers receive about 5 per cent. of income tax payers' total income after tax in 1988-89.

Commercial Buildings (Depreciation Allowance)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the gain to the revenue in a full year from abolishing the depreciation allowance on commercial buildings other than factories.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Capital allowances for commercial buildings (excluding industrial buildings) are available only for hotels and all buildings in enterprise zones. The Exchequer gain from abolishing capital allowances for new hotel building work would be less than £5 million in the first year rising to around £20 million after five years. Gains in later years would depend upon future levels of investment. No figures are available for commercial buildings in enterprise zones.

Property Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the yield to the Revenue in a full year of a property tax equal to 1 per cent. of the current value of all land and buildings; and if he can provide separate estimates for residential, commercial and industrial property.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The national balance sheet estimates of the current value of all land and buildings at the end of 1986 was some £1,050 billion, 1 per cent. of which amounts to £10·5 billion. Corresponding figures for residential, commercial and industrial property are respectively £6·9 billion, £1·9 billion and £0·3 billion. The figures include property owned by central and local government.

Remuneration and Benefits in Kind

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the gain to the Revenue in a full year from adding the whole cost of remuneration and benefits in kind to the income of the recipient for tax purposes;

(2) what is his estimate of the gain to the Revenue in a full year from disallowing all remuneration and benefits in kind as an expense against tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The taxable value of cars and free fuel provided for private use by an employer is calculated

by reference to a set of scale charges. Beneficial loans are valued by reference to the difference between the official rate of interest (which broadly reflects commercial rates) and the actual rate of interest paid; accommodation provided by an employer is taxed by reference to the annual value of the accommodation, less any rent paid. Information on the cost to the employer of providing the four benefits listed is not available centrally to the Inland Revenue.

The taxable value of other remuneration in kind received by directors and higher paid employees is already determined by reference to the cost to the employer.

Estimates of the revenue effect of either taxing all remuneration in kind by reference to the cost to the employer or disallowing all of these costs in the computation of the employers' taxable profits are therefore not available.

Family Taxation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average tax burden on a married couple with two children under 16 years in 1978-79; and what it will be in 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Between 1978-79 and 1988-89 the real take home pay of a couple with two children (one under 11, one 11 to 15) on average male earnings will have risen by 27 per cent. In the same period, the proportion of their earnings taken in income tax (net of child benefit) and NIC is estimated to have fallen from 20·6 per cent. to 20 per cent. If the 1978-79 tax regime had been kept in place and simply adjusted for inflation, the proportion of earnings taken in income tax and NIC taxes would have been 23·7 per cent.

Hereditament Maps

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide copies of hereditament maps sent from provincial offices to the Public Record Office at Kew, London, to those provincial offices that require them.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Valuation Office has made arrangements for copies of the hereditament maps to be available to those of their provincial offices which have a proven operational need; the Public Record Office does of course have facilities available for local record offices and members of the public who wish to purchase copies, subject to the normal scale of charges.

Gilt Edged Securities

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total net issue of gilt edged securities in the financial year 1987-88.

Mr. Lilley: The total issue of gilt edged securities, net of redemptions, in the financial year 1987-88 was £7,120 million.

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer why, in the light of the fact that the public sector generated a financial surplus, it was necessary to make a net issue of gilt edged securities in 1987-88.

Mr. Lilley: The aim of the Government's funding policy in 1987-88 was to fund the PSBR and any net change in official reserves of foreign currency fully over the financial year as a whole, by sales of gilt edged securities to the non-bank private sector and the overseas sector.

In the financial year 1987-88 the Government generated a public sector debt repayment of £3·5 billion. However, there was a net increase in official reserves of foreign currency of approximately £11·1 billion. After allowing for other forms of funding, £7·1 billion net gilt sales were required to achieve a full fund.

VAT

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he now expects to hear from the European Court about its decision on the case initiated by the Commission on the application of value added tax to gas, electricity, water, sewerage and on new commercial and industrial buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* The European Court of Justice has recently announced that it will deliver its judgment on 21 June.

EC (Budget Contributions)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now make a statement on that part of the agreement arising from the Brussels Council of 11 to 13 February which has led to an increase in the future United Kingdom net budget contribution of £200 million to £300 million per annum; and if he will set out the benefits arising to the United Kingdom from this additional expenditure.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* The increase in our net contribution results mainly from the decision on Community expenditure and own resources taken at the European Council. The benefits of the Brussels package were outlined by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her statement on 15 February at columns *705-707*.

Civil Service (Value for Money)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what definition of value for money is applied within the Civil Service; and whether there are any tests or procedures for its evaluation.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* The recent guide to policy evaluation which was published on 12 April 1988 and a copy of which was placed in the Library described value for money as:

"Ultimately the final social and economic benefit of a policy in relation to the cost. Sometimes used as shorthand for the optimum combination of economy, effectiveness and efficiency."

Given the variety of activities with which the Civil Service is concerned and the difficulties in a number of areas of valuing final output, there is no single test or procedure for evaluating value for money. But such tests would include the extent to which the effectiveness of the programme has been enhanced without additional resources or, alternatively, the extent to which effectiveness has been maintained with fewer resources through increased efficiency and improved economy. Volume I of the last public expenditure White Paper included a broad description of the measures being taken to improve value for money. Examples of value for money are given in the programme chapters in volume II.

Mortgage Interest

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total cost of mortgage interest relief for 1987-88, divided by ranges of total income and showing *(a)* the number of each band receiving mortgage relief, *(b)* the average value of relief per mortgagor, *(c)* the total cost of relief, *(d)* the percentage of total cost and *(e)* the total number of taxpayers in each case.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* Provisional estimates are given in the table. These are based on projections to 1987-88 of information in the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and the 1985 family expenditure survey. The estimates include mortgages formerly under the option mortgage scheme which are now subsumed within MIRAS.

Tax units receiving mortgage interest relief by range of total income 1987-88

Range of total income	*Number of tax units[1] with mortgage interest relief[2] (thousands)*	*Average value of relief per mortgagor (£)*	*Total cost of relief (£ million)*	*Percentage of total cost (per cent.)*	*Number of tax units[1] paying tax (thousands)*
Up to £5,000	720	370	270	5·6	3,200
£5,000 to £10,000	1,620	460	740	15·3	7,400
£10,000 to £15,000	2,500	550	1,370	28·2	4,800
£15,000 to £20,000	1,770	580	1,030	21·2	2,600
£20,000 to £25,000	860	580	500	10·3	1,300
£25,000 to £30,000	410	780	320	6·6	550
Over £30,000	520	1,190	620	12·8	750
TOTAL	8,400	580	4,850	100·0	20,600

[1] Single persons and married couples.
[2] Including about ¼ million non-taxpaying tax units.

Forestry

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate *(a)* the amount of tax relief which will be claimed against forestry operations and *(b)* the area of land involved in these claims, under the interim arrangements for tax relief on forestry operations announced in his Budget statement in the current year.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide an estimate of the annual cost to the Exchequer of the revenue forgone as a result of the transitional provisions for tax relief to occupiers of commercial woodlands and those who became occupiers as a result of commitments entered into applications for grants received by the Forestry Commission before 15 March.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* Income and corporation tax relief in respect of commercial woodlands was estimated at some £10 million a year at the rates of personal income tax applying before the Budget. Under the proposals announced in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget the relief is being phased out, and the cost will therefore reduce year by year at a rate which will depend on the extent to which the new planting grants are taken up. It is not possible to estimate the area of land which may be involved.

Income Tax Evasion

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the total loss of revenue from income tax evasion in each of the last five years, to date; what specific action he is taking to reduce the loss of revenue from income tax evasion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* It is not possible to form a reliable estimate of revenue lost through tax evasion.

Since 1979 there has been a steady increase in the resources devoted by the Inland Revenue to investigations. This is reflected in the increase in the yield from compliance work over the period: from £111 million in the year to 31 October 1979 to £741 million in the year to 31 March 1987.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many individuals, in each of the last five years to date, have been charged with offences related to the non-payment or under-payment of income tax; how many such individuals have been prosecuted for such offences; what was the minimum, average and maximum loss of revenue where prosecution took place; how many individuals, found guilty of tax offences, were fined or sentenced to a term of imprisonment; and what was the minimum, average and maximum fine and term of imprisonment.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* The charge is an integral part of the summons or warrant, which is in turn a part of the prosecution process. It follows that the number of people charged and the number of people prosecuted are the same. However, for various reasons, some prosecutions do not run their full course.

The number of people prosecuted to trial stage for offences related to tax evasion are as follows (prosecutions not completed are shown in brackets):

	Number
1983-84	159 (17)
1984-85	238 (14)
1985-86	320 (9)
1986-87	325 (8)
1987-88	210 (2)

The other information requested could not be provided except at disproportionate cost. But over the period the amounts of tax at stake varied from £90 to £1·7 million; fines ranged from £50 to £60,000; and sentences of actual imprisonment (ignoring suspended sentences) ranged from 1 day to 8 years.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate how much revenue has been forgone by the Treasury due to tax evasion for each year since 1979, in cash and real terms, at 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 9 June 1988]:* It is not possible to form a reliable estimate of revenue lost through tax evasion.

Inland Revenue (Staffing)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from Inland Revenue staff representatives about staffing levels; in what grades of staff current staff numbers are below establishment; what is the current backlog in routine inspection work; and how many staff are engaged in investigating suspected tax evasion and frauds.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* I have received no such representations recently, but staff representatives are in regular contact with senior management in the Inland Revenue on a wide variety of issues, including staffing levels. The numbers of staff in post in tax offices are generally in line with authorised numbers, but there are particular staff shortfalls at some grades of the tax inspectorate. I am not quite sure what the hon. Member means by "routine inspection work"; but the state of work in tax offices at April 1988 was generally good. In particular, the number of items of post awaiting attention for more than 14 days was at its lowest level for very many years. The Revenue currently employs some 2,600 staff on investigation work in local tax offices and specialist units.

Personal Sector (Financial Deficit)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the financial deficit of the personal sector for each year since 1979 in constant and cash terms both in total and per household.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* Estimates of the personal sector financial surplus/deficit at current prices are published in table 1.10 of "Financial Statistics", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library. No estimates are available on a constant price basis. No comparable figures are available for the number of United Kingdom households.

Security Firms (Tenders)

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what criteria it was decided to invite security firms with long-standing contracts with the Inland Revenue in Northern Ireland to tender, following the Inland Revenue's decision to bring all sites in Northern Ireland subject to private guarding under one contract; and on what basis it was decided not to invite certain such firms to tender for the contract.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 9 June 1988]:* There were two main criteria for selecting firms to tender for the Inland Revenue guarding contracts. First, the firms had to have the capacity to provide and maintain security guarding at all the Revenue offices where this was required throughout Northern Ireland, including back-up and support facilities. Second, the firms had to be members of the British Security Industry Association or operate to a standard equivalent to that set by the association.

Taxation

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will give for each region of the United Kingdom the tax payable in 1988-89 at the 1987-88 rates above 40 per cent. and the reduction in tax payable in a full year that will result from the top rate tax reductions;

(2) if he will give for each region of the United Kingdom the gain per tax unit and per household from the income tax measures announced in the Budget;

(3) if he will give for each region of Britain his estimate of the additional spending power that will be available in the region as a result of income tax cuts announced in the Budget.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 7 June 1988].* Estimates of the direct revenue effect of the changes in income tax announced in the 1988 Budget are given in table 4.1 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1988-89". I regret that separate estimates for each region of the United Kingdom are not available. The latest information available by region relates to 1985-86. Estimates of the income tax liabilities of *(a)* all taxpayers and *(b)* higher rate taxpayers in each region were given in my reply to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 23 May 1988, at columns *54-56*, and estimates of the numbers of taxpayers in each region by their marginal tax rate were given in my reply to the hon. Member for Ynys Mon (Mr. Jones) on 27 May 1988, at columns *373-74*.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Cervical Cancer

13. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give an estimate of the cost of cervical cancer screening in the north-west in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Cervical cancer screening is often carried out in conjunction with other health care services for women. It is not therefore possible to identify separately the precise cost of the screening programme in individual regions. We do however know that in 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, about 400,000 smears were taken within the North Western RHA. The estimated national average cost of about £10 for taking and examining individual smears would point to expenditure in the region of the order of £4 million for that year.

41. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what his Department is doing to assist Leicestershire district health authority in dealing with the delays in processing cervical cancer screening tests.

Mrs. Currie: The DHSS circular on cervical cancer screening, a copy of which is in the Library, states that laboratories must aim to send the results of a smear to the doctor who submitted it within a maximum of one month of receiving it. It is for the district health authorities to take action to achieve this. This Department monitors the position and we are aware that Leicestershire district health authority has recruited additional staff and that screeners are working overtime. The processing time has been reduced from eight weeks at 1 April to four weeks at 23 May.

78. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the progress of the cervical cancer screening programme.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the progress of the cervical cancer screening programme.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friends to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) earlier today.

Social Fund

17. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has recieved concerning the operation of the social fund.

Mr. Portillo: Since 11 April some 200 letters referring to the new provisions have been received.

NHS (Expenditure)

18. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the percentage of the gross domestic product which was spent on the National Health Service in 1987.

Mr. Newton: No estimate for 1987 is yet possible. The latest published estimates for 1986 is that gross expenditure on the National Health Service in the United Kingdom accounted for 5·5 per cent. of the gross domestic product, compared with 4·8 per cent. in 1979.

Housing Benefit

19. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of housing claimants who are likely still to be losers after transitional protection payments are made.

20. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of housing benefit claimants who are likely still to be losers after transitional protection payments are made.

22. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of housing benefit claimants who are likely still to be losers after transitional protection payments are made.

Mr. Portillo: We estimate that in cash terms, about one half of all housing benefit recipients either gained or saw no change in their entitlement to that benefit after April. Many of those who have lost will now be getting more in other benefits. The transitional payments scheme will help the position of many who have lost significant amounts.

23. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he now proposes to make any further changes in the housing benefit scheme.

Mr. Scott: I have nothing to add to the announcements made during the debate on 27 April and the subsequent written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) on 5 May at columns *550-51*.

25. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available on the impact of the new housing benefit rules on students living away from home.

Mr. Portillo: We published estimates of the impact of the social security reforms in October 1987. There is no analysis of the impact on students specifically.

38. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of representations he has received since the beginning of April regarding the effects of the changes in housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

42. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many right hon. and hon. Members have made representations to him on the effect on their constituents of recent housing benefit changes; what stage has now been reached in operation of the special cases unit for dealing with problems arising from the changes; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the new system of assessing housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has received a considerable number of letters and inquiries about the changes announced on 27 April and these are being handled in the normal way. Preparations of the transitional payments unit are at an advanced stage and on schedule for becoming fully operational in July.

61. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce detailed procedures for claims for transitional payments for the new central unit in respect of housing benefit claims.

Mr. Portillo: A new leaflet "RR4 Housing Benefit—New Rules" was printed on 27 May and copies have been placed in the Library. The leaflet explains who can qualify, how assessments will be calculated, and contains an application form for despatch by Freepost to the transitional payments units. The leaflets will be available frm a wide number of agencies including the transitional payment unit, DHSS local offices, local authorities and post offices.

Hospital Building Programme

21. **Mr. Rhodes James:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the progress of the hospital building programme.

Mrs. Currie: Investment in National Health Service building is continuing at record levels. Information held centrally shows there are now 504 health building schemes, each costing over £1 million, at various stages of planning, design and construction. The total values of the programme is estimated at £3·8 billion and capital expenditure this financial year is expected to exceed £1 billion.

47. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many major hospital building schemes have been started and completed since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: Information held centrally shows that, since 1 April 1979, a total of 286 health building schemes each costing over £1 million, have been started and completed. This is the biggest sustained building programme ever in the history of the National Health Service. A list has been placed in the Library.

Blood Glucose Testing Strips

24. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when blood glucose testing strips will be made available on prescription to diabetics.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that blood glucose testing strips became prescribable by general practitioners on 1 June.

Community Care

26. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends responding to the recently published report of the Public Accounts Committee on community care developments.

27. **Mr. Blair:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends responding to the recently published report of the Public Accounts Committee on community care developments.

30. **Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends responding to the recently published report of the Public Accounts Committee on community care developments.

32. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends responding to the recently published report of the Public Accounts Committee on community care developments.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 23 May at column *89*.

36. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects to be in a position to make a statement on his policy towards the report by Sir Roy Griffiths on community care.

39. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects to be in a position to make a statement on his policy towards the report by Sir Roy Griffiths on community care.

46. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects to be in a position to make a statement on his policy towards the report by Sir Roy Griffiths on community care.

53. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects to be in a position to make a statement on his policy towards the report by Sir Roy Griffiths on community care.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 29 March at columns *439-40*.

54. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the responses to date from *(a)* voluntary organisations and *(b)* other groups to the Griffiths report on community care.

Mr. Newton: We have received responses from two voluntary organisation and from 25 other interested groups. We will take them into account in framing our own proposals.

55. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the response to date to the report by Sir Roy Griffiths on community care.

Mr. Newton: We have received 48 responses from interested individuals and organisations and will take account of them in framing our own proposals.

56. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total public expenditure in the latest available year on the support of individuals in community care, broken down by the category of benefit.

Mr. Scott: The proportion of the money spent on retirement pensions, disability benefits and income support which can be said to contribute directly to the support of people in the community who might otherwise have to go into institutional care cannot be accurately estimated but is likely to be significant.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures he intends to take to ensure that satisfactory arrangements are made for dowry payments by district health authorities to local authority social services departments and voluntary organisations to meet the cost of care in the community.

Mr. Newton: We look to health authorities and local authorities to identify jointly an individual's need for community care and to negotiate locally the funding of a cost-effective way of meeting these needs. The Department monitors progress in pursuing community care and other service aims through the region's long-term strategic plans and annual short-term programmes.

Psychiatric Patients

28. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are currently in psychiatric institutions; what was the comparable figure six years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: On 31 December 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, there were 60,279 patients resident in National Health Service mental illness hospitals and units in England. The corresponding figure for 1980 was 74,831. These figures include those people admitted for short-term treatment and respite care.

It is estimated that the 14,500 net drop in residents is accounted for by decreases due to 24,000 people discharged and 32,500 deaths, and increases due to 42,000 new patients during the period 1981-86.

In 1986 although the number of in-patients in National Health Service illness hospitals and units in England was around 60,000, there were over 70,000 available staffed beds. As a result of better methods of treatment and modern practice, far fewer people need to be cared for as long-term in-patients.

Breast Cancer Screening

29. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what additional resources the Government are providing in the current year for the national breast cancer screening programme.

Mrs. Currie: In addition to the resources of over £9 million provided to meet the initial and continuing costs of the first screening centres, the Government are providing £9 million in 1988-89 for the further development of the breast cancer screening service. Financial allocations to regional health authorities also include over £6 million for capital expenditure on the buildings and equipment for

sufficient centres to serve about half the remaining population of each region on the basis of one centre per half a million population.

Between 1987-88 and 1989-90, on current plans, nearly £55 million will be provided to set up and run the screening centres, including central initiatives to support the service, for example through staff training, development of standard software and health education.

57. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the progress of the breast cancer screening programme.

59. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the progress of the breast cancer screening programme.

60. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the progress of the breast cancer screening programme.

71. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many breast cancer screening centres are now operating around the country.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in implementing the national breast cancer screening programme.

Mrs. Currie: We are very pleased with the excellent progress of the national breast cancer screening programme. Some 17 screening centres—at least one in each regional health authority—including back-up services for the follow-up of any screen detected abnormalities have now been set up. Nearly all have by now started screening. Each centre serves a population of up to half a million; four of the centres—at Guildford, Camberwell (King's college hospital), Manchester and Nottingham are also providing training for staff from the whole programme. Planning is almost complete for the nationwide service in England, to be established by 1990. This will involve about 100 centres, and will include mobile caravans for rural areas. We hope to be able to announce details in July. We anticipate that the programme should significantly reduce mortality from breast cancer which is the major killer of women under 65.

Life Expectancy

31. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the trends in life expectancy in Britain.

Mrs. Currie: Figures prepared by the Government Actuary's Department and published in table 7.2 of the 1988 edition of "Social Trends" show that expectation of life continues to rise at all ages in the United Kingdom. Life expectation at birth for males rose from 48 years in 1906 to 68·8 years in 1971 and 71·5 years in 1984. The corresponding increase for females was from 51·6 years in 1906 to 75 years in 1971 and 77·4 years in 1984. The assumptions used in the 1985-based population projections imply a further increase in the expectation of life to 75·2 years for males and 80·3 years for females by 2024-25.

Consultants (Waiting Lists)

33. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he proposes to improve the information available to patients on consultants' waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 28 April at column *253*.

Pensioners (Incomes)

34. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of pensioners have a second income besides their state pension.

Mr. Scott: The latest available figures are for 1985 when 80 per cent. of all pensioner households and 85 per cent. of recently retired pensioner households had income from sources other than state benefits.

Pensioners (Spending)

35. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the annual change in spending on durable goods by pensioners in Britain since 1979.

Mr. Scott: The average spending of pensioner households on durable goods rose in real terms by two thirds, or 8·9 per cent. a year on average, between 1979 and 1985, the latest year for which figures are available.

Social Security Reform

37. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received on social security changes since 1 June.

Mr. Portillo: We continue to receive representations. I am unable to provide a precise number.

Organ Transplants

40. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress is being made with the organ transplantation programme.

Mrs. Currie: Provisional figures for the first five months of 1988 show a major rise in organ transplantation compared with a similar period last year. The total number of National Health Service transplants of kidneys, hearts, heart-lungs, lungs and livers notified to the United Kingdom transplant service are as follows:

1 January 1987 to 29 May 1987: 708
1 January 1988 to 31 May 1988: 1,045

These statistics reveal a remarkable increase of 48 per cent. in the number of transplants carried out. The figures reflect the positive publicity given to organ transplantation this year, both by the Government and by others.

As previously announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health on 16 December 1987 at column 1094, from 1 April 1988 we are also funding an additional centre for liver transplantation at St. James' university hospital, Leeds and a fourth heart transplant unit at Wythenshawe hospital, Manchester.

On 3 June I was honoured to be the guest speaker at a special meeting to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the United Kingdom transplant service. In recognition of the growing demands on its services resulting from the expansion of the transplant programme, we have allocated additional funds to the United Kingdom transplant service in this financial year. The revenue allocation in 1988-89 is £929,000 compared with £800,000 in 1987-88. The additional resources provide for additional staff in the organ exchange and data processing departments, and will

help to develop the eye bank which stores tissue for use in corneal transplant operations. We are also providing a capital allocation of £61,000 for new and replacement equipment.

Diabetics

43. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes to services for diabetics have occurred since 1983.

Mrs. Currie: Provision of services for diabetics is shared by general practitioners and by district health authorities. This has not been changed during the period in question.

Over the period, as part of the development of services in the community the following items have become prescribable by general practitioners—

i. in 1983, U100 syringes for use with U100 strength insulin (insulin preparations were standardised to 100 units/ml in that year);

ii. from September 1987 disposable syringes and needles;

iii. from 1 June 1988 blood glucose testing strips.

NHS (Review)

44. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made on the Government's review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made on the Government's review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made on the Government's review of the National Health Service.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made on the Government's review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Moore: We are continuing to explore a wide range of ideas and shall bring forward proposals as soon as we can.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the manpower planning advisory group currently reviewing the staffing structure of the National Health Service is due to report.

Mr. Newton: The joint DHSS/NHS manpower planning advisory group has a continuing programme of reviewing individual staff groups. Its current work programme includes manpower, training and skill mix reviews in the occupational therapy, clinical psychology, radiography, pharmacy and physiotherapy groups. Reports are expected at various times during this year and next. The Management Advisory Service has recently completed a report on the review of pathology staffing for the MPAG which is currently under consideration by the NHS management board and regional health authority chairmen.

Portable Personal Pensions

45. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the response to date to the availability of portable personal pensions.

Mr. Portillo: Although the new personal pension arrangements under the Social Security Act 1986 do not start until 1 July, I am aware that there is already substantial interest in this important new option in saving for retirement.

Disabled People

48. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a timetable for the implementation of the remaining sections of the Disabled Persons (Services Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Discussions are continuing with local authority associations to determine the resources necessary for the successful implementation of the individual sections of the Act. The timing of further implementation is dependent on the outcome of these discussions.

SENSE

49. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what grants the Government have given in the current year to SENSE.

Mr. Scott: We recently announced a grant of £500,000 towards the development of the centre at Edgbaston additional to the grant of £300,000 in March. Other continuing grants are £15,000 towards the Usher's Syndrome project and £30,000 towards central administrative costs.

Regional Health Authorities (Role)

50. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans his Department has to change the role of regional health authorities in England, particularly with regard to joint planning of health and social services.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 26 May at column *270*.

Board and Lodgings Payments

51. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress of his current review into board and lodgings payments.

Mr. Portillo: I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the review of income support for people in hostels. We have commissioned a study by the Policy Studies Institute into the characteristics of hostels providing accommodation for income support recipients. We expect to receive the results shortly. In the meantime, no decisions have been taken on future arrangements for paying these claimants.

Private Health Insurance Companies

52. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last met the chairmen of BUPA, PPP and other private health insurance companies; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Currie: The private sector makes a significant contribution to health care and my colleagues and I take care to keep in touch with its representatives. The sector

now provides some 200 hospitals (about 10,000 beds), over 2,000 nursing homes (about 52,000 beds) and health insurance for nearly 5·5 million people. We welcome this growing response to public demand and the increasing cost-effective co-operation that is developing between the public and private sectors to the benefit of all.

Europe Against Cancer Week

58. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on Government participation in Europe Against Cancer week.

80. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on Government participation in Europe against Cancer week.

Mrs. Currie: The Department hosted the press launch of Europe Against Cancer week in the United Kingdom on 28 April. The week, observed throughout the European Community from 1 to 7 May and marked by a wide range of events organised by the National Health Service, cancer charities and voluntary organisations, was designed to dispel public fears of cancer and to emphasise that many cancers are preventable and curable. We also announced that we were making £100,000 available to provide full or part funding of activities during the week as well as for future projects under the European cancer initiative.

Nurses (Pay Award)

62. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to extend the funding of the recent nurses' pay award to cover extra recruits or additional posts over and above existing staffing levels.

Mr. Newton: The Government have provided the additional money required to fund in full the recent pay award. It is for health authorities to determine their nursing establishment, having regard to the total resources available.

63. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much extra recognition the current year's nurses' pay award gives to those nurses with extra skills and responsibilities.

81. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what increases nurses working in paediatric intensive care can expect to receive as a result of the nurses' pay award.

Mr. Newton: The extent to which an individual nurse will benefit from the new pay award will depend on the duties and responsibilities of the post occupied. However, the maximum pay for a staff nurse in a post which calls for extra skills and responsibilities, for example in paediatric intensive care is now £10,650 a year—an increase of over £2,000 or 24 per cent. above the previous maximum annual salary of a staff nurse. A similar nurse working in inner London will receive an annual salary of £12,538 maximum, an increase of over £3,000 or over 31 per cent.

70. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services by how much nurses' pay has increased since April 1979.

Mr. Newton: With the recent pay award, nurses' pay has increased by 44 per cent. in real terms since April 1979.

NHS Ancillary Staff (Pay and Conditions)

64. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to meet representatives of the ancillary staffs in the National Health Service to discuss pay and conditions.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to meet representatives of the ancillary staffs in the National Health Service to discuss pay and conditions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to meet representatives of the ancillary staffs in the National Health Service to discuss pay and conditions.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Reid) earlier today.

Hospital Building (West Midlands)

65. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many major hospital building schemes are currently under construction in the west midlands.

Mrs. Currie: Details of schemes currently under construction in the west midlands with a capital cost exceeding £1 million are given in the table.

Scheme	*Capital cost £ million*
Bromyard Community Hospital, Herefordshire	3·2
Edward Street, Psychogeriatric Unit, Sandwell	6·1
Manor Hospital, Maternity Services, Walsall	1·5
Manor Hospital, Phase 4 development, Walsall	20·7
Telford DGH, Shropshire	29·8
Stoke City General Hospital, Surgical Accommodation, North Staffordshire	20·6
Stafford Community Mental Handicap Unit, Mid-Staffordshire	1·0
Burton DGH, Central Production Unit, South East Staffordshire	3·4
Burton DGH, Psychiatric and Maternity Units, South East Staffordshire	2·4
Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Engineering Services Phases 3 and 4, Central Birmingham	1·6
Queen Elizabeth Hospital, beds and theatres, Central Birmingham	0·2
Good Hope Hospital, Phase II development, North Birmingham	5·8
Dudley Road Hospital, Post graduate medical centre, West Birmingham	1·0

Family Doctor Services

66. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to give the public more information about family doctor services.

Mr. Newton: The White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249), published in November 1987, sets out a number of measures for improving information to the public about family doctor services. For example, the Government intend to require family practitioner committees both to provide medical lists which contain more comprehensive information about practices in their areas, and to make the lists more widely available locally.

The wider provision by family doctors of practice leaflets, which contain information for patients about the

doctors, the organisation of the practice and the services available, will also be encouraged. In addition, the Government wish to see a relaxation of the current restrictions applied by the General Medical Council on the extent to which family doctors may advertise factual information about their practices. They therefore welcome the Office of Fair Trading's recent reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of the current restrictions on family doctors' advertising.

Doctors (Referrals Statistics)

67. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the variation in the rates of family doctors' emergency and out-patient referrals.

Mrs. Currie: The Government recognise the wide variation in the rates of family doctors' referrals. The reasons for these variations are largely unknown. An increasing number of research workers are active in this field and the Department is currently funding a project in the East Anglian regional health authority to develop an out-patient referral information system. These will help us to understand more fully the underlying behavioural patterns and to what extent these are related to the health needs of patients.

Babies (Malformation)

68. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the reduction in the notification rate for babies with central nervous systems defects.

86. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the notification rate for spina bifida.

Mrs. Currie: Information for both types of malformations are shown in the table. They refer to malformations observed in both live and still births. The statistics are a by-product of the congenital malformations notified to OPCS. These are likely to be an incomplete measure of the total number of affected infants, partly because the notification scheme is voluntary, but, more importantly, because in the interests of obtaining data quickly the notifications refer only to malformations observed at birth or up to seven days after birth.

Notification rates per 10,000 total births of babies born with selected congenital malformations, England and Wales, 1977-1986

Year	Malformations	
	Central nervous system[1]	Spina bifida[2]
1977	32·5	15·3
1978	29·2	14·0
1979	25·5	13·1
1980	22·3	11·4
1981	19·2	10·4
1982	16·1	8·1
1983	14·5	6·7
1984	12·6	5·9
1985	11·0	5·5
1986	9·6	4·0

[1] ICD codes (9th revision)—740, 741, 7432, 7421, 7420, 320-359, 7422, 7424, 7425, 7428, 7429, 7676.
[2] ICD code (9th revision)—741.

Income Support Premiums

69. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what effects the introduction of income support premiums has had on the work load of social security officers.

Mr. Portillo: It is to be expected that income support as a simpler benefit than supplementary benefit will lead to a lesser workload, but it is too early to provide data resulting from monitoring the new system in operation.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham

72. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he will take to ensure that the intensive care unit at Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham, is sufficiently funded so as to ensure that all seriously ill renal patients can obtain treatment.

Mrs. Currie: The allocation of resources to Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham, is a matter for the Central Birmingham district health authority. I understand that the authority will be opening an additional—eighth—bed in the new intensive care unit in July and a further four when funds permit.

The Queen Elizabeth hospital is one of seven centres providing renal treatment in the west midlands and it is for the West Midlands regional health authority to decide the allocations between them. I understand that the regional health authority has increased its funding of the region's renal programme by £320,000 over the last year's levels —a 30 per cent. increase in real terms—and is considering the possibility of increasing this still further.

In-Patient Statistics (North-West)

73. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many in-patient cases are being treated in the north-western region in the latest year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure in 1978.

Mrs. Currie: In 1986, the latest year for which information is available, 624,678 in-patient cases were treated. The comparable figure for 1978 was 511,674.

"Look After Your Heart" Campaign

74. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress of the "Look After Your Heart" campaign.

84. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of Government campaigns on health education for heart disease.

85. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the achievements of the Government's campaign "Look After Your Heart".

Mrs. Currie: "Look After Your Heart"—the first major heart disease prevention campaign in England—was launched in April 1987 with the aim, in its initial stages, of raising public awareness of the major risk factors associated with coronary heart disease and how they might be avoided. It followed previous campaigns such as "Look after Yourself" funded by the Health Education Council.

The campaign is planned as an "umbrella" under which the many local coronary heart disease programmes could be brought together and given increased impact. Community activity has been stimulated and supported in 172 health authorities and 65 local authorities, with "Look After Your Heart" community grants funding some 118 projects to the extent of £260,000. It is planned to continue this scheme into the next phase of the campaign, and we are also looking at ways of supporting longer-term projects.

The campaign has been notably successful in securing the active co-operation of industry and commerce. One way has been through a scheme of "healthy living" contracts, in which employers and organisations undertake to support the principles underlying the campaign by a series of practical innovations which can include, for example, providing no-smoking areas and healthy menus in public restaurants and works canteens, displaying and disseminating campaign material to staff and the public, and introducing "Look After Yourself" courses in exercise, nutrition and stress management. During the first year some 75 companies, employing almost 2 million people, joined the campaign, and many more are waiting to do so.

The Department and the Health Education Authority are consulting widely about the future shape of the "Look After Your Heart" programme. The results from the campaign's first tracking survey show that there has been a greater impact on socio-economic groups C2, D and E, (the groups at which the campaign is primarily aimed) than other socio-economic groups, and that the already high levels of awareness and knowledge of coronary heart disease risk factors have increased appreciably.

Perinatal Mortality Rates

75. **Dame Peggy Fenner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on perinatal mortality rates.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) on 18 May at columns *501-2*.

Consultant Geriatricians

76. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the increase in the number of consultant geriatricians since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The number of permanent paid and honorary consultants in post in the specialty of geriatric medicine increased by 129 from 363 in 1979 to 492 in 1986, an increase of 35·5 per cent.

NHS (Competitive Tendering)

77. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress of competitive tendering in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: As at 31 March 1988, almost all domestic and laundry services and some 76 per cent. of catering services had been put out to tender. Estimated annual savings generated from contracts awarded for the three services totalled £106 million: £28 million from contracts won by outside contractors and £78 million from tenders secured by in-house organisations. I am very satisfied with the progress being made by health authorities in putting other services out to tender and I look forward to future progress.

GP Maternity Units

79. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many general practitioner maternity units have been closed in England and Wales in the past 10 years.

Mrs. Currie: The information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Nineteen general practitioner units were approved for closure between 1979 and 1986.

Health Promotion

82. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how he intends to encourage doctors to do more work in health promotion.

Mrs. Currie: Our plans are set out in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249) published in November 1987. Officials are discussing implementation of the necessary reforms with the family doctors' representatives, the General Medical Services Committee.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield Hallam (Mr. Patnick) on 12 January at columns *128-30*, major changes are to be made in the system of payment to family doctors to encourage them to provide a range of health promotion and preventive activities. We intend to link payment of basic practice allowance to the provision of health promotion and prevention of ill-health. We plan to introduce incentive payments for reaching target levels of population cover for vaccination, immunisation and cancer screening and new payments for arranging and providing regular health promotion sessions for patients. We intend also to pay a fee to a doctor providing an initial clinical assessment for patients registering with the NHS for the first time. We are consulting the doctors' representatives about amending the family doctors' contract with the National Health Service to make health promotion and the prevention of disease including regular health checks a specific part of their terms of service.

Social Benefits

83. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the new transitional arrangements for social benefits are now fully operational.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Members for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and for Leyton (Mr Cohen) earlier today.

Maternity Units (Belper and Ashbourne)

87. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will visit the maternity units at Belper and Ashbourne to discuss their proposed closure.

Mrs. Currie: We have no plans specifically to visit the maternity homes at Belper and Ashbourne. The matter is

essentially one for local discussion at the moment. The proposals would be considered by Ministers only if the community health council opposes them.

Out-patient Departments

88. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to promote the efficiency of hospital out-patient departments.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities are responsible for promoting and monitoring the efficiency of out-patient departments. A booklet "Reducing Waiting time in Out-Patient Departments" which gave advice on the organisation of an efficient out-patients department appointments system was issued to health authorities in 1985. Officials are now considering further initiatives to promote efficiency in out-patients departments.

Nurses (Meetings)

89. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with representatives of nurses.

Mr. Moore: On 23 May, at the annual congress of the Royal College of Nursing I announced the Government's acceptance of the broad thrust of the proposals put forward by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for the reform of nurse education and training. The response we have made is a clear indication of the importance which this Government attach to nurse education. It provides the statutory bodies with the guidance needed to enable them to carry forward their work on the detailed implications of the changes. The proposals are firmly based on the needs of patients and clients, and are designed to ensure that nurses are more appropriately prepared to meet perceived health care needs. I welcome the professions' enthusiastic response to the announcement. A copy of the letter to the chairman of the UKCC giving the Government's response is in the Library.

I also stressed this Government's recognition of the nurses' special position with regard to pay, and our firm commitment to the pay review body. Our acceptance of all five of its reports has clearly demonstrated our regard for the nursing profession. I also highlighted the benefits to the profession of the introduction of the new clinical grading structure, which will reward those nurses who acquire additional clinical skills and take on new duties and responsibilities. It will also provide a valuable incentive for those who wish to remain in clinical practice to do so.

British Diabetic Association

90. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last met the chairman of the British Diabetic Association and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Newton: I met Sir John Nabarro for an informal discussion on 16 July 1987. Among the main topics we touched upon were disposable syringes and needles, which became available on general practitioner prescription on 1 September 1987, and blood glucose test strips, which became available on general practitioner prescription on 1 June 1988.

Rating Reform

91. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the compensatory element to be built into the April 1989 income support rates to reflect 20 per cent. of the average community charge will be, in the case of a couple, double that which is applied to a single person.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 20 May 1988 at column *592*.

Social Security Adjudication

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans any changes in order to improve the standards of decision-making on social security claims, in the light of the annual report of the Chief Adjudication Officer for 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: We are studying the report's recommendations.

Ritalin

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients under the age of 10 years have been given the drug Ritalin at the Maudsley hospital in the last 12 months.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Health Budget

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the projected areas in the health care budget in England and Wales for 1988-89 and 1989-90 after catering for the gross domestic product deflator.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

Gross expenditure—England
£ million (1988-89 prices)

	1988-89	*1989-90*
Hospital and community health services—current	12,091	12,154
Family practitioner services—current	4,687	4,779
Centrally financed services—current	527	519
National Health Service—capital	1,046	1,038
TOTAL	18,351	18,490

These figures are based on table 14.1 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91" (Cm. 288-II). The figures for 1988-89 do not include the addition of £596 million announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 21 April to meet the cost of the review bodies' recommendations on doctors' and nurses' pay. The 1989-90 plans are subject to review in the forthcoming public expenditure survey.

Information in respect of Health Service expenditure in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the main areas of health spending in English regional health authorities.

Mr. Newton: The 1986-87 summarised accounts of regional and district health authorities in England together

with those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals show in total main areas of expenditure as follows:

	£'000
Current expenditure	
Hospital services	8,255,383
Community health services	1,054,580
Other services[1]	572,464
Headquarters administration	434,739
	10,317,166
Capital expenditure	936,291
Total expenditure	11,253,457

[1] Includes ambulance, blood transfusion and mass radiography services, etc.

For analyses of this expenditure to regions and other more detailed England and regional information I refer the hon. Member to the Department's annual booklet "Health Authorities' Annual Accounts—National Summary (England)"—copies of which (for 1986-87 and earlier years) are held in the Library.

Vaccine Administration

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many tetanus vaccines were personally administered by *(a)* medical practitioners and *(b)* pharmacists in each year since 1982;

(2) how many flu' vaccines were personally administered by *(a)* medical practitioners and *(b)* pharmacists in each year since 1982;

(3) if he will take steps to remove the current anomaly whereby medical practitioners administer vaccines free of charge and claim back the cost while pharmacists providing the same vaccine must recover the cost directly from members of the public.

Mr. Newton: The personal administration of vaccines may be undertaken by doctors but not by pharmacists. Information on the number of tetanus and influenza vaccines personally administered by medical practitioners is not available centrally. General medical practitioners are remunerated through fees and allowances for supplying vaccines for personal administration as are pharmacists for supplying vaccines on prescription. In neither case are the cost of the vaccines recovered directly from members of the public, but a prescription charge will be payable (subject to the usual exemptions) where a pharmacist is supplying on prescription. There are no present plans to change these arrangements.

AIDS

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each health authority in England the number of persons suffering from AIDS; and if he will disaggregate the statistics by age and sex;

(2) what is his Department's latest estimate of the number of people in England that are currently HIV positive.

Mr. Newton: The numbers of cases of AIDS reported from each regional health authority are published monthly. Numbers of reported HIV antibody positive persons are published quarterly. Copies of the figures are available in the Library. Estimates of the number of people who are HIV antibody positive based on several factors including the number of known cases of AIDS, the number who may be susceptible to infection, the proportion of those infected who go on to develop AIDS, the varying incubation period and the proportion of those infected who present themselves for testing. It is evident that some of these factors are not precisely quantifiable, so the estimation can only be approximate. A group of experts, under the chairmanship of Sir David Cox, is now considering the estimation of and forecasts for the numbers of people infected with HIV and with AIDS over a two to five-year period.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many terminations of pregnancy have been effected in England because the mother is HIV positive.

Mr. Newton: Of the abortion notifications received for the period 1 January 1983 to 30 September 1987 (the 1987 data being provisional), there have been 17 abortions performed in England where AIDS[1] has been mentioned on the notification form.

[1] International Classification of Disease code 279.1—Deficiency of cell-mediated immunity.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on any research work undertaken by the World Health Organisation into AIDS using chimpanzees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The information we have is that there is currently no World Health Organisation work on AIDS using chimpanzees and none is planned.

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what contact his Department is maintaining with the World Health Organisation in Copenhagen with regard to the spread of AIDS and venereal diseases.

Mr. Newton: The Department maintains close liaison with the World Health Organisation's European regional office in Copenhagen on all their programmes including the communicable diseases programme (which includes sexually transmitted diseases) and the programmes they undertake in conjunction with the global programme on AIDS.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide details of moneys *(a)* made available and *(b)* used by district health authorities in England and Wales in the past 12 months for the purpose of treatment of AIDS victims.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 27 May 1988]:* In 1987-88 the Government made available an additional £25·1 million to health authorities in England as a contribution towards the costs of the provision of HIV and AIDS related services. In 1988-89 a total of £58·6 million has been allocated to help develop preventative, counselling and diagnostic services and to make a contribution towards the cost of care and treatment in hospitals and the community. The allocation of these funds, and any additional funding they may decide is needed, to HIV and AIDS related services is determined by individual authorities in the light of the particular needs in their areas. The allocation of funds in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

School Nurses

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received any representations about the school nursing service; and if he will make a statement listing the duties and responsibilities of school nurses.

Mr. Newton: We have received no representations about the school nursing service. The responsibility for the provision of school health services rests with individual health authorities and this includes the duties and responsibilities of school nurses.

Prescribing Publications

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in his Department's review of prescribing publications funded partly or wholly by his Department; and when he expects to announce the result of this review.

Mr. Newton: We are discussing the review with interested organisations and expect to complete it early next year.

Nurses

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much more pay nurses in inner London can expect to receive as a result of the current year's pay award.

Mr. Newton: Increases will depend on the duties and responsibilities of individual posts regraded within the new clinical grading structure. The table indicates the range of increases in basic pay for the main grades of nurses working in inner London.

Effects of 1988 pay award on selected nursing grades in inner London

Grade	*Old pay scale*[1] *£*	*New pay scale*[2 3] *£*	*Cash increase £*	*Percentage increase*
Student	5,470 to 6,100	5,996 to 6,783	526 to 683	9·6 to 11·2
Nursing Auxiliary	5,495 to 6,785	A. 6,180 to 7,545	A. 685 to 760	A. 12·5 to 11·2
		or	*or*	*or*
		B. 7,309 to 8,254	B. 1,814 to 1,469	B. 33·0 to 21·7
Enrolled Nurse	7,180 to 8,680	C. 8,533 to 9,977	C. 1,353 to 1,297	C. 18·8 to 14·9
		or	*or*	*or*
		D. 9,677 to 10,958	D. 2,497 to 2,278	D. 34·8 to 26·2
Staff Nurse	8,230 to 9,530	D. 9,677 to 10,958	D. 1,447 to 1,428	D. 17·6 to 15·0
		or	*or*	*or*
		E. 10,958 to 12,538	E. 2,728 to 3,008	E. 33·1 to 31·6
Ward Sister	9,930 to 12,930	F. 12,048 to 14,388	F. 2,118 to 1,458	F. 21·3 to 11·3
		or	*or*	*or*
		G. 13,913 to 15,813	G. 3,983 to 2,883	G. 40·1 to 22·3
		or	*or*	*or*
		H. 15,338 to 17,238	H. 5,408 to 4,308	H. 54·5 to 33·3

[1] Includes £930 Inner London Weighting.
[2] Includes £930 Inner London Weighting and new Inner London Supplement of 9 per cent. (max. £958 p.a.) for qualified staff and 5 per cent. (max. £532 p.a.) for unqualified staff.
[3] The lettered scales indicate a range of possible outcomes for individual staff on regrading. Broadly, the higher letters for each grade will apply to those with additional skills, qualifications and responsibilities.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the waiting list for operations in National Health Service hospitals as at June 1979 and June 1987 in each of the following constituencies: *(a)* Amber Valley, *(b)* Mid Worcestershire, *(c)* West Lancashire, *(d)* Staffordshire Moorlands, *(e)* Hendon South, *(f)* Darlington and *(g)* Fylde.

Mr. Newton: The information is not available centrally in precisely the form requested. Details of surgical waiting lists in the district health authorities wholly or mainly covering the parliamentary constituencies are given in the table. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairmen of the district health authorities who may be able to provide information relating to the parliamentary constituencies.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list—Surgical specialties

District Health Authority	*Constituency*	*1979* *March*	*1979* *September*	*1987* *March*	*1987* *September*[1]
South Derbyshire	Amber Valley	5,424	4,422	4,937	4,751
Worcester	Mid Worcestershire	2,000	2,378	3,457	3,320
West Lancashire	West Lancashire	2,509	2,335	2,447	2,142
North Staffordshire	Staffordshire Moorlands	10,295	10,303	8,883	8,633
Barnet	Hendon South	3,922	3,395	3,418	2,608
Darlington	Darlington	2,651	1,797	2,397	2,874
Blackpool, Wyre, Fylde	Fylde	4,635	4,278	4,327	3,686

[1] On a comparable basis with figures prior to September 1987

Social Service Departments (Attacks)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each year from 1979 until 1988 the number of physical attacks on members of local authority social service departments in the course of their duties.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information about assaults on social services staff is not collected centrally.

Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act 1986

Mr. Walters: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when the Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act regulations will be laid before Parliament; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when consideration of the draft rules relating to the Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act will be concluded;

(3) what representations he has received seeking early implementation of the provisions of the Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has himself made representations seeking early implementation of the Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act 1986. Consideration of the draft rules of court has been completed. They were laid before Parliament on 8 June and will come into effect on 1 August when sections 2 and 3 of the Act are implemented. This will give the courts and local authorities time to make the necessary preparations. It is expected that the charge and control regulations will be laid before Parliament in this Session.

Low-income Families

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish a table from the low-income families statistics showing the number of children living in Scotland below, at or up to 40 per cent. above supplementary benefit level in 1979 and 1981, 1983 and 1985; and what proportion of Scottish children they represent in each case;

(2) if he will publish a table from the low-income families statistics showing the number of *(a)* persons and *(b)* households in Scotland below, at or up to 40 per cent. above supplementary benefit level in 1979 and 1985; and what proportion of the Scottish population they represent in each case.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 27 May 1988 at columns *413-14*.

Family Practitioner Committees (Investigation)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what response the Department has made to the National Audit Office investigation into family practitioner committees.

Mr. Newton: The Department has studied the draft report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the management of the family practitioner services. Its representatives will appear before the Public Accounts Committee on 27 June in connection with the Committee's investigation of the report.

Dental Charges

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services under what circumstances a patient will have to pay 100 per cent. of the cost of a course of dental treatment under the new system of dental charges.

Mrs. Currie: Under the proposed fully proportional system of charges no course of treatment or individual treatment will attract a charge of 100 per cent.

Income Support

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether claims in writing for income support forwarded by organisations providing emergency accommodation will be treated as valid claims under the terms of Regulation 4(i) of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: A claim made by an organisation on behalf of a claimant is effective from the date of receipt by the Department but it must be followed up by a detailed statement of circumstances on one of the approved departmental claim forms. A claim can also be made by telephone to the Department provided it is followed up by a properly completed official claim form within one month.

Nottingham District Health Authority

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when he expects Nottingham district health authority to be funded up to 100 per cent. of its resource allocation working party allocation;

(2) if he will make additional financial provision to the Nottingham district health authority to ensure that essential medical equipment, including X-ray, operating theatre, intensive care and labour ward equipment, can be replaced at a higher rate than the current 25 per cent.;

(3) what is the difference, in cash terms, between Nottingham district health authority's current percentage of resource allocation working party allocation and the full resource allocation working party allocation.

Mr. Newton: Regional health authorities are responsible for the allocation of resources to district health authorities. The hon. Member may care, therefore, to write to the chairman of Trent regional health authority for details of the region's policy on allocations to Nottingham.

Hospital Ancillary Workers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of pay increases for hospital ancillary workers will be met by his Department; and what percentage by the district health authorities.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Members for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) and for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on Tuesday 10 May at column *133*.

Ativan

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received any recent representations regarding the side-effect of the drug Ativan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Since 31 March 1988, we have received some 16 letters from hon. Members or members of the public on this matter. Advice to doctors and pharmacists on the problem of dependence on benzodiazepines, of which Ativan is one, was issued by the Committee on Safety of Medicines in "Current Problems 21", a copy of which is in the Library.

Private Acute Sector

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish the research on activity in the private acute sector which followed up the study carried out in 1981 by the university of Sheffield.

Mrs. Currie: It is expected that the Department will receive the completed report on the research into acute hospital care provided by the private sector, which it has funded at the university of Sheffield, within the next one to two months. Discussion about publication will then take place.

Physiotherapy Treatment

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards providing convenient out-of-hospital physiotherapy treatment for patients under the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: It is for individual health authorities and local physiotherapy managers to determine where and how to provide physiotherapy treatment. Many authorities have introduced community and domiciliary physiotherapy services, which allow patients' preferences to be taken into consideration when deciding on the location of treatment. We have actively encouraged these developments.

Family Credit

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he has made to compensate families suffering financial hardship as a result of delays in the processing of applications for family credit.

Mr. Portillo: Arrears of benefit would, of course, be payable, backdated to the start of the award period. Family credit is paid to people in work, who will normally have significant other resources. Where, nevertheless, a family faced serious financial hardship pending an award, they could be considered for a loan from the social fund.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which organisations have made representations to him about family credit form FC2 and information leaflet FB4; what was the nature of those representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Representations have been received from the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and others, suggesting that the formula in form FC2, designed to allow potential claimants to work out whether they are likely to be eligible for family credit, can confuse or mislead. We are considering whether and how the presentation of this information can be improved in later editions to avoid this and any other points which appear to cause difficulty. The same formula appears in leaflet FB4 but we have no record of any representations specifically about that leaflet.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants for family credit since its introduction were not previously in receipt of family income supplement or supplementary benefit.

Mr. Portillo: Information is not available precisely in the form requested. Around 200,000 families were transferred from family income supplement to family credit from 11 April 1988. In addition, up to the end of May, nearly 140,000 claims for family credit had been received, a few of which will be renewal claims from ex-family income supplement cases where the first award of family credit had now expired.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to monitor the number of claimants receiving family credit as a direct transition from family income supplement.

Mr. Portillo: When existing family income supplement recipients were reassessed for family credit from 11 April 1988 a precise record was kept of the number awarded the new benefit. As expected, the vast majority of ex-family income supplement cases have become entitled to family credit.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many applicants for family credit have applied for this benefit because they are no longer eligible for income support.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available. Supplementary benefit recipients who were not eligible for income support because they were working 24 hours a week or more, and who had dependent children, were sent a claim form for family credit, but it is not known how many of them have actually made a claim.

New Cancer Hospital, Southend

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what assessment he has made of the extra capital costs likely to accrue as a result of the decision by the North-East Thames regional health authority to build a new cancer hospital at Southend and refurbish some existing facilities in its area instead of building the new hospital at Harold Wood and abandoning those existing facilities;

(2) what assessment he has made of the extra revenue costs likely to accrue as a result of the decision by the North-East Thames regional health authority to build a new cancer hospital at Southend and refurbish some existing facilities in its area instead of building the new hospital at Harold Wood and abandoning those existing facilities.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of the North-East Thames regional health authority about the funding of cancer services within the region.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the number of claimants of mobility allowance who will reach the age of 75 years in November 1989;

(2) if he will estimate the cost of abolishing the upper age limit on entitlement to mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: Recipients of mobility allowance, except those who have transferred from the former invalid vehicle scheme and who are not subject to this age limit, will not reach age 75 before 29 November 1989. Few will thus reach that age in November 1989 but the number who have reached age 75 will grow progressively after that date. It is estimated that about 500 recipients would benefit from the abolition of the age limit in the first year at a cost of under £500,000. This would rise to over 6,000 recipients, at a cost of around £8 million in 1991-2, with the numbers continuing to rise in subsequent years.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to increase the upper age limit of 75 years on entitlement to mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on 10 May at column *82*.

Drug Prescribing

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South of 23 May, *Official Report*, column *88*, if he will take steps to require doctors prescribing unlicensed drugs on a named person basis to inform his Department; and if he will ensure that full records of such prescribing are kept and are publicly available.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to require doctors to notify the Department of such prescribing.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when was the last occasion on which he met representatives of speech therapists to discuss their salaries, career structure and funding by his Department;

(2) if he will reorganise the career structure of speech therapists;

(3) what are the minimum and maximum rates of pay of speech therapists; and what steps he intends to take to increase them;

(4) if he will undertake a reassessment of the role of speech therapists and seek to elevate their status and pay.

Mr. Newton: Pay is a matter for negotiation in the appropriate Whitley council. I understand that a claim to increase the pay of speech therapists from 1 april 1988 has been received and will be discussed at a joint meeting on 27 June. The last joint meeting on 9 December 1987 resulted in the agreement for a comprehensive restructuring of speech therapist grades effective from 1 January 1988. The minimum salary for a newly qualified speech therapist is now £8,250. The maximum salary for the most senior grade, available to both managers and holders of posts requiring the provision of an exceptionally high level of clinical expertise, is £19,207.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his estimate of the number of stroke victims, elderly people and children with speech problems who require speech therapy; and what steps he is taking to ensure that their needs are met;

(2) what is the average number of speech therapists available per 100 children needing their help.

Mr. Newton: I regret that there are no accurate estimates available of the number of speech and language impaired people in the population. The Department is currently sponsoring a research study by Dr. Philip Davies, Rivermead hospital, Oxford, which should produce improved prevalence and incidence data, when completed next year. However, not all those with communication problems necessarily need or would benefit from speech therapy, so it is unlikely to be possible to derive the kind of ratio the right hon. Member seeks.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many speech therapists are *(a)* women and *(b)* men.

Mr. Newton: At 30 September 1986 there were 2,510 whole-time equivalent speech therapists in England. Fifty of these were male. The numbers employed are a matter for individual health authorities.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the basic educational requirement for speech therapists.

Mr. Newton: In order to obtain employment in the National Health Service, there is a statutory requirement to hold a certificate, issued by the College of Speech Therapists, certifying success in an examination approved by the college. All such current examinations are at first degree level, but many practising speech therapists hold diploma level qualifications gained before speech therapy became a degree level entry profession. Entry requirements for degrees in speech therapy are a matter for the individual educational establishment.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of unfilled posts for speech therapists at special schools.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available centrally and could not be provided in the form requested. It is for individual authorities to decide on the deployment of speech therapists.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many speech therapists have left the profession in each of the past five years; and what proportion they are of the total;

(2) what is the present annual rate of recruitment of speech therapists; and what has been the comparable rate in the last five years.

Mr. Newton: Information is collected centrally only on the number of speech therapists employed. The total number employed for the past five years in England is shown in the table.

NHS Speech Therapists in Post[1]: England

Date	Staff in Post Whole-time equivalent[2]	Increase over previous year Whole-time equivalent[2]	Increase over previous year Percentage[3]
30 September 1982	1,900	—	—
30 September 1983	1,970	70	3·7
30 September 1984	2,150	170	8·8
30 September 1985	2,340	190	9·0
30 September 1986	2,510	170	7·2

Source: DHSS Annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.
Notes:
[1] Excludes helpers
[2] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalents.
[3] Percentages are calculated on unrounded figures.

The figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what steps he has taken to assess the increased demand for speech therapists in the last five years;

(2) how many speech therapists there are in England and Wales; if he has any evidence of shortage in some areas; and what steps he intends to take to increase the present number of speech therapists.

Mr. Newton: It is for individual health authorities to assess the demand for speech therapists and determine the appropriate level of speech therapy provision. Health authorities have taken account of increased demand and the numbers of speech therapists employed has increased by 32 per cent. from September 1982 to September 1986, the last five years for which data are available.

There is no shortage of speech therapists in authorised posts, although I am aware of reports of some isolated instances of difficulties in filling posts in certain specialties or geographical areas. The numbers of speech therapists employed in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Young People (Benefits)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of 16 and 17-year-olds in *(a)* each regional authority in Scotland and *(b)* Britain who are expected to be in receipt of (i) income support and housing benefit, (ii) housing benefit only and (iii) board and lodgings payments in the years 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Portillo: Estimates are not available.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many 16 and 17-year-olds in *(a)* each regional authority in Scotland and *(b)* Britain were in receipt of (i) income support and housing benefit, (ii) housing benefit only and (iii) board and lodgings payments for each year since 1984.

Mr. Portillo: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as can be obtained as soon as possible.

Board and Lodging Payments

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the proposed changes to the structure of board and lodging payments for residents in hostels, including women's aid refuges, residential homes and nursing homes.

Mr. Portillo: We are currently reviewing income support payments for people in hostels. No changes have yet been proposed. We are considering the payment of benefit for people in residential care homes and nursing homes in the light of a number of recent reports, including Sir Roy Griffiths' review of community care.

Student Nurses

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when he expects to be able to publish details of the timetable of the scheme to change the system of finance available to student nurses;

(2) whether all student nurses will receive student maintenance awards at a given date rather than phasing in the system of student finance while discounting the present system of remuneration for student nurses.

Mr. Newton: Final decisions on the Project 2000 proposals and the time scale of their implementation, which will be phased, will depend on the outcome of discussions with the statutory nursing bodies about the further work that needs to be done.

Maternity Units

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on the role of general practitioner maternity units in *(a)* towns and cities and *(b)* the rural areas;

(2) what is his Department's advice to regional and district health authorities on the criteria to be adopted for maternity unit provisions in the rural areas.

Mrs. Currie: Good practice in maternity services is described in three reports produced by the maternity services advisory committee. These reports have been commended to health authorities and offer advice across the full range of maternity services.

Midwives

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's advice to regional and district heath authorities on the number of qualified midwives who should be employed for *(a)* a given number of patients and *(b)* the total population of each authority.

Mr. Newton: It is for individual health authorities to determine the number of qualified midwives they require in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Foetal Tissue

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to the reply of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *557*, whether the women whose foetuses were to be

used to provide material which might be passed on for transplant use were told the specific purpose for which such material would be used; and if he will make a statement;

(2) pursuant to the reply of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *557*, if he will identify the abortion centre to which he refers from which human foetal tissue was made available for transplant purposes.

Mr. Newton: It is not appropriate to identify the home involved, in view of the need to safeguard confidentiality for individual patients. However all women undergoing abortion at the home whose foetuses may be used to provide material for research purposes are invited to sign a declaration to the effect that they have no special wishes concerning the disposal of material arising from their pregnancy. Information about the specific purpose for which material might be used is given if requested. The home does not hold records to show whether such additional information was requested in these particular cases.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *557*, if he will seek to make available through the Library copies of the minutes of the meetings at which the local ethical committees which gave permission for the use of foetal tissue in transplant operations undertook the careful and prolonged consideration of the issue to which he refers.

Mr. Newton: Minutes of local ethical committees are not held centrally. Local ethical committees are responsible to the relevant district health authority and my hon. Friend may like to approach Sandwell district health authority direct.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *557*, if he will list, indicating the nature of the involvement in each case, all the personnel of the Birmingham university medical centre who were involved in the transplanting of human foetal tissue to which he refers.

Mr. Newton: This information is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to approach the Birmingham university medical centre direct.

Incomes

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the average and median projected income before and after tax for the financial year 1988-89 for *(a)* families with children, *(b)* married couples without children below pensionable age, *(c)* single people below pensionable age, *(d)* couples of pensionable age and *(e)* single people of pensionable age, giving the number of couples or people which fall into each category and the percentage of people in each category falling below the average income for that category.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that reliable estimates for 1988-89 are not available.

Birmingham Children's Hospital

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children there were on the waiting list for cardiac surgery at the Birmingham children's hospital on each day for the period 1 May to 17 May.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 23 May 1988]:* The Department is routinely informed of the number of children awaiting cardiac surgery at the Birmingham children's hospital once a month. On 5 May the number was 100. Between then and 3 June, 30 children were operated on, of which 14 were from the waiting list and 16 were emergency cases or priority new referrals. Fourteen were added to the waiting list, which accordingly remained at 100. 83 of the 107 children awaiting cardiac surgery last Christmas have now been treated. The unit has treated 102 open-heart cases so far this year compared with 126 in all of 1987.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 16 June 1988

ENERGY

Nuclear Accidents (Notification)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the agreements he has with each country in the European Community and the Nordic countries for the notification of nuclear accidents in *(a)* their countries and *(b)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom is a signatory to the IAEA convention on early notification and is a party to the European Community arrangements for the exchange of information in the event of a nuclear accident.

Bilateral agreements with Norway and Denmark were concluded last year and there is a similar agreement with France dating from 1983.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether the conditions permitting the export of plutonium from Sellafield to Japan have been met in full; and what total quantity of plutonium is expected to be involved in the contract;

(2) whether the agreement to export plutonium to Japan from Sellafield will be reviewed in the event of Japan's fast breeder reactor programme being cut back.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 14 June 1988.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Home Office represents my Department's interests at NATO civil emergency planning boards and conducts liaison arrangements through the senior civil emergency planning committee. My Department is directly represented on the NATO petroleum planning committee and its working group, which meets regularly. The Department participates in relevant NATO exercises.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will identify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department, in conjunction with the energy industries, is required to prepare and has plans, including those for home defence, to meet any civil emergency arising in the production, supply and distribution of energy fuels in the United Kingdom as covered by the Energy Act 1976. The total number of departmental staff, including part-time staff, engaged on this work is 30. The annual budgets for the years listed were £240,000; £295,000 and £317,500 respectively.

Oil and Pipelines Agency

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he intends to review the role of the Oil and Pipelines Agency: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Oil and Pipelines Agency (OPA) is responsible for collecting royalty in kind, for maintaining the arrangements for state participation in oil production in the United Kingdom continental shelf and for managing the Government pipeline and storage system (GPSS). Following review, the Government have decided to cease taking royalty in kind. Notice is being given to the companies concerned that the final chargeable period for royalty in kind will run from 1 July to 31 December 1988, and that from 1 January 1989 all royalty will be taken in cash. With the ending of the trading activities of OPA, it will be my intention to phase out the participation arrangements with the oil companies. We shall be discussing with OPA and the industry the best means of achieving this. Discussions are taking place with my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, with a view to the GPSS being transferred to his Department.

Nuclear Technology

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, columns *300-1*, which countries have been the destination of transfers of nuclear technology, reprocessing and waste management which have been subject to Government approval.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 24 May 1988]:* To date, one such transfer, to Japan, has been approved.

PRIME MINISTER

Port of Leith

Q43. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to the port of Leith.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Charles Powell

Q102. **Mr Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what procedures are required to be followed by civil servants when they are approached with requests to give interviews or pose for photographs for use in press articles; how those procedures were followed in relation to the photograph of Mr. Charles Powell which appeared in the *Illustrated London News* of April 1988; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Such requests would be judged on their merits. No interview was sought or given in the case referred to in the question.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on the implementation of the Government's financial management initiative throughout Departments since its introduction.

The Prime Minister: In the Treasury minute (Cm. 236) in response to the 13th report from the Committee of Public Accounts, the Government noted that it shared the Controller and Auditor General's broad conclusions that real progress was being made in the development of suitable systems and that there were no serious shortcomings in the Departments examined by the National Audit Office in 1986. We shall shortly be making available a report on the progress being made with budgeting in Departments which covers the key system elements of the financial management initiative. As I announced on 18 February 1988, at column 1149, we have accepted the main recommendations in the efficiency unit's report "Improving Management in Government: the Next Steps". The implementation of these recommendations will further reinforce the principles of the FMI and demonstrate clearly the Government's commitment to maintaining the momentum of our overal programme to improve value for money.

Dr. Sergio Ramirez

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister why she is unable to receive Dr. Sergio Ramirez, Vice-President of Nicaragua, on his forthcoming visit to Europe; when was the last time she received an invitation to meet the Vice-President; what was her response; when she last met the Vice-President of Nicaragua; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Nicaraguan ambassador informed us that Dr. Ramirez, whom I last met in February 1985, wished to visit the United Kingdom on 11 and 12 July during a tour of European capitals. I did not intend to receive him on this occasion, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs agreed to do so. I now understand, however, that Dr. Ramirez has decided not to include the United Kingdom in his tour.

Ministerial Responsibilities

Mr. Strang: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list those Ministers, other than the Secretary of State for Employment, who answer parliamentary questions about the establishment and activities of the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive and their subordinate agencies; and if, for each Minister, she will list the precise aspects for which he is responsible.

The Prime Minister: The Secretary of State for Employment is responsible for all matters concerned with the staffing and establishment of the Health and Safety Commission and Executive which do not fall to myself as arising from the position of HSE staff as civil servants. He is also responsible for all the aspects of the commission's and the executive's work which concern primarily the protection of workers, and the protection of the public from the generality of hazards.

Any Secretary of State may, having consulted the Secretary of State for Employment, direct or ask the commission to do work on particular matters. The commission may also submit proposals for regulations or approved codes of practice to any Minister responsible for provisions which are relevant statutory provisions for the purposes of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Secretaries of State with responsibilities which currently involve the commission and the executive, for whose activities they may answer in Parliament, are principally the Secretary of State for Energy, who has ministerial responsibility for nuclear safety in England and Wales; the Secretary of State for Scotland, who has a like responsibility there; the Home Secretary, who is responsible for the security of explosives; the Secretary of State for Transport, who has general responsibility for the protection of the public from hazards connected with transportation and harbours; the Secretary of State for Social Services who, in exercising certain of his responsibilities for public health, and the health and safety of NHS staff, relies on the advice of the commission; and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, particularly in relation to part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 and its associated regulations.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is extensively supported by the commission and the executive in relation to the negotiations of European directives and standards of a harmonising character, many of which have implications for safety and health, and his responsibilities for consumer safety at some points impinge on the commission's work.

The Health and Safety Executive also exercises many functions which impinge on the responsibilities of the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales. Questions wholly or partly directed to the executive's activities could fall to be answered by those Ministers.

Medical and Dental Officers (Armed Forces)

Mr. Whitney: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about the pay of medical and dental officers in the armed forces.

The Prime Minister: The Armed Forces Pay Review Body has submitted to me a supplementary report on the pay of medical and dental officers in the armed forces which recommends increases of between 4 and 7·6 per cent. with effect from 1 April 1988. These awards are derived from those to civilian doctors and dentists which I announced in the House on 21 April 1988, and the Government have decided to accept them in full. The report has been published as Cm. 396 and copies are available in the Vote Office.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between the Cabinet Office and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Cabinet Office is not represented on any NATO civil emergency planning board or committee, but it is kept informed of the work of these bodies, is consulted as appropriate by the relevant United

Kingdom representative and is involved in the formation of the United Kingdom's policy on issues that arise within them.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will identify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in the Cabinet Office, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for such work in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Cabinet Office is responsible for the co-ordination of the Government's civil emergency and home defence planning. Nine staff are primarily engaged on this work. The annual budget for such work in the last three financial years is as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1985-86	0·27
1986-87	0·35
1987-88	0·35

Office Costs

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Prime Minister what has been the percentage increase or decrease in the cost of running her office at 10 Downing street and Chequers since 1979.

The Prime Minister: Since 1979 there have been several developments which have affected how the costs of running my office are assessed, including:

Introduction of charging for aircraft by the Ministry of Defence in 1981-82;

Abolition of the CPRS in 1983, and the absorption of some of its staff within the No. 10 Policy Unit;

Introduction of charging for buildings and services by the PSA in 1983-84;

Introduction of charging for service personnel at Chequers by the MOD in 1984-85;

Changes in the allocation of charges for the Government Car Service in 1984-85; and

Inclusion of costs of office services from 1986-87.

When the effects of these developments are excluded (as far as it is possible to do so) and the result expressed in constant price terms, the cost of running 10 Downing street and Chequers has decreased by 1·61 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1987-88.

Engagements

Mrs. Virgina Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 June.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 June.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 June.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 June.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 June.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Nursery Education

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science by what date he expects to achieve the target figures for provision of part-time nursery education, set out in the 1972 White Paper "A Framework for Expansion", of 50 per cent. of three-year-olds and 90 per cent. of four-year-olds.

Mr. Dunn: Taking account of all forms of provision, we are not far short of the levels of participation the White Paper recommended: virtually all rising-fives, three quarters of other four-year-olds and one third of three-year-olds are in school, and over half the three-to-four-year-old population attend playgroups.

Mathematics

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from industry about the mathematical ability of school leavers.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received no direct representations from industry about the mathematical ability of school leavers. However, there is evidence that standards of mathematical achievement in England and Wales, particularly standards achieved by less able pupils, are lower than they should be. Our proposals for a national curriculum, with clearly prescribed attainment targets and programmes of study for mathematics, backed up by national assessment and testing, will help to raise standards.

Truancy

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to require education authorities to make periodic returns to his Department of the percentage of truancy by 14 and 15-year-old children; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on 26 November, at column *275*.

Open University

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met officials of the Open University to discuss funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend is advised on all matters relating to the Open University, including funding, by an independent visiting committee. This year the committee has met the university on two occasions, most recently on 7 June.

Exporters (Training)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *259*, what plans he has to extend the provision for training to exporters for the Japanese market.

Mr. Jackson: As I said in my reply of 13 May, the network of language export training centres is capable of

providing training to exporters for the Japanese market. The network has been established under the local collaborative projects scheme, which is jointly funded through the Department's professional, industrial and commercial updating programme and the Training Commission. The network is currently being extended to give full nationwide coverage. The centres will also have the potential to use open learning techniques, thereby increasing the opportunities for access by business. The Department of Education and Science is in consultation with the Department of Trade and Industry on how to expand the demand for the network's Japanese services as well as other possible ways of enhancing Japanese language training for exporters.

Polytechnics and Colleges

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now authorise the release to the Association of Polytechnic Teachers and the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education copies of the consultative document on articles of government which he has been discussing with directors of polytechnics and principals of colleges.

Mr. Jackson: The Government intend to circulate at an early date draft guidance on articles of government for the polytechnics and colleges for consultation with interested bodies, including these associations.

GCSE

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what money has been allocated nationally for the provision of school library facilities with regard to the introduction and running of the general certificate of secondary education examination system; what figure has been allocated to each local education authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government's spending plans for 1988-89 include an extra £10 million for secondary school libraries in recognition of the heightened pressure for improvements resulting from the introduction of the GCSE. In addition to the above, over £100 million has been allowed in the plans for GCSE-related expenditure, of which £10 million is supported by specific grant for books and equipment. It is, however, for local authorities themselves to decide individually on the priority that they wish to give to secondary school library provision from the resources available to them.

Education Buildings

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what bids were submitted by local education authorities for the additional funding made available by his Department for the improvement of educational buildings in inner city areas; what allocations have been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Forty authorities which cover an urban programme area submitted supplementary plans totalling £89 million. Those are currently under consideration and we expect to announce additional allocations to some authorities shortly.

Teachers (Safeguarding Payments)

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to him regarding the present annual cost of safeguarding payments to teachers *(a)* nationally and *(b)* for a typical local education authority that has recently undertaken a major redeployment exercise; whether his draft circular on local financial delegation permits continued safeguarding outside allocated school budgets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is not available. However, the cost of safeguarding nationally will have diminished greatly from October 1987, when the restructuring of teachers' pay led to many formerly safeguarded teachers becoming entitled to an incentive allowance in their present post. The draft circular on financial delegation states that in exceptional cases LEAs might wish to offer compensation outside the delegated budget for the additional costs to a school of taking on a teacher with a safeguarded incentive allowance. My right hon. Friend would expect this item to be limited in extent.

Teachers (Salaries)

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to him as to the number and proportion of schools that have staff in post at a total salary cost greater than the pro rata amount of the local authority's salary budget for schools apportioned between schools according to pupil numbers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Such information could be extracted from the Department's administrative records only at disproportionate cost.

Schools (Financial Delegation)

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy that any scheme of financial delegation to schools should provide sufficient funds in every case to enable the continued employment of the present teaching staff on the assumption that the number of pupils remains constant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Government do not intend to impose a single model scheme of financial delegation. Subject to the passage of the Education Reform Bill, it will be for each local education authority to prepare and submit its own scheme for approval. My right hon. Friend has issued for comment a draft consultative document which envisages that the budget of each school under a scheme of financial delegation should be based primarily on pupil numbers, weighted for differences in age. It will be for the governing body to determine the staffing required to meet the current and changing educational needs and priorities of the school within its delegated budget.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the "School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 1988" will be published.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The "School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 1988" was published this morning.

I have now made an order which will give effect to the provisions in this document. It provides for the implementation of the recommendations on pay rates of the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions. A circular has also been sent today to each local education authority. Copies of the 1988 document and the circular have been placed in the Vote Office.

Scottish Universities

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* undergraduate students and *(b)* postgraduate students in each of the Scottish universities came from outside the United Kingdom in each academic year from 1978-79.

Mr. Jackson: The information is shown in the following table.

Full-time students from outside the United Kingdom in Scottish Universities

	Academic year beginning								
	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Undergraduates									
Aberdeen	254	256	253	175	165	168	266	438	567
Dundee	212	187	190	205	187	157	147	133	143
Edinburgh	519	455	476	434	387	419	373	509	499
Glasgow	321	413	414	366	422	521	602	683	745
Heriot-Watt	335	316	305	260	273	354	375	445	410
St. Andrews	243	266	206	203	180	236	271	358	414
Stirling	205	218	207	157	102	104	105	122	226
Strathclyde	386	386	368	419	441	508	570	614	597
Total	2,475	2,497	2,419	2,219	2,157	2,467	2,709	3,302	3,601
Postgraduates									
Aberdeen	222	188	164	148	143	146	149	164	199
Dundee	202	160	165	157	94	90	110	108	136
Edinburgh	523	426	370	365	401	369	354	424	494
Glasgow	241	288	235	228	260	293	353	540	615
Heriot-Watt	120	121	113	114	148	131	157	183	229
St. Andrews	86	85	77	80	72	67	72	89	111
Stirling	68	40	51	61	81	101	137	144	202
Strathclyde	479	471	433	422	451	539	569	632	699
Total	1,941	1,779	1,608	1,575	1,650	1,736	1,901	2,284	2,685

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* undergraduate students and *(b)* postgraduate students were studying at each Scottish university, by parental socio-economic class, as defined by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, in each academic year since 1978-79.

Mr. Jackson: Information on the parental socio-economic class for students at individual universities is not available.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* undergraduate mature students and *(b)* postgraduate mature students there have been in each Scottish university since the academic year 1978-79.

Mr. Jackson: The available information is given in the table.

Mature new entrants to individual Scottish universities

Undergraduates (Aged 21+)	Academic year beginning								
	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Aberdeen	86	61	62	33	50	52	113	196	174
Dundee	44	31	37	41	33	18	28	31	39
Edinburgh	110	68	80	73	78	99	64	144	123
Glasgow	89	99	70	74	112	199	141	218	189
Heriot-Watt	97	47	63	64	91	140	118	147	96
St. Andrews	53	76	44	39	45	65	66	72	79
Stirling	56	43	42	34	11	30	44	50	103
Strathclyde	107	138	114	160	139	192	231	194	190
Total	642	563	512	518	559	797	805	1,052	993
Postgraduates (Aged 25+)[1]									
Total	536	516	611	558	586	637	691	731	818

[1] Excludes students domiciled outside the United Kingdom. Breakdown between universities is not available.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department has no arrangements for liaison with the bodies mentioned.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will identify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, and the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department has no formal terms of reference for these activities. No staff were employed on them and there was no budget for the years in question.

Education Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take into account rates of truancy when considering the expenditure requirements of inner city education authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: The needs of inner city authorities for spending on education are assessed as part of the assessment of grant-related expenditure for rate support grant purposes. There is an additional educational needs allowance based on socio-economic factors, but we do not believe that it would be desirable to include in the assessment a direct measure of truancy.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Home Leave)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements cover financial assistance for prisoners on home leave where the householder qualifies for income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All prisoners on home leave receive travelling expenses and subsistence for the journey. Householders who are in receipt of income support may apply for financial assistance under paragraph 6304 of the social fund manual, but the operation of these arrangements is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Violence (Town Centres)

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent assessment he has made of the level of violence in town centres of England and Wales, other than large inner city areas, and what steps are being taken to counteract such violence.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has referred in a number of recent speeches, including that to the Police Federation last month, to our concern at this serious problem. We have also received the report of the survey into the extent of the problem recently carried out by the Association of Chief Police Officers in consultation with the Home Office. Officials and representatives of the association are now examining together the problems faced by the police in tackling this sort of disorder and how best to overcome them.

We have already taken a number of steps to increase police powers and capacity to tackle violent crime and disorder. We have strengthened the powers available to the police to deal with public disorder and have brought before Parliament proposals to prohibit the sale of specified offensive weapons and to make it an offence to be in possession of a knife in a public place without good reason.

Since 1979 we have approved 4,327 additional posts for provincial forces, and police strength in these forces has increased by 6,808. The link between misuse of alcohol and this type of disorder is clear, and that is one reason why in the Licensing Act 1988 the law against under-age drinking has been strengthened.

Prison Officer Peter Shaw

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations regarding the transfer application of Prison Officer Peter Shaw, of Her Majesty's prison, Grendon.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Apart from the correspondence with Mr. Shaw himself about his request for transfer, one letter has been received in the Department in support of his application.

Mr. G. Bacon

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to why the home of Mr. George Bacon, at 7 Herbert road, Manor Park, London E.12, was raided on 30 March; and what were the results.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that a warrant was sought and obtained in order to search Mr. Bacon's house for stolen electrical equipment and household items. No stolen property was found.

Police Federation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what financial support is given by Her Majesty's Government to the Police Federation or its officers; and for what purposes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A contribution of 85 per cent. is made through the common police services arrangements to the salaries of the chairman, secretary, and treasurer of the Police Federation's joint central committee, the remainder being met by the federation itself. The travelling and subsistence expenses of joint central committee members attending certain meetings are also reimbursed by the same means. A small sum is also payable for the secretarial expenses incurred by the Police Federation on behalf of the staff side of the Police Negotiating Board. The size of these contributions amounted to about £72,000 in 1987-88. These payments are made mainly in pursuance of the recommendations of the Edmund-Davies committee report on the "Structure and Role of Police Staff Associations" (1979, Cmnd. 7633).

In addition, police authorities provide locally for office facilities, time off for part-time officers, the salaries of full-time officers, and travelling expenses for meetings and conference expenses. Fifty one per cent. of these costs are met through the police specific grant paid by the Government.

Adult Education (London)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to develop links

between the chief education officer at the Home Office and the separate London boroughs, which have to establish their individual adult education departments on the abolition of the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The draft guidance issued by the Department of Education and Science to inner London boroughs states that the arrangements for education in Prison Department establishments will be the subject of discussion between the DES, the Home Office, ILEA and the councils concerned.

Arrangements for these discussions will be made as soon as possible.

Prisoners (Education)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently receiving adult education services from the Inner London education authority community education department.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On the most recent date for which information is readily available, the total attendances for day and evening classes in the five prison establishments within the Inner London education authority area was 771.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to promote arrangements by individual boroughs to ensure continuing adult education for prisoners when they return to the community after serving their sentence, subsequent to the abolition of the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has no powers to ensure that the LEAs provide continuing adult education for prisoners when they are returned to the community after serving their sentences. Each LEA has to balance priorities in the light of an assessment of needs and of available resources.

Discussions will be held between the Department of Education and Science, the Home Office, ILEA and those councils which will be concerned with delivery in the five London prisons and this will provide an opportunity to review provision in the community. The Home Office will encourage all London boroughs to make provision as appropriate.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the letter from the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, sent to him on 18 April, about an alleged miscarriage of justice.

Mr. Hurd: I wrote to the right hon. Member on 9 June.

Michael Ryan

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames Valley police as to how many *(a)* persons who made written statements to police officers and *(b)* solicitors representing persons who made written statements to police officers, concerning matters leading up to the shootings by the late Michael Ryan in Hungerford, have requested copies of their written statements to police officers from the chief constable; what were the dates of such requests; whether copies have been given or sent to those persons or their solicitors; and when the chief constable intends to deal with those requests to which he has not as yet given an answer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police that no such requests have been received.

Prison Building

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there are any plans to build a new prison on the site of New Hall hospital, Scarisbrick, near Southport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans to build a prison on this site.

Police and Military Joint Tactical Doctrine

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the nature and purpose of the recently developed police and military joint tactical doctrine.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The primary responsibility for the internal security of the United Kingdom rests with the police, whether in peacetime or in war. Under common law the armed forces are required to make their best endeavours to come to the aid of the police if requested to do so. The joint tactical doctrine reaffirms those general principles in relation to planning and operational liaison between the police and the military during times of crisis and war.

Courts (Staff Shortages)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many court hearings have been cancelled within the past year because of staff shortages.

Mr. John Patten: The information is not available centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many court hearings in Yorkshire and Humberside have been cancelled within the last year because of staff shortages.

Mr. John Patten: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the reasons for the current shortage of justices clerks.

Mr. John Patten: There is no shortage of justices clerks. Concern has been expressed that rates of pay are not sufficient to recruit and retain court clerks, especially those qualified as barrister or solicitor. Rates of pay and conditions of service for magistrates courts staff in England and Wales, other than in inner London, are set by the joint negotiating committee (JNC) for magistrates courts staff. I understand that the JNC is collecting information on recruitment and retention of staff and the reasons for any shortages, and will consider this when discussing a pay settlement for 1988. I shall give careful consideration to the settlement proposed.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many justices clerks in the Yorkshire and Humberside region have within the last year left posts in magistrates courts to take up positions with the Crown Prosecution Service.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that no justices clerks have left in this way. Information about court clerks is not readily available. I shall be writing to the hon. Member.

Forensic Science Service

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what quantitative and qualitative effects upon the casework for the forensic science service he expects to flow from his recent proposals for the staffing of that service and his intention to maintain the allocation of resources to the service at their present levels.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The current proposals for the staffing of the Home Office forensic science service are intended to enhance its ability to meet the demands on it, by increasing the total number of officers reporting cases to the courts, and enabling the service to recruit and retain the staff needed for this work. The total resources available to the service will be maintained at their present level, but we will keep under review the case for increasing them.

Life Sentences

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of recommendations of the Parole Board for release of people serving non-mandatory life sentences have been overturned by him.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During 1987, the most recent year for which figures are available, my right hon. Friend was unable to accept five of 29 recommendations for release made by the Parole Board during 1987 in respect of prisoners serving non-mandatory life sentences.

Ticket Touting

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation to make ticket touting at sporting or other events a criminal offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans for such legislation.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were granted temporary admission in each of the years from 1982 to 1986, 1987 and in 1988 up to the present time; and how many such persons still remain.

Mr. Renton: The total numbers of persons granted temporary admission to the United Kingdom in the years 1982, 1983 and 1984 were 6,584, 7,292 and 8,527 respectively. The information available for 1985 onwards was given in reply to a question from the hon. Member on 22 April, at column *594*. Information on the numbers of such persons granted temporary admission who still remain in the United Kingdom is not available.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons who arrived in Britain as visitors and who have subsequently married persons settled in Britain (i) are awaiting interview and (ii) have been interviewed and await a decision.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Charities (Street Collections)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek powers to standardise the procedure and forms involved in applications to make cash collections in the street for approved charities.

Mr. John Patten: Most licensing authorities have adopted street collection regulations which follow closely the model contained in the schedule to the Charitable Collections (Transitional Provisions) Order 1974. All street collection regulations require my right hon. Friend's confirmation before coming into force. Following a recommendation of the Woodfield report on the supervision of charities, we are reviewing the law relating to public collections, including these arrangements.

Union Flag

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to ban the disfiguring with words and slogans of the Union flag.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Football Matches (Policing)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the charges to each professional football club in London for police services in the season 1987-88; and what amount each club has paid.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the information is as follows:

Club	*Season 1987-88*	
	Charged £	*Paid* £
Arsenal	161,875·96	156,065·68
Brentford	34,078·68	34,078·68
Charlton	49,273·65	49,273·65
Chelsea	168,257·86	147,740·45
Crystal Palace	37,173·59	34,393·90
Fulham	26,526·79	26,526·79
Leyton Orient	17,509·17	16,958·86
Millwall	57,693·28	57,693·28
Queen's Park Rangers	129,564·28	129,564·28
Tottenham Hotspur	153,785·36	141,372·30
West Ham United	176,303·08	176,303·08
Wimbledon	81,354·26	81,354·26
TOTAL	1,093,395·96	1,051,325·21

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding amendment of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to bring private clubs, with both female and male members, within the scope of the Act; and what action he is taking.

Mr. John Patten: A number of right hon. and hon. Members have made representations recently about the call which the organisation "Women in Golf" has made for a change in the law. In its recent report "Equal Treatment for Men and Women" the Equal Opportunities Commission included a proposal to bring private clubs with both female and male members within the scope of the Sex Discrimination Act. I would refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to her questions on this on 14 March.

Police (Assaults)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about assaults on police officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware of the concern of the police service over the increasing frequency of assaults. My right hon. Friend has therefore asked Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary to collect from forces in England and Wales the figures of assaults on police officers and to publish them in his annual report. This will enable the problem to be more accurately assessed.

Firearms Certificates

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Council of Ministers will be

considering the European Economic Community proposal for the mutual recognition of firearms certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The position remains as described by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in reply to my hon. Friend's question of 14 January, at column *352*.

Risley Remand Centre

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future of the Risley remand centre.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The future of Risley remand centre is linked with the longer-term strategic plans for local prison accommodation in the north-west. Liverpool and Preston prisons are planned to become local prisons in 1989. We intend that Risley will adopt the role of a local prison as soon as possible thereafter. In the meantime, building work at the establishment will proceed on two fronts. A rolling programe of refurbishment of existing living accommodation has begun and will be completed in autumn 1990. A larger programme of expansion and redevelopment at the establishment is scheduled to start by summer 1989. This will provide new inmate living accommodation with integral sanitation in the cells and better facilities for staff, inmates and visitors. The work is due to be completed in stages between 1991 and 1994.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Home Office officials represent the United Kingdom on the NATO senior civil emergency planning committee, which undertakes the direction of policy and general co-ordination of civil emergency planning, and on the civil defence committee and working group, which comprises senior officials of NATO countries meeting on a regular basis to consider national plans for all aspects of the protection of the public in an emergency. The NATO group of experts on warning and detection reports to the civil defence committee; it is chaired by the director of the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation and co-ordinates research and development of warning and detection systems, including an annual international exercise. Home Office officials also represent the United Kingdom on the NATO civil communications planning committee and working groups, which are concerned with the maintenance of civil communications in an emergency.

Mr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will identify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Civil Defence Act 1948 provides the statutory basis for civil defence activity. The objective of civil defence planning in the Home Office is to give effect to the civil defence functions of Ministers, which are set out in the 1948 Act. These include the formulation of policy and issue of guidance to the local authorities and the police and fire services, payment of grant, the provision of training and equipment, development of communications, scientific research and the maintenance of warning and monitoring arrangements.

The Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986 enables local authorities to use civil defence resources in the response to a peacetime emergency. The Home Office issues guidance on this subject in consultation with other Government Departments.

The information requested on Home Office expenditure and manpower is as follows:

Year	*Expenditure £ million*	*Manpower*
1985-86	46·30	171
1986-87	48·40	177
[1]1987-88	55·30	178

[1] Estimate.

Abortion (Inquest)

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the reasons for his conclusion that the public interest would not be served by an inquest into the case involving the abortion which took place at the City general infirmary, Carlisle, in July 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This conclusion was reached after careful consideration of all the information provided by the coroner.

Security Services (Report)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be receiving the first report from the counsellor to the security services.

Mr. Hurd: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) on 2 November 1987, at column 512, the staff counsellor, who was appointed in November 1987, will report not less frequently than once a year to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and myself.

DNA Testing

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the reason for the delay in the publication of the feasibility study, jointly undertaken with the Foreign Office, into DNA testing involving those applying to settle in the United Kingdom; whether he is going to make arrangements to fund the introduction of any DNA testing scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Some of the practical and policy considerations revealed by the DNA pilot trial have proved difficult to resolve, but the results should be available shortly.

Community Education (London)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to continue the work of the community education department of the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Dunn: I have been asked to reply.

The community education and careers branch of ILEA is responsible for adult education, the youth service and the careers service in inner London. Under our proposals the boroughs will become responsible for these services in their area. They will have to set out their intentions for them in their development plans. Discussions will be held with the boroughs, ILEA and others on the future arrangements for particular aspects of these services.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Sunday Trading

Mr. Cran: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received from the Association of District Councils regarding Sunday trading laws.

The Attorney-General: The Association of District Councils wrote to my predecessor about the enforcement of the Sunday trading provisions of the Shops Act 1950 in the course of 1986. He received no further representations from the association and I have received none. As I mentioned in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) on 18 April last, at column 297, I recently asked the association for information concerning the scale of the enforcement effort being made in pursuance of the responsibility placed upon local authorities by the Act.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Attorney-General what action the Director of Public Prosecutions proposes to take following the completion of an investigation by the City of London police into contacts between the two principal Crown witnesses at the appeal hearing of the men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The investigation by the City of London police into contacts between Dr. Skuse and Mr. Reade, who were both Crown witnesses at the appeal hearing of six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings, has been completed.

The investigation did not reveal any evidence of criminal conduct by any person and the Director of Public Prosecutions has therefore decided to take no further action in the matter.

Judges

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Attorney-General how many judges there were at the latest date for which statistics are available; what were the figures five, 10, 20, and 30 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The number of judges in post at the relevant dates is set out in the tables. It should be noted that the post of circuit judge was not brought into being until the enactment of the Courts Act 1971. The second table, therefore, which deals with number in post in 1968 and 1958, gives the number of county court judges who were in post at the relevant time.

In addition to the county court judges in post at that time there were a small number of full-time judges in the quarter sessions. As at 1 January 1969 there were 25 such posts, but the exact numbers in post 20 and 30 years ago respectively cannot be ascertained without the expenditure of disproportionate resources.

Statistics on the number of judges, 5, 10, 20 and 30 years ago

	Circuit judges	*High Court judges*	*Court of Appeal*	*House of Lords*
As at 1 June 1988	405	80	27	9
5 years ago	346	77	18	9
10 years ago	290	72	16	9

	County court judges	*High Court judges*	*Court of Appeal*	*House of Lords*
20 years ago	89	61	11	9
30 years ago	69	42	8	9

Rowntree plc

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Attorney-General who requested him to make contact with the Rowntree Charitable Trust to request written confirmation that it was mindful of its charitable responsibilities in respect to the proposed takeover of Rowntree plc.

The Attorney-General: The request for information to the trustees of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust was made on my behalf by an official in the Treasury Solicitor's Department, after consultation with my Department, following a report in *The Daily Telegraph* on 2 June.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Nicaragua

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the Overseas Development Agency refused the request from the Nicaraguan Government for the provision of beans and vegetable oil to offset the effects of the recent drought in Nicaragua.

Mr. Chris Patten: The European Community has recently approved a request from the Nicaraguans for substantial food aid, including beans and vegetable oil.

The United Kingdom supported this request and will be contributing over 17 per cent. towards the cost of the allocation.

SCOTLAND

Caravan Parks

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish model standards for caravan touring parks, along the lines of those already issued for residential and holiday caravan parks.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A consultation paper seeking comments on draft model standards for caravan touring parks in Scotland will be issued by the the Scottish Development Department before the end of June. Views will be sought from a variety of sources, including local authorities and organisations representing caravanning interests.

Scottish TUC

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden of 27 May, *Official Report*, column 363, how many meetings there were between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Services and the Scottish Trades Union Congress; and whether a formal or informal record was kept of the meetings.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for health. For such meetings only informal notes for use within the Department are taken.

Doctors

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for each health board, the numbers of *(a)* consultants, *(b)* general practitioners and *(c)* other grades of doctors employed in each year since 1970.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not available for the years 1970 to 1973 as health boards were not created until 1974. For the period 1974 to 1986 the data are published in "Scottish Health Statistics", copies of which are available in the Library. The information for 1987 is set out in the table.

Number[1] of doctors employed by health board: 30 September 1987

Health board	*Consultants*	*General practitioners*	*Other grades*
Argyll and Clyde	112·3	301	218·5
Ayrshire and Arran	93·5	238	160·0
Borders	25·5	70	29·7
Dumfries and Galloway	48·2	109	74·0
Fife	81·0	195	148·8
Forth Valley	79·0	184	123·3
Grampian	178·5	301	373·0
Greater Glasgow	541·2	638	1,138·4
Highland	69·8	159	114·6
Lanarkshire	155·5	305	268·7
Lothian	353·3	504	761·0
Orkney	1·0	22	4·3
Shetland	2·0	17	6·0
Tayside	172·4	247	343·2
Western Isles	5·5	28	6·1

[1] Consultants and other grades are shown as whole-time equivalents and general practitioners as number. General practitioner data are provisional.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department will be contributing to the Office of Fair Trading's inquiry into the competitive position of doctors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Director General of Fair Trading has now referred the question of restrictions on doctors' advertising to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I understand that officials of the Scottish Home and Health Department will be invited to give evidence to the commission.

Nurses

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for each year since 1970, the number of qualified nurses employed by each health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of qualified nurses, expressed as whole-time equivalents, employed by health boards at 30 September in each year from 1974, when health boards were established, to 1986 are published in "Scottish Health Statistics", copies of which are held in the Library. The latest available figures for 30 September 1987, not yet published, are as follows:

Qualified nurses by health board: 30 September 1987

Health Board	*Whole-time equivalent*
Argyll and Clyde	2,443·3
Ayrshire and Arran	1,916·9
Borders	612·9
Dumfries and Galloway	1,088·0
Fife	2,059·7
Forth Valley	1,753·8
Grampian	3,370·1
Greater Glasgow	8,111·8
Highland	1,462·1
Lanarkshire	3,294·3
Lothian	5,052·5
Orkney	138·5
Shetland	148·5
Tayside	3,417·1
Western Isles	208·7
TOTAL	35,078·2

Scottish Information Office

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the rules governing relations between officials of the Scottish Information Office and former employees of that office.

Mr. Rifkind: The officials concerned are bound by the rules which apply to the conduct of all civil servants; the practical effect in this area is that no assistance would be given to former civil servants which would not in principle be given to other bona fide contacts.

Playgrounds

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the average cost of replacing the concrete or tarmac surfaces in children's playgrounds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Costs vary greatly depending on the contractor's charges and the type of surface used, ranging from relatively cheap surfaces such as sand, to expensive wetpore surfaces which can cost in excess of £100 per square metre.

Dental Services

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people aged up to 16 years have used dental services paid in full or in part by the National Health Service for each year since 1975.

Mr. Michael Foryth: The only available information is as shown:

Patients aged 0 to 15 treated by the General Dental Services

Year	*Number*
1985	544,677
1986	551,384

Patient aged 0 to 14 treated by the Community Dental Services

Year	*Number*
1980	188,723
1981	185,010
1982	185,531
1983	191,774
1984	189,438

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many people between the age of 16 and 21 years have used dental facilities paid in full or in part by the National Health Service, for each year since 1975;

(2) how many people over the age of 21 years have used dental services paid in full or in part by the National Health Service for each year since 1975;

(3) what is the cost to the National Health Service in 1988 terms, for each year since 1975, of dental services given to people *(a)* aged up to 16 years, *(b)* between the age of 16 to 21 years and *(c)* over the age of 21 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish health boards have suspended or diminished cervical cancer screening tests during the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. The number of cervical smear tests undertaken continues to rise. The provisional total for 1987 is 420,361 compared with 361,626 in 1986, an increase of 16 per cent.

Dry Sow Stalls

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of pig farmers in Scotland are estimated still to employ dry sow stalls; how this proportion compares with 10 years ago; and what action he plans to take to ensure the phasing out of such stalls.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The precise information requested is not held centrally, but present indications are that some 60 to 65 per cent. of sows are currently housed in the stalls concerned.

The Farm Animal Welfare Council has recently completed a review of pig production systems. The council's report makes a number of recommendations which could influence future housing arrangements. Interested parties are currently being consulted and their comments will be fully considered.

Water Supplies (Aluminium)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about alleged links between the existence of aluminium in water supplies and the incidence of Alzheimer's disease; if he will list those Scottish water authorities which add aluminium to their water supply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand that research about Alzheimer's disease is being undertaken at the Medical Research Council's environmental epidemiology unit at Southampton, but that its results have not yet been published. The research will be assessed by medical advisers and appropriate action will be taken if it is needed. The Government have adopted the standard for aluminium set by the EC drinking water directive. Most water supplies comply, and where they do not water undertakers have programmes of remedial action. Aluminium compounds are widely used as an aid to coagulation in the treatment of drinking water. Most, if not all, Scottish water authorities use them at some of their treatment works.

Fish Farms

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he has any plans to review the extant planning procedures relating to the siting or expansion of fish farms; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent representations he has received concerning the planning and siting of salmonid fish farms and other fish farms; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations arguing for or against changes in the procedures currently operated by the Crown Estate commissioners in relation to the establishment of offshore fish farms. He is currently reviewing the operation of these procedures, and the representations are being taken into account. The results of the review will be announced in due course. The Government have no plans to review the current planning procedures relating to fish farms in inland waters.

Corntonvale Prison

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to amend the vocational guidance given to prisoners shortly before their release from Corntonvale prison; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A comprehensive programme of training and guidance is given to prisoners before their release from Corntonvale. The programme is regularly reviewed as to its relevance and content. If the hon. Member wishes to raise a particular aspect, perhaps he would write to me.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the educational and training programmes available to prisoners in Corntonvale prison; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The programme of education and training available to prisoners and young offenders at Corntonvale prison is as follows:

Education:
- Certificated Courses:
  - Higher and 'O' grades in:
    - —Arithmetic
    - —English
    - —Modern Studies
    - —Food and nutrition
- Non-Certificated Courses:
  - Social Skills
  - Art and Craft
  - Cookery
  - Current Affairs
  - Office Studies

Methods:
- Direct teaching, correspondence courses and practical guidance.

Training:
- City and Guilds and SCOTVEC (modular) courses are available in:
  - Sewing and garment making
  - Gardening
  - Catering
- Courses are being planned in:
  - Hairdressing
  - Manicuring
  - Beauticulture

Health Boards (Members' Interests)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department maintains any record of the shareholdings of health board members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. Chairmen and members of health boards are required to declare any interests in matters being considered by their boards in terms of the National Health Service (Health Boards: Membership, Procedure and Payment of Subscriptions) (Scotland) Regulations 1975.

Health Authorities (Report)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he received the report on the Scottish health authorities review of priorities for the eighties and nineties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On 16 May my right hon. and learned Friend received a copy of the SHARPEN report from the Scottish Health Service Planning Council together with advice, in the form of a foreword to the report, endorsing the priorities identified by the working party and indicating a number of reservations about the recommendations made. Copies of the planning council's advice have been placed in the Library. Close consideration will be given to the report's recommendations and to the planning council's advice. I envisage that the report will be published in due course, together with the council chairman's foreword and an indication of the Government's response.

Voluntary Bodies (Grants)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement concerning the amount of grant-aid being made available under the special grants (environmental) programme in 1988-89 to voluntary bodies in Scotland working in the environmental field.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am pleased to announce that grant-aid totalling £200,000 has been offered to the following voluntary bodies in the financial year 1988-89, to assist them in carrying out environmental conservation, improvement or education work in Scotland:

	£
Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland	5,000
Association of Community Technical Aid Centres	10,000
Buchan Countryside Group	5,000
Central Scotland Countryside Trust	9,900
Council for Scottish Archaeology	9,000
Environment Centre	5,700
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	10,000
Royal Zoological Society	5,750
Scottish Community Woods Campaign	7,750
Scottish Conservation Projects Trust	30,000
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations	6,300
Scottish Environmental Education Council	15,000
Scottish Field School of Archeology	2,400
Scottish Field Studies Association	10,000
Scottish Historic Buildings Trust	13,700
Scottish Rights of Way Society Limited	5,000
Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link	7,500
Scottish Wildlife Trust	30,000
Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust	7,000
Woodland Trust	5,000

Greenland White-fronted Geese

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what measures have been taken to prevent the killing of Greenland white-fronted geese during their return to breeding grounds or during the period of preparation for their migration;

(2) what was the date on which licences to shoot Greenland white-fronted geese were withdrawn; what was the reason for their withdrawal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All licences to shoot Greenland white-fronted geese on Islay were withdrawn on 16 March 1988 to avoid stress to the birds during the period of preparation for return migration to their breeding grounds. The timing of the withdrawal of licences was determined on the basis of advice received from the Nature Conservancy Council. From that date the prohibition on the killing of white-fronted geese has been fully restored and there is no evidence to suggest that any further shooting has taken place.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will identify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend is empowered by the Civil Defence Act 1948 to take such steps as he considers necessary for the purposes of civil defence; to make regulations about the civil defence functions of local authorities and to make grants towards expenses incurred in the discharge of those functions. Regulations made under the Act include the Civil Defence (Local Authority Functions) (Scotland) Regulations 1983, which prescribe the functions of local authorities in relation to civil defence. The Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986 enables local authorities to use civil defence resources in responding to a peacetime emergency.

Information on expenditure and manpower is as follows:

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Expenditure (£ million) (including grants paid to local authorities and payments to NHS)	5·40	5·40	7·30
Civil service manpower	48	48	43

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is no direct liaison or collaborative work between NATO boards and committees and the Scottish Office, whose interests are covered by representatives of other Departments on a United Kingdom basis.

School Closures

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has reached a decision on the school closure proposals referred to him by Strathclyde regional council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Last month Strathclyde region submitted to me 34 proposals for the closure, rezoning or change of site of schools which require my consent under section 22B of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. I have given my consent to the following:

Castlehead High School, Paisley—extension of delineated area.

St. Margarets Primary School, New Cumnock—closure.

Daer and Powtrail Primary School, Lanark Division—closure.

Donaldson Street School, Kirkintilloch—relocation.

Girvan Primary School, Girvan—extension of delineated area to include part of delineated area of Assel Primary School which is to close.

I have refused consent to the following:

Paisley Grammar School—closure.

Notre Dame High School, Glasgow—closure.

Decisions on the other cases will be notified to the education authority as soon as possible.

Council House Sales

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to provide further details of the new discount scheme for public sector tenants wishing to buy their council houses; and when he now expects the new provisions to take effect.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* Details of the items to be contained in the determination covering the revised discount provisions are currently under consideration, but it is expected that the new scheme including the cost floor provisions, will be commenced two months after the Housing Bill receives Royal Assent.

The framework of the new provisions will be broadly in line with that which applies at present in England and Wales.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Inner-city Initiative

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on the progress of his Department's inner-city initiative.

Mr. Atkins: The inner city task forces are a central part of the Government's action for cities. They were set up in February 1986 as small local teams charged with experimenting with policies and projects to tackle the problems of small inner city areas with big problems. They remain very closely involved in local economic regeneration. They are meeting their objectives of securing more jobs for local people and improving their employability, encouraging and facilitating local enterprise and supporting environmental and crime prevention initiatives.

Over 600 projects have been supported by the task forces, covering a broad spread of activity from which important lessons are being learnt and the results disseminated, for example, about

targeted training
developing schools-industry links
helping small businesses start and grow through advice and better access to finance
encouraging local purchasing initiatives.

In all these areas, and others, we are learning, above all, how to encourage and develop the contribution of the local business world in each city to action for cities so that all residents of our cities can benefit from increased national prosperity.

In addition to my Department's task force initiative, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster carries responsibility under the Prime Minister for co-ordinating the Government's action for cities, which involves a number of Departments. I am glad to say that there has been a most positive response from business to join us in tackling the problems of our inner cities following the breakfast presentations that my colleagues and myself have been making around the country.

Mr. Peter Luff

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the annual amount paid by his Department to the employers of his special adviser, Mr. Peter Luff, in compensation for their loss of his services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: £21,933 per annum plus VAT.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The DTI represents the United Kingdom on the NATO industrial planning committee, which meets twice a year at plenary level and four times at working group level. This committee, together with the food and agriculture planning committee, is responsible for planning and exercising the Central Supplies Agency, a NATO civil wartime agency. The Central Supplies Agency would be responsible for ensuring the continued availability and equitable distribution of both civil and military purposes of food, agricultural and industrial supplies. The committee also exchanges information on the wartime industrial plans of member countries and studies on a selective basis their capability to produce essential industrial supplies during wartime.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will identify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Civil emergency and home defence planning in the DTI is aimed at ensuring that those industries for which the Department is responsible would be able to meet any essential demands placed upon them during an emergency. Six members of staff are currently engaged full time on the work, with assistance from other staff as necessary. Annual expenditure has been as follows:

	£000's
1985-86	125
1986-87	130
1987-88	135

Space Industry

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of the space industry; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry met the United Kingdom industry space committee on 26 May. There was a wide-ranging discussion of recent developments and future prospects, including the question of the commercialisation of space activities.

House of Fraser plc

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has yet received the report of the investigation into the circumstances in which House of Fraser plc was taken over; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: No. The investigation into House of Fraser Holdings plc continues and I am unable to say when a report will be received.

TechAlert

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will place in the Library a copy of the TechAlert report by Charles Miley; and if the will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: No. The report was prepared as part of a review of TechAlert currently being undertaken by the Department and it contains commercially sensitive information.

Airbus Industrie

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on what proposals there are for the restructuring of the management and finances of Airbus Industrie.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The proposals for restructuring the management and finances of Airbus Industrie are contained in the report of the four independent advisers, known as the wise men, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

At our last meeting, in Hanover on 5 May, the Aerospace Ministers of the four Airbus partners' Governments noted with satisfaction that the Airbus partners and Airbus Industrie had responded promptly in studying the wise men's recommendations and reaching agreement in principle to their proposals. We asked the industrialists to start to implement the restructuring without delay with a view to establishing the structure of the new organisation by autumn, with full implementation from the end of 1988 at the latest.

GEC-Plessey (Merger)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the outcome of the negotiations which he asked the Director General of Fair Trading to have with GEC on the proposed merger between GEC and Plessey.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State announced on 25 March this year that he had agreed to a variation of the undertakings given by GEC following publication of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the proposed merger between GEC and Plessey in August 1986. The variation is to allow the establishment of a joint venture company to handle the telecommunications interest of both companies. This decision was in accordance with the recommendation of the Director General of Fair Trading.

Internal Market Council

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the Internal Market Council held on 7 June.

Mr. Maude: The Council, at which my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade and I represented the United Kingdom, discussed proposed directives on the mutual recognition of higher education diplomas and right of residence throughout the Community for EC nationals not already covered by the treaty of Rome; proposals for a Community patent convention; and a regulation to establish a Community trade mark system.

The Council adopted directives on consumer protection in the indication of the prices of foodstuffs and non-food products; on member states' arrangements for the inspection of laboratories to verify compliance with good laboratory practice; on the rules governing the classification, packaging and labelling requirements for dangerous preparations; and establishing a mandatory range of quantities in which spirit drinks and sparkling wines must be sold.

The Council also agreed on a directive relating to the publication of annual accounting documents of branches of banks whose head office is outside that member state; a proposal to develop a Communitywide market for information services; and a resolution on small and medium-sized enterprises and deregulation.

Post Office (Counter Services)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what proposals he has for alterations in the Post Office's arrangements for contracts for counter services; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received since 1 January concerning contracts for Post Office counter services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I have received many representations about changes to some sub-postmasters' contracts with the Post Office, particularly the introduction of community offices. However, this is primarily a matter for the Post Office and I have no proposals to intervene to change these arrangements.

Rowntree plc

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many representations were received by the Office of Fair Trading about the Nestlé bid for Rowntree; and how many of these supported the reference of this bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* I understand that the Office of Fair Trading has received many representations, most of which express opposition to the proposed merger.

Voluntary Restraint

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 7 June to the hon. Member for Darlington, *Official Report*, column *429*, whether, in the case of the non-vehicle voluntary restraint arrangements with Japan, he is satisfied that the net cost to the economy does not outweigh the benefits to the industries concerned.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* I am satisfied that the continuation of the inter-industry restraint arrangements to which my hon. Friend refers is justified for a limited period. I am keeping the need for them under close review.

NORTHERN IRELAND

De Lorean Motor Cars Ltd.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to recover the outstanding moneys owing to Her Majesty's Government arising out of their investment in De Lorean Motor Cars Ltd.

Mr. Viggers: Claims have been lodged by the Department of Economic Development with the liquidators of the Northern Ireland company, De Lorean Motor Cars Ltd. and the trustee in bankruptcy of the American parent company, De Lorean Motor Company, both of whom have instituted legal actions for the benefit of creditors, including actions against the De Lorean auditors, Arthur Andersen and Co.

Legal proceedings claiming substantial damages have also been taken out in the United States by the Department of Economic Development alleging a number of offences, including negligence and breach of contract against Arthur Andersen and Co.

The joint receivers appointed by the Government in 1982 are also involved in legal proceedings for the recovery of funds. These actions are in London against Lotus Cars Limited, the estate of the late Mr. A. C. B. Chapman, Mr. F. R. Bushell and Mr. J. Z. De Lorean for the recovery of funds believed to have been misappropriated and in Switzerland to recover funds known to be held in Swiss bank accounts. In the United States the joint receivers have lodged claims with the trustee in bankruptcy of the American parent company.

Livewire Scheme

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the Livewire scheme.

Mr. Viggers: Livewire is a United Kingdom-wide scheme which helps 16 to 25-year-olds develop their ideas for self-employment. The scheme's principal sponsor is Shell UK and in Northern Ireland the main local sponsor is the *Belfast Telegraph;* the scheme is administered locally by the action resource centre. This year 266 young people entered the competition in Northern Ireland, representing 8 per cent. of the United Kingdom total.

Northern Ireland participants have traditionally performed well in the United Kingdom competition; this year's grand final takes place on 28 June 1988.

I believe that Livewire is an excellent scheme which is highly valued in Northern Ireland and I congratulate the organisers. By helping young people obtain skilled advice and support the scheme encourages their interest in self-employment and provides an important focus for the development of tomorrow's entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy that housing benefit in respect of any household be deducted proportionally from all occupants in the household in receipt of benefit, and that the tenant named on the rent book could be held responsible for a proportioned amount of rent and rates charged by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Needham: No.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for northern Ireland whether he will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Neither the Northern Ireland Office nor the Northern Ireland Departments have any direct involvement with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, but their interests are fully represented on the appropriate NATO bodies by relevant central Government Departments.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will identify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments have a remit to prepare and review contingency plans to deal with those peacetime civil emergencies which fall within their main areas of responsibility. Civil Defence planning in Northern Ireland is carried out under the authority of the Civil Defence Act (Northern Ireland) 1950 and is in line with current arrangements throughout the United Kingdom.

The number of staff involved was 12 for 1985-86 and 1986-87 and is currently 11.

The annual budgets were:

	£
(i) 1985-86	1,539,000
(ii) 1986-87	930,000
(iii) 1987-88	1,706,000

Sentencing Policy

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what new arrangements he has made for the review of life and indeterminate sentences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend announced a review of the cases of each special category prisoner serving a sentence of life imprisonment or detention at the Secretary of State's pleasure in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) on 7 June, at column *464*. As far as other Secretary of State pleasure cases are concerned, I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's replies to the hon. Members for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 26 May, at columns *499-501*.

Sport

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide figures for the last five years for the amount spent by his Department on sport; and if he will give a breakdown of such figures into convenient categories.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding reply 14 June 1988]:* The information requested is as follows:

	1983-84 £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £	*Totals* £
1. Capital grants to district councils[1]	6,303,001	4,925,815	3,829,751	2,359,192	1,750,616	19,168,375
2. Capital grants to voluntary sports clubs	1,150,459	1,407,567	759,604	348,156	290,650	3,956,436
3. Sports councils for Northern Ireland	905,641	980,156	1,118,212	1,146,199	1,219,124	5,369,332
4. Sports sponsorship incentive scheme	nil	140,534	76,899	103,698	70,328	391,459
TOTALS	8,359,101	7,454,072	5,784,466	3,957,245	3,330,718	28,885,602

[1] Includes grants for the provision of community facilities which cannot be given separately.

AIDS

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to how many deaths AIDS was a contributory factor during May.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* No such deaths were attributed to Northern Ireland during May.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chile

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information, pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, columns *821-23*, he has on the electoral registration arrangements, including the requirements for identity cards, at the forthcoming plebiscite in Chile.

Mr. Eggar: The number of Chileans registering to vote in the forthcoming plebiscite is encouraging. By 10 June, 6·2 million people had registered out of a total electorate of about 8 million. Registration is continuing at about 400,000 per month. Voters require identity cards to enable them to register. At the end of May, just over 7·5 million new identity cards had been issued.

Military Expenditure

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to which countries are proposing to increase their military spending in 1988-89 by the greatest percentage (i) in real terms and (ii) in absolute terms in *(a)* the developed world and *(b)* the Third world.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards proposals that the United States of America and its Western allies should seek a

pledge by developing countries to cut military spending as part of a consensus on disarmament at the special session of the United Nations General Assembly; what account is proposed to be taken in seeking such a pledge of the projected level of arms exports by Western developed countries in the coming years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We are not aware of any specific proposals for developing countries to pledge a cut in their military spending, but believe that all states should be encouraged to undertake measures of arms control consistent with their security interests. Arms control is not the exclusive preserve of the superpowers. We believe this approach is consistent with our policy of meeting the legitimate defence interests of certain countries in accordance with their right to self defence as embodied in article 51 of the United Nations charter.

Foreign Affairs Council

Sir Peter Blaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 13 and 14 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I attended the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 13 and 14 June, accompanied by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, and my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development. On 13 June I also took part in a discussion of European political co-operation issues.

Much of our work concerned relations with Eastern Europe. In the framework of political co-operation, we issued a statement on East-West relations welcoming recent encouraging developments and urging East European countries to approach the final phase of the CSCE negotiations in Vienna in a constructive spirit.

In the Council we agreed to the signature on 25 June of an EEC-CMEA joint declaration, which provides a framework for co-operation in appropriate fields. The Council also discussed the Community's negotiations with Hungary for a trade and co-operation agreement, and agreed on a new compromise proposal, suggested by the United Kingdom, on the timing of abolition of quantitative restrictions. I hope that this will lead to the early conclusion of the agreement.

In the framework of political co-operation we discussed the middle east, Afghanistan, Latin America and South Africa. We issued a statement of support for Lebanon, where presidential elections due this summer will be of great importance for the future of the country, and a brief statement reiterating our concern about the fate of the Sharpeville Six. Copies of the statements will be placed in the Library of the House. On Afghanistan, we agreed that both the European Community and the member states individually should make a significant aid contribution to help the return of refugees and the reconstruction of an independent, non-aligned Afghanistan. We agreed that there was cause for concern at the loss of momentum in the Central American peace process, but reaffirmed our full support for it and for democratisation in Latin America.

In the Council we had a useful first discussion of the forthcoming renegotiation of the EEC/ACP (Lomé) convention. The Council agreed that the next elections to the European Parliament should take place between 15 and 18 June 1989. It also considered the jurisdiction and composition of the court of first instance, and Ministers, meeting as a conference of representatives of the member states, discussed the nomination of judges and advocates-general to the European Court of Justice. Both questions were remitted for further work. The Irish Foreign Minister and I briefed the Council on a proposal for an EC contribution to the International Fund for Ireland. This important initiative was welcomed by the other Foreign Ministers.

Finally, the Council reached agreement on the legal texts implementing the conclusions of the Brussels European Council on the future financing of the Community. These texts will be formally adopted once the European Parliament has given its opinion.

We are thus now close to completing the key task of translating the major political agreements reached in February into the binding legal form on which the United Kingdom has insisted throughout these lengthy and successful negotiations.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current waiting time for interviews for applicants who are (i) fiancées, (ii) spouses and (iii) dependants in *(a)* Bombay, *(b)* New Delhi, *(c)* Islamabad, *(d)* Karachi and *(e)* Nairobi.

Mr. Eggar: Waiting times for interviews are currently as follows:

Months

	Spouses and dependants (Q2)	*Fiancées (Q3)*
Bombay	6	9
New Delhi	5	8
Islamabad	12	20
Karachi	6	11
Nairobi	3	3

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average length of time it takes for an applicant who is refused entry clearance for *(a)* notification of refusal following interview, *(b)* dispatch of ECO's statement to the Home Office, *(c)* dispatch of Home Office papers to immigration appeals tribunal and *(d)* listing of case by the immigration appeals tribunal.

Mr. Eggar: The time taken from interview to decision on an application for entry clearance depends entirely on what further inquiries (including the applicant being asked to produce further documentary evidence) the entry clearance office (ECO) deems necessary to satisfy himself that the applicant qualifies for admission under the immigration rules.

The dispatch of ECO's explanatory statements direct to the appellate authority varies from post to post and can currently take from one week, in the case of smaller less busy posts, to up to six months in the case of larger posts in the Indian sub-continent processing in excess of 45,000 entry clearance applications per year.

Statistics about the time taken to complete individual appeals are not available, but I understand from my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General that the following time scale is currently likely;

(i) from receipt in London of the ECO's explanatory statement to despatch to both parties: up to four weeks;

(ii) from receipt of papers by both parties to issue by each party of a certificate of readiness to proceed: this is in the hands of the parties and times vary from a few weeks to many months;
(iii) from certificate of readiness to proceed to hearing date: up to two months, but longer where parties request adjournments;
(iv) from hearing date to issue of appeal decision: about two weeks.

Central America

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why Her Majesty's Government did not support the United Nations General Assembly resolution 42/231: special plan of economic co-operation for Central America; what information he has on the response by the United Kingdom's EEC partners; what information he has as to which other countries declined to sign resolution 42/231; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: United Nations resolution 42/231 on the United Nations special plan of economic co-operation for Central America was adopted by consensus, which the United Kingdom joined, together with all our EEC partners.

We did not co-sponsor the resolution because we wished to make an explanation of vote on it. I understand that several other countries, including a number of Commonwealth countries, also decided not to co-sponsor.

Kuwait

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *612*, if he will now state what future measures he proposes to take to improve relations with Kuwait; why the information was not contained in the previous answer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: As I explained to my hon. Friend on 8 June, our relations with Kuwait are long established and very good. They will continue to be reinforced by frequent visits in both directions by senior members of our two Governments, who exchange views on matters of mutual interest.

Panama

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 31 March, what advice is now being given to British visitors intending to travel to Panama and how many have contacted the United Kingdom embassy in Panama following that reply.

Mr. Eggar: Our current advice is that the situation in Panama is still unsettled and prospective visitors should travel only if on urgent business. They should bring international credit cards and sufficient cash in US dollars in small denominations to cover other expenses. They should contact the British embassy on arrival. Fewer than a dozen visitors have contacted the British embassy since 31 March.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will identify (i) liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and (ii) the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has no direct liaison arrangements with NATO on civil emergency and home defence planning, on which the Home Office takes the lead in respect of the United Kingdom, consulting us as necessary. The United Kingdom representative on NATO's senior civil emergency planning committee is a Ministry of Defence official, a member of staff of the United Kingdom delegation to NATO. The United Kingdom representative at plenary meetings of the committee is a senior Home Office official.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will identify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is not directly involved in civil emergency or home defence planning, which is co-ordinated by the Home Office in respect of the United Kingdom. However, we are consulted as necessary by the Home Office and by other Whitehall Departments in the process of such planning.

Regional Languages and Cultures

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when, and by what means, Her Majesty's Government intend to give effect to the provisions of the European Community charter relating to regional languages and cultures, established by resolution of the European Parliament on 16 October 1981.

Mr. Eggar: European Parliament resolutions do not bind member states. The question of implementation by the Governments of EC member states does not therefore arise.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when, and by what means, Her Majesty's Government intend to implement part I, articles 1 (1) and (3), of the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, to which the United Kingdom is a signatory.

Mr. Eggar: We fully uphold our obligations under article 1 of the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights. The measures taken in respect of our obligations under this covenant and under the international covenant on civil and political rights, which contains an identical article 1, are explained in the reports we have presented to the United Nations economic and social council and to the human rights committee respectively. Copies of these reports are available in the Library of the House.

DEFENCE

RAF Upper Heyford

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement as to the reasons why the flight paths have been changed at RAF Upper Heyford.

Mr. Freeman: The fine-weather take-off patterns employed at RAF Upper Heyford until 1 June this year aimed to minimise the disturbance to the surrounding population caused by aircraft noise. These patterns were unique in military aircraft operations in the United Kingdom, in that they required aircraft to bank and turn immediately after take-off. The poor weather take-offs do not involve this banking procedure. Although the F-111 has a very good safety record, a number of modifications have been made to the aircraft during its life which have reduced its thrust-to-weight ratio. The take-off patterns at Upper Heyford, like all flying operations, are kept under continual review and recent operational experience indicated the need to introduce new fine weather take-off patterns, in line with standard procedures elsewhere, to ensure that the high safety standards of the United States Air Force are maintained. In fine weather the aircraft now depart in a straight line from the airfield as they have always done in poor weather.

Rainfall

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the rainfall levels for each meteorological reading station for 2 and 3 May 1986.

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Member's question would require the extraction from archives of daily rainfall figures recorded at about 4,400 meteorological reporting stations in the United Kingdom alone. The transcription and checking of almost 9,000 sets of figures would involve disproportionate effort and expense.

Exercise Tristar

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) for what theatre of operations forces will be training during Exercise Tristar;

(2) on what date local media organisations were informed about Exercise Tristar;

(3) on what date advance notice of Exercise Tristar was given to hon. Members in constituencies to be affected by the exercise.

Mr. Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 13 June.

It is not our normal practice to inform hon. Members about routine training exercises as small as Exercise Tristar 88 which are unlikely to cause any disruption to members of the public, nor to inform the media that such exercises are taking place.

Tornado

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current shortfall of trained tornado air defence aircrews in the RAF.

Mr. Freeman: There is no shortfall of trained Tornado air defence aircrews in the RAF.

Military Helicopter (Incident)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the investigation of the incident involving a military helicopter and a civilian car in the Tyndrome-Dalmally area on 5 May.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is now in a position to make a statement on the investigation of the incident involving a military helicopter and a civilian car in the Dalmally area on 5 May.

Mr. Freeman: RAF police investigations into this incident are very thorough and have not yet been completed, although the complainant in her statement to the RAF police has indicated that she thought the helicopter concerned was civilian rather than military.

Air Interceptions

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North of 3 May, *Official Report*, column *384*, if interceptions of a single Soviet aircraft sorties by several different Royal Air Force aircraft are counted as one interception or as several.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A single penetration of the United Kingdom air defence region by Soviet military aircraft may result in more than one interception by Royal Air Force aircraft. Such interceptions are recorded individually. Equally, however, where an aircraft, or a flight of RAF aircraft, intercepts two or more Soviet aircraft flying together this would be recorded as a single interception.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North of 3 May, *Official Report*, column *384*, if any change has taken place in the average number of interceptions by the Royal Air Force of Soviet aircraft per week since 1987.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It would not be appropriate to comment on Soviet aircraft activity over periods shorter than one year.

TA Exercise, Newbury

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the Territorial Army exercise at Crookham court school, Newbury; and what representations he has received from local residents thereon.

Mr. Freeman: A training exercise for Army cadets from the school was held on 12 May at Crookham court school. There have been no representations from local residents.

Stainmore Common

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement outlining his Department's plans for the use of Stainmore common by the Army.

Mr. Freeman: The Stainmore land is to be used by the Army for dry training by up to 150 men at any time, although training for up to 300 men may take place on a maximum of 22 days a year. Exceptionally, training up to battalion level may be conducted with the prior consent of the local planning authority. No live firing will take place in this area.

Combat Talon II Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United States of America has approached Her Majesty's Government about deployment in the United Kingdom of Special Operations Forces Combat Talon II aircraft, due to enter service in 1989.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No.

RAF Molesworth

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of proposals he has for future uses of RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 20 January, at column *764*.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, following the United States contingency deployment plan for chemical weapons, the United States has approached Her Majesty's Government about the contingency deployment of chemical weapons in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to the reply of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces to the hon. Member on 24 July 1986, at column *490*.

Exercise Excalibur

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircraft took part in Exercise Excalibur in April.

Mr. Freeman: Forty two.

Exercise Flintlock

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if facilities at Royal Air Force Woodbridge have been used in support of Exercise Flintlock in the current year.

Mr. Freeman: Elements of the 21st Special Operations Squadron based at RAF Woodbridge deployed to take part in Exercise Flintlock.

Steeple Aston (Noise)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the recent noise testing carried out by the Royal Air Force Institute of Community Health at Dr. Ratcliffe's school, Steeple Aston; and if he will publish the results in the *Official Report;*

(2) if, in the light of the results of the recent noise testing carried out at Dr. Ratcliffe's school, Steeple Aston, he will issue instructions to prevent airplanes from Royal Air Force, Upper Heyford taking off directly over Steeple Aston.

Mr. Freeman: Unsuitable wind conditions have so far prevented the completion of the noise survey at Dr. Ratcliffe's school, Steeple Aston. I will reply when the information is available.

Buccaneer (Anniversary)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many serving or former South African military personnel were present at RAF Lossiemouth on 29 and 30 April for the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Buccaneer aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: The celebrations held at RAF Lossiemouth on 29 and 30 April commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Buccaneer aircraft were primarily social in nature and the majority of those involved were United Kingdom service men from the Royal Navy and RAF. No South African or indeed other foreign military personnel were specifically invited, and, so far as I am aware, no South African military personnel were present. The celebrations were advertised widely in the international aviation press and a message of congratulation was received from the South African Air Force, which also operates Buccaneers.

Winston Barracks, Lanarkshire

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current status of the proposal to establish a United States Navy contingency hospital at Winston barracks, Lanarkshire, how many United States personnel are currently stationed there; and what is the cost to the United Kingdom Exchequer of establishing and maintaining this facility.

Mr. Stewart: We have agreed to make available to the United States Navy a site at RAF Lanark (formerly Winston barracks) for the establishment of a wartime contingency hospital. The costs of establishing and running this facility will be met entirely by the United States, but there will be no permanent presence at the site of United States military personnel in peacetime.

Maritime Exercise (Sutherland)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement of the nature and purposes of the air activities to be carried out in north-west Sutherland and Wester Ross during the maritime exercise on 17 and 18 June.

Mr. Freeman: The exercise will involve a small-scale amphibious landing using helicopters. Shore-based aircraft will simulate opposition to the landing, for which air defence will be provided by a mix of shore-based and carrier-borne aircraft.

Irish Regiments

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which of the four Irish regiments in the Regular Army have served in Northern Ireland during the past two years.

Mr. Ian Stewart: None of the so-called "Irish-named" regiments of the Army have served in Northern Ireland during the past two years.

Army Equipment Exhibition

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to invite from foreign countries only official Government organisations to attend the British Army equipment exhibition as potential buyers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The majority of overseas visitors to the British Army equipment exhibition are from official

Government organisations. We do, however, invite some overseas senior industrialists at the request of companies participating in the exhibition. I see no reason to alter this practice.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy not to invite British based private arms traders to attend the British Army equipment exhibition as potential buyers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Salisbury: We do not invite British-based private arms traders to the British Army equipment exhibition.

Low Flying

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will meet villagers of Penyllordd, Hope and Caergeric regarding the impact of low-flying military aircraft flights upon the quality of life in these and neighbouring areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I would be happy to meet the hon. Member to discuss any problems his constituents may have regarding the impact of low-level military aircraft flights near their homes.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what geographical area, expressed *(a)* by county and *(b)* by parliamentary constituency, is covered by low-flying area 7.

Mr. Freeman: Low-flying area 7 covers *(a)* the counties of Clwyd, Dyfed, Mid Glamorgan, South Glamorgan, West Glamorgan, Gwent, Gwynedd and Powys and *(b)* the parliamentary constituencies of Ynys Môn, Conwy, Clwyd, North-West, Delyn, Caernarfon, Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, Clwyd, South-West, Ceredigion and Pembroke, North, Montgomery, Pembroke, Carmarthen, Brecon and Radnor, Llanelli, Gower, Swansea, East, Swansea, West, Neath, Aberavon, Cynon Valley, Rhondda, Ogmore, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, Pontypridd, Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Central, Cardiff, North, Cardiff, South and Penarth, Cardiff, West, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Islwyn, Newport, East, Newport, West, Torfaen and Monmouth and part of the parliamentary constituencies of Alyn and Deeside, Shropshire, North, and Wrexham.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what geographical area, expressed *(a)* by county and *(b)* by parliamentary constituency, is covered by low-flying area 10.

Mr. Freeman: Low flying area 10 no longer exists.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what geographical area, expressed *(a)* by county and *(b)* by parliamentary constituency, is covered by low-flying area 12.

Mr. Freeman: Low flying area 12 covers *(a)* the counties of Cleveland and Tyne and Wear and parts of the counties of Durham, Northumberland and North Yorkshire and *(b)* the parliamentary constituencies of Wansbeck, Blyth Valley, Tynemouth, South Shields, Jarrow, Sunderland, North, Sunderland, South, Newcastle upon Tyne, North, Wallsend, Newcastle upon Tyne, Central, Newcastle upon Tyne, East, Tyne Bridge, Gateshead, East, Houghton and Washington, Blaydon, Durham, North, Easington, Hartlepool, Stockton, North, Stockton, South, Redcar, Middlesbrough, and part of the parliamentary constituencies of Hexham, Durham, North-West, City of Durham, Bishop Auckland, Darlington, Sedgefield, Richmond (Yorks.), Langbaurgh, Berwick-upon-Tweed and Roxburgh and Berwickshire.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties were flown over the United Kingdom in the period 1 January to 31 May.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1 January and 31 March 1988 a total of 40,952 such sorties were flown over the United Kingdom. Figures for April and May 1988 are not yet available.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of complaints received about low flying over the United Kingdom in the period 1 January to 31 May.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1 January and 30 April 1988 the Ministry of Defence received 1,267 complaints and inquiries about military low flying. Figures for May are not yet available.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the Royal Air Force's expenditure on public relations, in constant prices, in each year since 1979; and what increase in resources is currently being provided for the Royal Air Force's public relations campaign on low flying.

Mr. Freeman: The last year for which comprehensive figures are available is 1987-88. Total spending on public relations for the Royal Air Force from 1983 was as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	0·2
1984-85	0·3
1985-86	0·5
1986-87	0·6
1987-88	0·7

Details of total expenditure for the years 1979-80 to 1982-83 could not be obtained without disproportionate effort. The figures provided include annual staffing costs together with expenditure on films, exhibitions, publications, equipment and so on. No increase in resources has been allocated to PR activity on low flying.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 20 January, *Official Report*, column *764*, if the figure for the number of complaints received about low flying includes complaints made to local Royal Air Force and United States Air Force air bases and other military installations.

Mr. Freeman: Yes, although queries which had been answered by the local Royal Air Force station or United States Air Force air base would not necessarily have been forwarded to the Ministry of Defence for inclusion in central statistics.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will identify the terms of reference of work on

(a) civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The terms of reference of work on civil emergencies and home defence planning are classified. The other information sought is not available in the form requested.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with the bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Ministry of Defence has no formal links with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees. However, MOD officials are consulted as necessary by the relevant lead Department on matters which are of interest to the MOD. The scale of MOD involvement varies and it is not possible to quantify this without disproportionate time and effort.

RAF (Flying Training)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the percentage increase in the provision for Royal Air Force flying training activity in 1987-88 over 1986-87; and what changes in provision are being implemented in 1988-89.

Mr. Freeman: Royal Air Force flying training activity decreased by 9 per cent. from 1986-87 to 1987-88; a further decrease of 6 per cent. for 1987-88 to 1988-89 is being implemented.

Northern Ireland

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table showing the number of troops deployed in Northern Ireland, the number of his Department's civil servants stationed there, and the total cost to public funds of each in each year since 1974.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* The information available on the armed forces and MOD civilian numbers in Northern Ireland on 1 January of each year since 1974 is as follows:

	Regular Forces	*UDR*	*Civilians*
1974	16,991	7,816	[1]not available
1975	15,732	7,678	not available
1976	15,627	7,793	not available
1977	15,427	7,616	not available
1978	15,287	7,812	[2]3,364
1979	13,704	7,761	3,305
1980	13,389	7,425	3,231
1981	12,143	7,431	3,087
1982	11,799	7,350	2,947
1983	11,357	7,026	2,825
1984	10,260	6,929	2,761
1985	10,222	6,468	2,709
1986	10,090	6,508	2,693
1987	11,158	6,535	2,621
1988	10,887	6,364	2,618

[1] Civilian numbers prior to 1978 are not readily available and could only be produced at disproportionate cost.
[2] Civilian numbers in 1978 are at 1 April.

Information on costs is not available in the form requested. However, the following information is available on the extra costs of military operations in Northern Ireland:

Financial year	*Extra costs*[1] *at outturn prices £ million*
1981-82	149
1982-83	143
1983-84	141
1984-85	121
1985-86	135
1986-87	144
1987-88	168

[1] These costs are derived from an annual assessment of the resources which MOD requires to fulfil those tasks which relate directly to the campaign against terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Reconnaissance Force

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the role and composition of the military reaction or reconnaissance force in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* There is no such unit.

Sub-machine Guns

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which models of the Sterling and Ingram sub-machine gun have been issued to the Army in Northern Ireland from 1973 to the current date.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* The Sterling model L2A3 sub-machine gun and the Ingram model 10 sub-machine gun have been issued to the Army in Northern Ireland.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pesticides

Mr. Hood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with union representatives concerning the safe use of pesticides; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Trade unions are represented on the three specialist panels established to give assistance to the independent advisory committee on pesticides. These panels, the medical and toxicological panel, the application technology panel and the labelling and container design panel, make an important contribution to ensuring the safe use of pesticides. Since October 1986 there have been a total of eight meetings, and trade union representatives have attended four of them.

Trade unions were consulted on the drafting of the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. They were also consulted on the first draft of a statutory code of practice on use of pesticides in agriculture and will be able to comment on the revised draft which was published for use on a trial basis in February 1988.

No pesticide product is approved for use unless Ministers, on the advice of the advisory committee on pesticides, are satisfied that it can be used safely. From time to time new information becomes available. Trade unions are consulted whenever the withdrawal of approval for a product for safety reasons is to be considered by the ACP.

In addition to direct contacts with individual trade unions and the TUC, my Department is kept in touch with trade union views on the safe use of pesticides through tripartite bodies organised by the Health and Safety Executive. The Health and Safety Commission, which is itself a tripartite body, has to approve any advisory code of practice on safe use of pesticides drafted by the HSE.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of the number of prosecutions of persons for breach of the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986, for each year since 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department has conducted two, successful, prosecutions since the regulations were brought into effect in October 1986. One prosecution was in 1987, the other this year. Both were for misuse of pesticides. My Department may also prosecute offenders who misuse pesticides under other legislation. In 1987 there were two such prosecutions under the Protection of Animals Act 1911. The other agricultural departments are responsible for similar prosecutions in respect of their own areas.

Since 29 June 1987 the Health and Safety Executive has been the enforcing authority for the regulations for the premises for which they are responsible under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. These premises include farms and holdings, and pesticide manufacturers in Great Britain. Figures for prosecution should be available shortly.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he takes to ensure that workers in the agriculture industry are fully aware of the dangers to their health from exposure to pesticides.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No pesticide product is approved for use unless Ministers, on the advice of the independent advisory committee on pesticides, are satisfied that it can be used safely. The product label is the principal way in which information on the safe use of a particular pesticide product is conveyed to the user. Any statements about operator protection or requirement for operator training have the force of law.

No workers in the agriculture industry may use a pesticide in the course of their work unless they have been given adequate instruction and guidance in the safe use of pesticides and are competent for the duties they are called upon to perform. And in using the pesticide they are required to take all reasonable precautions to protect the health of human beings.

In order to ensure that young people and those offering a commercial service are fully aware of all their obligations under the Control of Pesticide Regulations 1986, as from 1 January 1989 they will not be allowed to apply professional agricultural pesticides unless they hold an appropriate recognised certificate of competence.

Sheep Dipping

Mr. Hood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the hazards to health of farm workers involved in the process of sheep dipping; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Operators exposed to sheep dips containing organophosphorus compounds may experience some adverse reaction. All approved products carry safety warnings which advise on the appropriate precautions which should be taken to minimise exposure.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidance his Department has given to the agriculture industry concerning precautions in the process of dipping sheep.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Advisory leaflets are available to farmers which set out the precautions operators should take when dipping sheep. It is also a requirement that safety precautions are included on the labels of all licensed sheep dips.

Chernobyl

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *493*, if he will list the numbers and types of equipment and materials purchased for analytical purposes and for monitoring as a result of the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The following additional major items of analytical and monitoring equipment have been purchased:

1 Gamma Spectrometry Assembly
1 Automatic Sample Changer for above
2 Liquid Scintillation Counters
25 Single Channel Analysers coupled with a $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch sodium-iodide detector
3 Single Channel Analysers coupled with a 2 inch sodium-iodide detector
8 Double Channel Analysers coupled with a $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch sodium-iodide detector

In addition, a large number of containers and other minor items have been purchased.

Plant Variety Testing

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the number of job losses as a consequence of the implementation of the review into plant variety testing and seed certification; and where such job losses will occur.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* A report on the plant variety testing and seed certification systems in the United Kingdom was published on 14 April 1988. All interested parties have been invited to comment by 15 July 1988. No decisions will be taken on the implementation of the report's recommendations until after comments have been received and given full consideration. It is premature, therefore, to estimate whether any job losses will occur.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of visits made by those responsible for the review of plant variety testing and seed certification to locations in Scotland, the places visited, the number of individuals consulted in each location and the length of time of each interview.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* Three visits were made by the review team to Scotland, where the following meetings were held:

Date	*Organisation*	*Location*	*Number of individuals*
27 May 1987	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	Edinburgh	9
28 May 1987	Representatives of the industry in Scotland	Edinburgh	15
27 July 1987	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	Edinburgh	4
27 July 1987	Representatives of the Scottish Agricultural Colleges and the Scottish Agricultural Statistics Service	Perth	11
28 July 1987	Representatives of the Scottish Crop Research Institute and Caithness Potato Breeders Ltd	Dundee	10
27 January 1988	Representatives of the Scottish Office Trade Union Side	Edinburgh	9

The number of individuals shown excludes members of the review team, but includes officials of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. Each meeting lasted approximately half a day, except for a shorter meeting with the Scottish Office trade union side.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those individuals and organisations who have made representations on the potential effects of the implementation of the recommendations of the recent review on plant variety testing and seed indentification.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* Individuals and organisations have until 15 July 1988 to comment on the report on the plant variety testing and seed certification systems in the United Kingdom. Up until 10 June 1988, written representations were received from the following persons and organisations:

The British Association of Seed Analysts.
The Hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. David Clark) on behalf of Ms. D. M. Davidson.
The Institution of Professional Civil Servants—Scottish Branch Section O.
Nickerson Seed Investments Ltd.
The Scots Timothy Seed Growers' Association.
Mr. B. Snoad—John Powling Seeds.
The United Kingdom Agricultural Supply Trade Association Ltd. (Scottish Council).

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department liaises with the NATO food and agricultural planning committee by attending the twice-yearly meetings of this body and its working group, and by participating in exercises which take place annually and training sessions held every other year. Representation is at United Kingdom Civil Service grade 7 level; in addition at present a MAFF grade 5 official chairs the committee. The work of the committee consists of exchanging information about civil emergency planning, within its field, in the member nations, identifying any action required by NATO and planning to carry this through. The work forms an essential part of the United Kingdom contribution to NATO and is a valuable aid to United Kingdom national civil emergency planning.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will indentify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Most of the work on these items by my Department is carried out under programme 52 of the ministerial information in MAFF (MINIM), and the relevant information can be found in the published MINIM report, a copy of which is available in the House Library.

For this programme, the details are:

1. To maintain contingency plans to safeguard supplies of essential foods during civil emergencies; implement plans and respond to the needs of food and agriculture during emergency.
2. To plan, in conjunction with other Departments and interests in the UK and within the NATO Alliance, to feed the population in times of crisis, conventional war and recovery after nuclear attack in the light of planning assumptions laid down centrally by Ministers.
3. To maintain in good condition a strategic food stockpile of a size, composition and distribution determined in accordance with central government policy.

The number of man-years involved on civil emergencies in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 was 19, 18 and 20 respectively, and the budgets costs were £0·3 million, £0·3 million and £0·4 million.

The number of man-years involved on defence planning in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 was 64, 61 and 63 respectively, the budget costs were £13·1 million, £13·4 million and £13·4 million. In addition, the cost of accommodating the strategic food stockpile is in the region of £10 million per year.

Other work, on civil accidents, is carried out under programme 35, where the terms of reference are

"To review and update national and international procedures for food safety in the event of a nuclear or non-nuclear accident."

Information on the numbers of staff and budgets for this work is not separately available.

American Waste

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what assessment he has made of the danger of an outbreak of Colorado beetle infestation from the importation and dumping of American domestic waste in the United Kingdom;

(2) what assessment he has made of the danger of an outbreak of swine fever from the importation and dumping of American domestic waste in the United Kingdom;

(3) what assessment he has made of the danger of an outbreak of foot and mouth disease from the importation and dumping of American domestic waste in the United Kingdom;

(4) what assessment he has made of the danger of rabies from the importation and dumping of American domestic waste in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My officials are assessing the implications of importing American domestic waste in relation to both plant and animal health. The possible introduction of the Colorado beetle is one of the plant health risks being investigated. We are aware of no recent outbreaks of either swine fever or foot and mouth disease in the United States of America, but we are considering whether there might be any risk of those diseases being introduced if the waste included waste food originating outside the United States of America. We are satisfied that there would be no risk of introducing rabies.

Badgers (Tuberculosis)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a live vaccine for use against tuberculosis in badgers was first isolated.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There is no live vaccine suitable for use against tuberculosis in badgers. Laboratory trials using a killed strain of the bacillus mycobacterium vaccae are in progress.

WALES

Labour Statistics

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the percentage of *(a)* female and *(b)* male unemployment in 1985, 1986 and 1987 in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The seasonally adjusted number of unemployed claimants, expressed as a percentage of the working population, is as follows:

Percentage of unemployed—Wales (annual averages)

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
Male	16·5	16·5	15·5
Female	10·6	10·9	9·2

Source: Department of Employment.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest figure for the percentage change in unemployment in (i) Wales and (ii) Clwyd since May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* On a consistent seasonally adjusted basis, the number of unemployed claimants in Wales in May 1979 was 73,100 and in May 1988 132,200, an increase of 80·8 per cent. Comparable figures for the same period for Clwyd are not available.

Unadjusted unemployment claimant figures, which are affected by changes in coverage, are available for Clwyd since June 1983. These show a decrease of 24·5 per cent. over the period to May 1988. Comparable figures for Wales show a fall of 18·1 per cent. I am pleased that unemployment in Wales has now gone down every month for the last 24 months.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the numbers of part-time workers in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* The most recent estimates of the total number of part-time workers in Wales is provided by the 1984 census of employment. This indicates that in September 1984 there were 192,000 part-time workers.

Welsh Development Agency Factories

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each of the last five years, the number of Welsh Development Agency factories, together with their area in square feet sited in Wales, disaggregated by (i) county area; (ii) district council area and (iii) parliamentary constituency area; and if he will give the corresponding statistics for the percentage of the factory space that remained unoccupied.

Mr. Peter Walker: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

WDA (Driving Instructors)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department holds on the number of approved driving instructors that the Welsh Development Agency has financially assisted in setting up in business during each of the past five years; and at what level of geographic disaggregation this information is available.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh Development Agency has no record of ever providing financial assistance to an approved driving instructor in Wales.

Gipsy Site, Felindre

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he will announce his decision on the reference to him by Lliw Valley borough council under section 8 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 on the proposal by West Glamorgan county council to seek deemed planning permission for an official gipsy site at Brynwhilach Farm, Felindre, Swansea.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend expects to be in a position to announce his decision by the end of July.

Farm Workers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farm workers were employed in each county of Wales at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Peter Walker: The numbers of farm workers employed in each county, in June 1987 are given in the following table:

	Regular Family Workers	*Regular Hired Workers*	*Total Regular Workers*	*Seasonal Casual Workers*	*Total Workers*
Clwyd	768	1,020	1,788	1,138	2,926
Dyfed	1,931	1,625	3,556	3,339	6,895
Gwent	453	464	917	646	1,563
Gwynedd	793	716	1,509	1,021	2,530
Mid Glamorgan	179	145	324	373	697
Powys	1,072	959	2,031	1,611	3,642
South Glamorgan	119	252	371	181	552
West Glamorgan	163	124	287	416	703
Wales	5,478	5,305	10,783	8,725	19,508

Notes:
1. Figures relate to main holdings only.
2. Regular workers includes those working full-time and part-time.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he is proposing to carry out a monitoring exercise in compliance with the code of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 24 May 1988. A survey to provide information on the ethnic origin of staff in the Welsh Office was recently completed as part of a phased programme of ethnic surveys across the Civil Service.

Hedgerows

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if there are any estimates of the amount of hedgerows grubbed up in Wales in the last year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if there are any guidelines issued to prevent the loss of hedgerows in the Welsh countryside;

(2) what action he proposes to take to combat the loss of the natural fauna and flora found in hedgerows.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Government are anxious to prevent the loss of hedgerows and, as such, grant-aid for their removal was completely withdrawn in 1983. At the same time higher rates of grant were introduced for the provision, replacement and improvement of hedges. The Agricultural Development Advisory Service has produced a number of leaflets giving guidance on hedgerow management and can advise on their value both for agriculture and conservation purposes. The Department also gives guidance to highway authorities on methods of managing roadside hedges which are sympathetic to the needs of the resident flora and fauna.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to take to combat the accelerated erosion of soil surrounding hedgerows which have been grubbed up.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am not aware of any particular problems in Wales of accelerated erosion of soil surrounding hedgerows which have been grubbed up. I understand this is a problem mainly associated with the arable areas of East Anglia.

Environmental Conservation

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to take to combat the destruction of the physical character of the countryside.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Government are firmly committed to the conservation of the countryside. There are a number of statutory designations which serve to protect it, including national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty, sites of special scientific interest and national nature reserves. A recent initiative is the designation of environmentally sensitive areas, and on 1 January 1988 I established the second such area in Wales in the Lleyn peninsula. In addition the Countryside Commission, which is my right hon. Friend's statutory adviser on countryside conservation matters, the national parks and the Welsh Office agriculture department can make grants available towards the management of important landscape features.

Water Supplies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has received from Welsh water on the increased levels of acidification of Welsh rivers and its effects on the concentration of aluminium in domestic water supplies.

Mr. Grist: No information has been received of any connection between increased acidification of surface waters and the concentration of aluminium in domestic water supplies. Compliance with the requirements of directive 80/778/EEC which includes a maximum limit on the aluminium concentration, is discussed in the water quality report published annually by Welsh water authority.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the supply outlets of domestic water in Wales that *(a)* are currently being treated with aluminium sulphate, *(b)* have aluminium concentration in excess of the European Commission guidelines and *(c)* are subject to derogations for these and other reasons.

Mr. Grist: In respect of directive 80/778/EEC Welsh water authority's sources of supply which are subject to derogations or delay for aluminium are as follows:

Derogations	*Delays*
Nantmor	Nantybwch
Llan Penmachno	Capel Dewi
Cwmsymlog	Strata Florida
Afon Cwm-y-Llan	Bontgoch
Rhyd	Georgetown (Tredegar)
	Alwen
	Cynwyd
	Meifod
	Bettws-y-Coed
	Carno
	Portis
	Ponsticill
	Llandello Graban
	Llanwrtyd Wells

Other derogations and delays apply to sources as follows:

Source	*1 = Colour; 6 = pH unit; 33 = Iron; 34 = Manganese*	
	Derogated Parameter	*Delayed Parameter*
Nantybwch	34	33
Garw Levels	33	33
Preseli		33
Strata Florida	34	
Ystradfelltre	34	
Lovesgrove Borehole	34	
Nantymoel	34	
Ffynnon Rhys		33
Wern Ddu	6	
Penygoyallt	6	
Llanfynydd	6, 34	33
Georgetown	6, 34	33
Alwen	1, 34	33
Cynwyd	34	33
Bettws-y-Coed	34	
Garreglwyd	33, 34	
Bryn Goch	33	
Maenllwyd		33
Nantmore	34	
Rhyd-Ddu	34	
Talwaenydd		33
Carno	34	33
Talybont		33
Portis	34	33
Penyfan	33	
Upper Wenallt Springs	33	
Cwm Cegr Springs	33	
Llanbedr Springs	33	
Llanwrtyd Wells		33
Barmouth Junction		33
Bolton Hill		33
Caerau	34	
Llan Penmachno	34	
Crai Reservoir	34	
Croesor	34	
Rhyd	33, 34	
Rhydyronnen	33	
Tir-Cawen	33	

Details of the number of supplies treated with aluminium sulphate and the concentration of aluminium in supply are not held centrally.

Cancer Treatment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will undertake to meet a joint conference of the Clwyd area health authority, the Alyn-Deeside district council and the county and town councils of Deeside to discuss his plans to enhance cancer treatment for north Wales patients in north Wales, as outlined in his letter to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside on 10 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Proposals for a comprehensive study of cancer treatment services for north Wales patients have already been the subject of consultation with appropriate health authorities and further discussion would unduly delay commencement of the study.

Datamagnetics, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the amount of funds given so far by *(a)* Investors in Industry, *(b)* the Welsh Development Agency and *(c)* the European Economic Community to Datamagnetics, Clwyd; and what new funds are proposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: For information on the Welsh Development Agency's input I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 9 May 1988.

EC resources in the form of European regional development fund grants are not passed directly to individual companies. When an investment proceeds as planned, ERDF is retained centrally as partial reimbursement for United Kingdom regional aid assistance already awarded.

As regards the financial involvement of Investors in Industry, I suggest that the hon. Gentleman seeks the information required from the company itself.

The receiver remains optimistic that Datamagnetics can be sold as a going concern.

Deeside and Vale of Clwyd Mind Association

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will meet members of Deeside and Vale of Clwyd Mind Association to discuss the possible closing down of their projects under the unified training programme for the unemployed employment training;

(2) what special measures he will take to assist Deeside and Vale of Clwyd Mind Association to continue the currently effective community programme providing work for disadvantaged groups when employment training is fully operative;

(3) how many places Deeside and Vale of Clwyd Mind Association provide in the current year under the community programme;

(4) if he will enable Deeside and Vale of Clwyd Mind Association to become a training manager in its own right; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Deeside and Vale of Clwyd Mind Association provided 39 places under the Training Commission's community programme scheme between 1 April and 31 May 1988. Decisions about the association's participation in employment training are for the Training Commission, and I understand that none has yet been made. I have no plans to meet members of the association.

Welsh Language

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the members and their appropriate qualifications of the committee advising him on the Welsh language.

Mr. Peter Walker: The eight members of the working group chaired by my hon. Friend the Minister of State are:

Alun Daniel—Executive Director, Welsh Development Agency
Prys Edwards—Chairman Wales Tourist Board
John Elfed Jones—Chairman Welsh Water Authority
Tom Jones—North Wales Regional Officer T&GWU
Winston Roddick QC—Barrister
D. Hugh Thomas—Clerk and Chief Executive, Mid Glamorgan Council Council
Euryn Ogwen Williams—Deputy Director, S4C
Elfed Roberts—Regional Director, Midland Bank.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will identify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department has plans for various civil emergencies, and encourages and co-ordinates contingency planning by other public bodies with executive responsibilities. Home defence planning is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and my Department participates in and contributes to planning in respect of Wales. Three members of staff are devoted full time to this work, and others participate from time to time as necessary.

My Department's budgets, in cash terms, for the last three years were as follows:

	£ thousands
1985-86	103
1986-87	187
1987-88	413

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Liaison between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the United Kingdom Government in areas of Welsh Office responsibility is conducted through the Home Office.

Waste Imports

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will seek powers to prohibit the importation of contaminated soil and other waste from the continent to Wales.

Mr. Grist: The Government believe that the provision of waste disposal services is a legitimate and proper element of international trade provided that adequate safeguards are in existence to ensure that there is no danger to public health or the environment.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much domestic waste, contaminated soil and other waste has been imported in 1986, 1987 and 1988 from *(a)* the continent, *(b)* Holland and *(c)* other sources into (i) Wales and (ii) Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has of the impact upon human, animal and plant life consequent upon the disposal of contaminated soil from Holland at a site near Gresford, Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the answer given on 3 December 1987. I was fully satisfied before the consignment was allowed to be imported from Holland that there would be no adverse impact upon human, animal or plant life and I was assured by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, on advice from Wrexham Maelor borough council, that the disposal site in question was appropriately licensed to receive the waste.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the substances that contaminated the soil exported from Holland to Gresford, Clwyd, via Mostyn docks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The soil contained very low levels of copper, lead, zinc, cadmium, nickel, chromium, arsenic, antimony and mercury.

Gateway Network

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the progress of the small business gateway network in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: On Wednesday 15 June I announced in Cardiff that the high street banks in Wales had joined the gateway network. This adds the commitment of an important sector of private enterprise to our major framework of support for small businesses in the Principality and will add considerably to its success and impact.

THE ARTS

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will list the objects and property accepted in satisfaction of capital transfer tax and inheritance tax during the financial year ended 31 March; if, in listing them, he will specify *(a)* the amount of tax satisfied in each case, *(b)* whether any offers of objects carried conditions as to destination, *(c)* the dates in each case of the recommendations received by him from the Museums and Galleries Commission for the acceptance of objects, *(d)* the total for the financial year of the tax thus satisfied and *(e)* the means by which that total has been covered in the public accounts; and whether a press notice will be issued from the Office of Arts and Libraries comprising the information given in his reply.

Mr. Luce: The information the hon. Member requests is as follows:

Item Offered	Amount of Tax Satisfied (£)	Condition as to Destination	Date of receipt of MGC's recommendations
Two paintings by Belloto	412,500	None	24 February 1987
Archives of Lord Clark of Saltwood	144,870	None	13 March 1988
Chattels at Hagley Hall	34,100	To remain in situ	Residue of offer first recommended 11 October 1985
Picasso's "Weeping Woman"	1,200,000	Offer conditional on allocation to Tate Gallery	11 May 1987
Derby Commemorative Jug	13,750	None	11 May 1987
Raeburn Portrait	96,250	None	MGC Recommendation went to Secretary of State for Scotland on 21 May 1987
Twenty Vignettes by Turner	233,750	Offer conditional on allocation to Scottish National Galleries	MGC Recommendations went to Secretary of State for Scotland on 22 July 1987
Ten Portrait Miniatures	200,344	None	11 May 1987
Henry Moore Drawings	153,456	Offer conditional on allocation to the British Museum	1 September 1987
Constable's "Stratford Mill"	5,500,000	None	4 March 1987
Gainsborough's "Captain Wade"	638,444	Offer conditional on allocation to Bath City Council	15 January 1988
Total Tax Satisfied	8,627,464		

The total amount of tax satisfied in 1987-88 was £8,627,464 and a call on the Reserve of £7,388,444 was made, of which £6,627,464 was spent. A press notice is being issued in conjunction with this reply.

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will state the total amounts of tax satisfied consequential on the acceptance of objects and property in lieu of capital transfer tax and inheritance tax which have been covered in the public accounts by means of resort to the Reserve for contingencies in each of the three completed financial years since the written answer on 26 July 1985 made on behalf of the then Minister for the Arts, *Official Report*, column 777.

Mr. Luce: The amount of tax satisfied by means of resort to the Reserve in the last three financial years is listed in the table. Due to underspends in each financial year on the annual vote of £2 million provided for the acceptance-in-lieu of objects and property the amount actually spent from the Reserve was less than the original call. I list the actual money spent from the Reserve for the hon. Member's information.

Year	Amount of tax Satisfied/Call on the Reserve £	Amount actually spent from the Reserve £
1985-86	520,000	366,707
1986-87	1,165,000	947,842
1987-88	7,338,444	6,627,464
Total	9,023,444	7,942,013

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Servants (Secondment)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will give, by region, the number of temporary appointments of civil servants made on secondment to companies in the private sector and of individuals in the private sector to Civil Service Departments, by region.

Mr. Luce: Information is not held centrally showing the regional distribution of secondees between Government Departments and outside organisations, and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

ENVIRONMENT

East End Trust

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial contribution is being made by the London Docklands Development Corporation to the East End trust; what proportion of its current income this represents; and to what purposes its funds are being devoted.

Mr. Trippier: London Docklands Development Corporation has approved contributions to the East End community trust totalling £186,500. These are for revenue support, a wildlife habitat study in Docklands, and to provide a legal advice service to local groups. The trust is developing its sources of funding. London Docklands Development Corporation is currently a major contributor.

Rents

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the average level of fair rents registered in Greater London in each year from 1979 to the latest available date for *(a)* private unfurnished tenancies, *(b)* private furnished tenancies and *(c)* housing association tenancies, distinguishing, in each case, between the rent on first registration and that on re-registration and including figures for the percentage increase on an annual and cumulative basis and for the movement of the retail price index over the same period.

Mrs. Roe: The figures on average rents registered by rent officers for private unfurnished, private furnished and housing association tenancies and for movements in the retail prices index up to 1987 are as follows:

Average Fair rents registered by Rent Officers in Greater London (£ per annum)

	Unfurnished tenancies		*Furnished tenancies*		*Housing Association tenancies*	
	First Registration £	*Re-registration* £	*First Registration* £	*Re-registration* £	*First Registration* £	*Re-registration* £
1979	691	664	897	1,016	609	543
1980	778	761	1,059	1,169	669	649
1981	728	861	1,295	1,165	778	755
1982	895	967	1,301	1,297	890	821
1983	1,048	970	1,433	1,537	974	912
1984	1,080	1,123	1,554	1,605	1,107	999
1985	1,240	1,128	1,771	1,755	1,196	1,069
1986	1,272	1,305	1,900	1,873	1,250	1,150
1987	1,345	1,315	2,057	2,012	1,462	1,266

Notes:
Service charges, if any, are included in fair rents.

The percentage movement of the retail prices index on an annual and cumulative basis since 1979 is as follows:

Retail Prices Index (UK) Annual

	Percentage increase over year	*since 1979*
1980	18	18
1981	12	32
1982	9	43
1983	5	50
1984	5	57
1985	6	67
1986	3	73
1987	4	80

The mix of properties for which rents are registered varies from year to year for a number of reasons: for example, extension of decontrol in 1981; the reduction from three to two years in the minimum period for re-registration which led to re-registrations in 1983 of rents previously registered in 1980 and 1981. Therefore, comparisons of averages for consecutive years do not properly reflect rent movements. Better estimates of rent movements are derived from previous and new registered rents for tenancies where there has been no material change in terms or in the physical condition. For properties with rents fixed during 1979, 1982, 1984, 1986 and 1987 the estimated increases in Greater London are:

	Unfurnished tenancies *Percentage increase*		*Furnished tenancies* *Percentage increase*		*Housing association tenancies* *Percentage increase*	
	in period	*annualised*	*in period*	*annualised*	*in period*	*annualised*
1979-82	44	13	40	11	46	13
1982-84	19	9	18	8	19	9
1984-86	17	8	17	8	16	8
1985-87	20	9	17	8	16	8

London Docklands (Refurbishments)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much expenditure his Department has allowed the London Docklands Development Corporation to incur on the internal refurbishment of dwellings in the urban development area.

Mr. Trippier: Expenditure of £90,000 has been approved exceptionally for the internal refurbishment of three dwellings owned by the London borough of Tower Hamlets. The corporation is considering what further contribution it might make for this purpose for discussion with the Department.

Storm Damage

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he proposes to take of the level of expenditure incurred by *(a)* central Government and *(b)* Ealing council in respect of the severe flooding in the Greenford and Hanwell area in 1977 and of the number of people who received payments, and of the (i) highest payment, (ii) lowest payment and (iii) the average payment made, in deciding whether to make any financial assistance available following the recent flooding in the same area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: All requests for financial assistance are considered on their merits. The treatment of Ealing's request for financial assistance in 1977 would not therefore be relevant to any request in respect of the flooding in 1988. Any representations Ealing borough council may make will, of course, be considered carefully; none has been made so far. I would refer the hon. Gentlemen to the answer I gave him on 23 May 1988, at column 79.

Playgrounds

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce urgent legislation to make compulsory the replacement of concrete or tarmac surfaces of children's playgrounds and the use of safe soft materials in such playgrounds.

Mr. Moynihan: No. The Health and Safety at Work etc, Act 1974 already applies and requires local authorities and other playground operators to take reasonable measures to ensure safety at playgrounds which are under their control. Duties under this Act are enforceable by the

Health and Safety Executive. Additionally, the Department issued guidance to local authorities on safety in children's playgrounds in 1978; part of this guidance was consolidated in British Standard 5696. A new British Standard on playground surface safety is currently being drawn up and should be completed by the end of this year.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many children suffered accidents resulting in death or major injuries as the result of playing in playgrounds with concrete or tarmac surfaces for each year since 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I am consulting the Health and Safety Executive, to which accidents are reported under the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have playgrounds with concrete or tarmac surfaces.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not held centrally. I understand, however that a joint working group comprising the national children's play and recreation unit, the Institute of Leisure and Amenities Management and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, is conducting a comprehensive survey of local authority provision. The results of the survey should be available later this year.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the average cost of replacing the concrete or tarmac surfaces in children's playgrounds.

Mr. Moynihan: It is not possible to assess a meaningful average cost. Costs vary greatly depending on the contractors' price and the type of surface used—ranging from relatively cheap surfaces such as sand to expensive wet pore surfaces.

England *v.* Scotland Football Match

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the football authorities about crowd behaviour at the recent England v Scotland match at Wembley.

Mr. Moynihan: I have not discussed the England *v.* Scotland match directly with the football authorities. Immediately following the match the Football Association launched an internal inquiry into the incidents which occurred both in and around the stadium. Evidence will be taken from all relevant bodies. I have asked to see a copy of the report of the inquiry as soon as it is available. I will be discussing progress on anti-hooliganism measures with the football authorities on 5 July.

Disabled Athletes

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made on the Ten Events Initiative to highlight the ability of many top sportsmen and women with disabilities; and whether he intends to visit the Paralympics in Seoul.

Mr. Moynihan: Following the successful launch of the Ten Events Initiative with the slalom challenge during the British ski championships, I have completed the bowls event, participating in 100 ends in a day, and the first leg of the Milk Race. Sponsorship from these events will go towards helping to send a Great Britain squad to the Paralympics in Seoul. I shall be participating in several events this summer, including 100 holes of golf in a day, a Docklands decathlon and watersports events.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about safety of waste disposal sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have received a number of representations about the safety of waste disposal sites. Waste disposal facilities are licensed by the waste disposal authorities to ensure that the operations do not endanger public health or the water supply.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps will be taken to ensure that the import and dumping of American domestic waste in the United Kingdom conforms with European Community policy to preserve, protect and improve the quality of the environment and to contribute to protecting human health.

Mr. Moynihan: Disposal of all controlled waste is subject to licensing by waste disposal authorities and must take place in accordance with the conditions imposed by the authority on the disposal licence, which are intended to protect health, the water supply and local amenity.

Asbestos

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigations have been made by the fire research station into the consequences of fires in buildings containing asbestos materials and the subsequent distribution of asbestos particles; what conclusions were reached on the consequential risks to firemen or residents from inflamable asbestos fibres; and if he will make a statement on the steps being taken to reduce this.

Mr. Moynihan: At the beginning of 1986 the fire research station carried out a small-scale investigation of the effect of heat on the principal types of asbestos materials used in buildings, and undertook preliminary modelling studies of the dispersal of fibres in the fire plume. It was concluded from these studies that further work was necessary before the risks to firemen or residents from asbestos in fires could be fully assessed. This further work is continuing.

Brook House, London

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his inspector's decision with regard to the discontinuing of office use of Brook house, Park lane, London W1, and of other such properties after 1990.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following the report of an inspector who held a local inquiry into an appeal by MEPC plc, against the decision of Westminster city council to refuse planning permission for the continued use for offices purposes of Brook house beyond 1990, my right hon.

Friend the Secretary of State issued his decision to dismiss the appeal. His reasons for the decision are fully documented in his decision letter dated 17 May 1988. The Secretary of State has no further jurisdiction in the matter.

Decisions relating to other such properties are a matter for Westminster city council. In so far as individual cases may come before the Secretary of State, for example on appeal, they will be dealt with on their merits.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to introduce new statutory rules of procedure governing planning applications and appeals which go to public inquiry.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following consultation with the Council on Tribunals, two sets of rules, made by my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor, have been laid before both Houses.

They are the Town and Country Planning (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1988—in respect of decisions taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales; and the Town and Country Planning Appeals (Determination by Inspectors) (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1988—in respect of decisions taken by planning inspectors appointed by either of my right hon. Friends.

The revised rules are intended to make the planning inquiry process as efficient and effective as possible, while not impairing the fairness and impartiality of inquiry proceedings, or the ability of participants to make representations which are relevant to the decision. In particular, the new rules provide for a fuller exchange of information among the various interested parties about their respective cases before an inquiry opens, and introduce a more detailed timetable for the steps to be taken before an inquiry opens. Other new features are that they regulate pre-inquiry meetings and the procedure to be followed if a decision is quashed by the courts.

Also issued today are an explanatory circular to local authorities and two non-statutory codes of practice. The first is on preparing for major inquiries and the second governs the conduct of hearings, which are held as an alternative to inquiries in suitable cases.

I hope that applicants or appellants, local planning authorities, and other parties to planning cases will co-operate fully in implementing the new arrangements so that the benefits, for all parties involved, of smoother procedures and quicker decisions can be fully achieved.

Rating Reform

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet received the report from Price Waterhouse on the costs to local authorities associated with *(a)* the setting up and *(b)* administration of the poll tax.

Mr. Howard: Yes.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by what date he expects the majority of revaluations for the unified business rate to be completed and notified to ratepayers.

Mr. Howard: Drafts of the new valuation lists which will come into force on 1 April 1990 are required to be deposited for public inspection no later than 31 December 1989. We hope to have sample information on which to base decisions on the transitional arrangements for business rates by the autumn of this year.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give revised figures to exemplify the effect in 1987-88 on the overall illustrative community charge levels of applying to them the decision to grant student status to student nurses, in particular in the London boroughs of Camden, Lambeth and Southwark.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* It is not possible, at this stage, to estimate the effect on the community charge in particular areas of treating student nurses (of which there are at present about 60,000) as students for the purposes of the community charge. We intend that the cost to individual local authority areas of all exemptions from the charge, and student reliefs, will be allowed for in ensuring that each area can levy the same personal community charge if it spends in accordance with the Government's assessment of need. To do this we shall need to know the number of exempt individuals and students (including, if appropriate, student nurses) living in each area. This information is not available at present.

Leeds Urban Development Corporation

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, following the laying before Parliament of the order to establish the Leeds urban development corporation in May, a detailed map of the site can now be published.

Mr. Trippier: Copies of the 1:10,000 map referred to in the order are available for inspection in the Library and at the offices of my Department and of Leeds city council.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations have taken place, following the laying before Parliament of the order to establish the Leeds urban development corporation in May, with Leeds city council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Prior to the order being laid I kept both the City council and local Members of Parliament informed at each stage of the process; and I invited the city council to comment on the proposed boundaries. The next step is for Parliament to debate the order.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) following the laying before Parliament of the order to establish the Leeds urban development corporation in May, whether the board will include representatives from groups and bodies within the local community in whose area the urban development corporation lies;

(2) whether the board of the Leeds urban development corporation has now been appointed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The board cannot be appointed until Parliament has approved the order and the corporation has been established. My right hon. Friend has announced Mr. Peter Hartley as chairman-designate; other members will include people with special knowledge of the locality and people with appropriate business or professional experience. He is currently consulting Leeds city council about his intention to appoint local authority members to the board.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, following the laying before Parliament of the order to establish the Leeds urban development corporation in May, the commissioned consultative report on the urban development corporation potential can now be published.

Mr. Trippier: The report has now been published. I have placed copies in the Library and sent copies to Members with constituencies in the area.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made to date with establishing the Leeds urban development corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Excellent progress has been made. I hope Parliament will approve the orders and the corporation will be established in the next few weeks.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will identify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: My Department's work on civil emergencies and home defence planning involves the development and operation of contingency measures for dealing with emergencies in peace-time, particularly in relation to water supply and the release of radioactive substances. The Property Services Agency provides works and estate management services to enable client departments to fulfil their operational requirements in any emergency.

The number of staff and annual budgets are as follows:

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Number of staff	8	17	19
Annual budget (inc. Capital £000s expenditure)	175	418	473

These figures do not include any staff who may do work related to civil emergencies and home defence planning incidental to their normal duties.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: My Department does not have any direct liaison arrangement with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees.

Government Departments (Planning)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those Government Departments from which his inspectors have received representations about planning matters since 12 June 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested is not readily available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

National Front

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence of British National Front, or other extreme Right-wing organisational involvement he has collected following recent incidents including British citizens attending the European football championships in West Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have received no evidence that extreme Right-wing groups are funding or organising the incidents in West Germany, though I have seen newspaper reports about the insignia they have been wearing and their chants. I deplore all incidents or hooliganism, however those involved are dressed.

Private Housing Schemes

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will consider permitting local authorities to give the same level of assistance to privately let housing schemes as the Housing Corporation is able to give to mixed-funding schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Local authorities wishing to provide assistance for privately let housing schemes may do so only with the Secretary of State's consent under section 25 of the Local Government Act 1988. Hitherto, that consent has not normally been given if the aggregate public sector assistance to the scheme in question would exceed 30 per cent. As from today that limit has been raised to match the higher limits for housing association grant from the Housing Corporation to mixed-funding schemes, announced on 3 March 1988, namely, in the range 50 to 75 per cent. according to area. These higher limits should help unlock more private finance for housing that can be let at rents within the means of the prospective tenants.

Housing Co-operatives

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to carry out a review of housing co-operatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is the Government's policy to encourage the formation of co-operatives in order to broaden opportunities for tenants to play a greater part in the management of their homes. I have visited a number of co-ops recently and have been greatly impressed by their ability to build and strengthen local communities.

I am aware, however, that there are concerns, not least from within the co-op movement itself, that the present arrangements for supporting and promoting co-ops may not provide a suitable basis for the expansion in numbers which I am keen to secure. I am, therefore, commissioning a wide-ranging review of the arrangements to promote, develop and support co-ops, with the following terms of reference;

a. To consider the administrative, financial and legislative framework necessary for the promotion, development and support of housing co-operatives on a local and national scale, both generally and in the context of tenants' choice;

b. To consider the role of secondary housing co-operatives as promotional and servicing agencies; and

c. To make recommendations.

I have set up a review team which will be led by my Department to consider these matters. We are writing to the organisations most closely involved, but I invite all interested parties to write to the review team at my Department with their views on what is needed for co-ops, or similar forms of tenant involvement in the control of rented housing, to succeed. I have asked the review team to report by the end of the year.

Environmental Assessment Directive

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will now lay before Parliament regulations implementing the European directive on environmental assessment (85/337/EEC) for projects subject to planning controls.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yesterday I laid before Parliament the draft Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988. They require to be approved by resolution of each House before they can be made. I hope that both Houses will approve the drafts so that they may be made before 3 July. Copies of these draft regulations have been placed in the Library and will be available for sale at Her Majesty's Stationery Office from 20 June. Drafts of further regulations relating to projects which are not subject to planning control, and equivalent Scottish regulations, are also being laid before Parliament.

Nuclear Waste

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been done into the feasibility of building dry store facilities for nuclear waste at each of the locations where the waste is produced.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* Following the recommendations in March 1986 of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment, the generating boards (CEGB and SSEB) each conducted a full analysis of the arrangements for storing and disposing of spent nuclear fuel from their Magnox power stations. The Department of the Environment then commissioned an independent review of the two reports by a firm of consulting engineers.

The reports and the review confirmed that reprocessing of spent Magnox fuel remains preferable to direct disposal and that the building of dry stores at the respective power stations would not be justified at this late stage in their lives. Copies of the reports are in the Library of the House.

Asset Sales and Purchases

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will tabulate *(a)* the asset sales and *(b)* the purchases of his Department and the Commission for New Towns for 1987-88 and the planned net receipts for 1988-89, giving separate figures for sales and receipts by local authorities.

Mrs. Roe *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* The sums raised from the sale of assets by the Commission for the New Towns in 1987-88 amounted to £210·6 million. The commission's planned receipts for 1988-89 are confidential at this stage. I am unable to answer the remaining aspects of the hon. Member's question without more precise details of the information he requires.

Toxic Waste (Pontypool)

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what special measures his Department is taking to monitor the disposal, at the ReChem international plant at Pontypool, of the toxic waste which will be imported from Switzerland in the next few weeks.

Mr. Grist: I have been asked to reply.

Any wastes entering the United Kingdom from other countries are subject to the same controls as home-produced wastes. Operations at the ReChem plant, Pontypool are regulated by the Health and Safety Executive, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, Torfaen borough council and the Welsh water authority.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Scottish Grand Committee

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list in the *Official Report* the dates and subjects debated by the Scottish Grand Committee in the Scottish Assembly building, Old Royal High School, in Edinburgh since 1979.

Mr. Wakeham: Since 1979 the Scottish Grand Committee has met on 17 occasions in the former Royal High School buildings in Edinburgh. The dates of these meetings and the subjects discussed were:

Date	*Subject*
15 February 1982	Matter Day debate on youth employment and training.
24 May 1982	Matter Day debate on law and order.
5 July 1982	Estimates Debate on industry and the economy.
22 November 1982	Second Reading of Divorce, Jurisdiction, Court Fees and Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill.
7 February 1983	Matter Day debate on education for 16 to 18 year olds.
12 December 1983	Matter Day debate on the National Health Service.
30 April 1984	Matter Day debate on the effect of European Community policy in Scotland.
25 June 1984	Estimates debate on industry and the economy in Scotland.
10 December 1984	Second Reading of Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill.
25 March 1985	Public expenditure plans to 1987-88 in relation to the Scotland programme.
8 July 1985	Estimates debate on employment and the economy.
20 January 1986	Matter Day debate on higher education.
28 April 1986	Matter Day debate on rating reform.
30 June 1986	Matter Day debate on the administration of Scotland.
19 January 1987	Matter Day debate on Scottish Agriculture and Fisheries.

Date	Subject
23 March 1987	Second Reading of Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill.
21 March 1988	Matter Day debate on Education in Scotland

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Excise Duty

99. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to increase the road fund tax on a 53-seat coach from £85 to £850.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Decisions on all excise duty rates are matters for the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for 3Transport (1) how many unlicensed vehicles in the London borough of Newham have been detected in each of his Department's campaigns against motor tax evaders;

(2) how many unlicensed road vehicles have been detected in the current campaign in London being undertaken by his Department in conjuction with the Metropolitan and City police forces;

(3) how many prosecutions involving unlicensed vehicles arose out of his Department's campaign in London in May 1987.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: During the 1988 London campaign 62 unlicensed vehicles were reported within the borough of Newham. Figures for individual boroughs are not available for earlier years. In London as a whole 4,055 offence reports have been received in the course of the 1988 campaign. The comparable figure for 1987 was 2,900 and the number of resulting prosecutions in 1987 was in the region of 1,000.

Bypasses

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bypasses have been begun in each of the last 30 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Eleven bypasses were started in 1986-87 and 14 in 1987-88.

For earlier years, the information is not available in the form requested. Figures for the numbers of bypasses completed since 1974 are as follows. It can be assumed that in most cases construction started approximately two years before.

Year	Number of completed bypasses
1974-75	13
1975-76	21
1976-77	17
1977-78	9
1978-79	7
1979-80	4
1980-81	3
1981-82	8
1982-83	12
1983-84	7
1984-85	8
1985-86	11
1986-87	14
1987-88	14

No information is available for years before 1974. Other schemes, although not designated bypasses, also have a bypassing effect.

Heathrow (Passengers' Hand Baggage)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the X-ray machines used to examine passengers' hand baggage at Heathrow and marked safe for film up to 1,000 ASA are safe for film rated at *(a)* 1,000 ASA; *(b)* 1,600 ASA; and *(c)* 3,500 ASA; and how many complaints have been received about the fogging of such film.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The United Kingdom aviation security programme, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State administers, provides for passengers who fear that any article they are carrying might be damaged if passed through the X-ray machine at an airport to be afforded the alternative of having the article examined physically by a member of the security staff. Any arrangements made to indicate to passengers that particular X-ray machines are safe for particular kinds of film are entirely the responsibility of the airport authority concerned. So, too, are any complaints about the fogging of film which has been passed through the machines.

Motorways

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of new motorway he anticipates being opened in 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We expect to open 16 miles in 1989 and 50 miles in 1990. We expect to complete 12 miles of widening this year and 13 miles in 1989. No new motorway will open this year.

Heavy Goods Vehicles (Weight Restrictions)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to reduce the maximum level of weight restrictions on heavy goods vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no such proposals. The House will be debating on 16 June the European Commission's current proposals on lorry weights and dimensions.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will identify (a) liason arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and (b) the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Officials from my Department participate fully in the work of the following civil NATO planning boards and committees concerned with transport:

Planning Board for Ocean Shipping
Planning Board for European Inland Surface Transport
Civil Aviation Planning Committee
and various sub-committees and working groups of these bodies.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will identify the terms of reference of

work on (a) civil emergencies and (b) home defence planning carried out in his Department, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The work carried out by the Department on civil emergencies encompasses the preparation, co-ordination and implementation of plans for the maintenance of essential services in an emergency. Home defence planning involves the preparation of similar plans for use in a time of tension and war, and the provision of certain support to the armed services.

The numbers of staff involved and the annual budgets in recent years have been as follows:

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Staff	62	62	62
Annual Budget	£4·5 million	£5·3 million	£4·9 million

These figures do not allow for staff who may do a limited amount of work on civil emergencies incidental to their normal duties.

Trees

Mr. Forth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many trees have been planted by his Department in England since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since 1979 we have planted 12·25 million trees and shrubs alongside our motorways and other trunk roads in England. The Secretary of State is the most prolific planter of trees for amenity purposes in the country.

London Taxi Fares

Mr. Bendall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement about London taxi fares.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Secretary of State has made an order increasing London taxi fares by about 6·5 per cent. on average with effect from Saturday 25 June 1988. The new tariff will incorporate a minimum fare of £1 (including an unchanged hire charge of 40p) for the first 1,305 yards or 4 minutes 21 seconds. The rate will then be 20p for every 435 yards or 1 minute 27 seconds up to six miles and 20p for each 290 yards or 58 seconds thereafter.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost of electrifying the London to Leicester east midlands line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The layout of the midland main line, with a high proportion of curves, junctions and stations, means that without a major reconstruction significant improvements in speed are impracticable. For these reasons the existing HSTs cannot be used to their full potential because of these limitations. Electrification might reduce journey times by a few minutes, but I understand from BR that it is clear from preliminary studies that the benefits to the passenger would be small compared to the cost, which would have to be recouped through fares. In these circumstances BR has made no recent or detailed estimates of cost.

Commercial Vehicles

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to require all commercial vehicles to display the name, address and telephone number of the owners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Certain vehicles, for example those carrying food, are required to display the user's name and address. Extending the requirement to all commercial vehicles would not be justified, particularly as the user of a vehicle may not by the owner. Many vehicles are leased or hired for short periods.

Ferry Safety

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of P and O to discuss ferry safety.

Mr. David Mitchell: On 7 March.

Blackwall Tunnel

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning traffic delays at the Blackwall tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Metropolitan police recently requested an extension of the hours of tidal flow working, which allows northbound traffic to use three of the four available lanes in the morning peak hours. This request was refused after consultation with other interested bodies. It would have shifted congestion from the south to the north of the river.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the decision of the east London river crossing public inquiry to be announced.

Mr. Channon: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on Monday 13 June at column *72*.

Speed Governors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now implement speed governors for heavy goods vehicles as well as public service coaches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 7 March, at column *97*.

Motorways

Mr. Forth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the expenditure by his Department on temporary markings on motorway roadworks for *(a)* temporary white lines, *(b)* temporary studs, *(c)* lane directional arrows and *(d)* blacking out, for the latest three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the traffic density on British motorways; and what are the comparable figures in Germany, France and Italy.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The latest available estimates are:

Country	*Year*	*Average Daily Flow of Vehicles per 24 hours on Motorways (thousands)*
Great Britain	1985	36·4
Great Britain	1987	40·8
Germany	1985	31·3
France	1985	15·7
France	1987	18·2

Comparable data are not available for Italy.

Road Schemes (Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list his Department's proposed road improvements or new road schemes costing £100,000 or more which are planned to start in Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire within the next five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is set out in the table. Schemes are liable to delay for a number of reasons. The lists are subject to change.

Roads	*Improvements and schemes*
Cambridgeshire	
M1-A1 link	Thrapston-Brampton[1]
A1	Brampton realignment junction improvement
A1	Glatton grade separated junction
A1	Continuous programme of gap closures
A11	Four Wentways junction improvement
A11	Four Wentways-Newmarket dualling
A11	Newmarket-Red Lodge dualling
A11-A45	Newmarket bypass—safety fence installation
A45	Barford road, St. Neots junction improvement
A47	Castor and Ailsworth bypass
A47	Eye bypass
A47	Guyhirn diversion
A47	Thorney bypass
A47	Westwood-Paston interchange—safety fence installation
Northamptonshire	
M1-A1 link	M1-Rothwell
M1-A1 link	Kettering southern bypass
M1-A1 link	Kettering-Thrapston
M1-A1 link	Rothwell-Kettering
A5	Kilsby diversion
A6	Black Lodge improvement
A6	Burton Latimer bypass
A6	Finedon bypass
A6	Rushden-Higham Ferrers bypass
A43	Blisworth bypass
A43	Green Man Inn improvement
A43	Hulcote turn-Tiffield turn
A43	Kettering northern bypass
A43	Moulton-Overstone improvement
A43	Radstone lane improvement
A43	Silverstone bypass
A43	Whitfield turn—Brackley Hatch dualling
A43-A6116	Roundabout
A47	Eastern Hornstocks bends

[1] Also runs through part of Northamptonshire.

Nuclear Materials

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if any consignment of radioactive materials, including medical radio-isotopes, natural uranium, uranium hexafluoride, enriched uranium, plutonium and low, intermediate or high-level nuclear wastes has ever been lost in transit within the jurisdiction of United Kingdom regulatory and safety authorities in any year since 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* The information is not available for the years 1979 to 1982. I understand that since then industrial or medical isotopes have been lost on six occasions. No other radioactive materials have been lost in transit.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the annual tonnage for each year since 1979, of spent nuclear fuel licensed for *(a)* export and *(b)* import through the ports of Felixstowe, Harwich, Dover, Folkestone, Newhaven, Southampton, Immingham and Barrow, respectively.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* This Department does not collect details of the kind requested.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Company Profitability

11. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rise in non-North sea company profitability in 1987.

83. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rise in non-North sea company profitability in 1987.

92. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rise in non-North sea company profitability in 1987.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The net rate of return on capital employed by non-North sea industrial and commercial companies increased by $1\frac{1}{2}$ percentage points in 1987 to $10\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.—the highest level for about 20 years.

Balance of Payments

12. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement regarding the effect of the recent appreciation of the value of the pound on the current account of the United Kingdom balance of payments.

Mr. Lilley: The outcome for the current account depends on many more factors than just the exchange rate. Much more important for competitiveness is the need to control unit costs.

70. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement regarding the effect of the recent appreciation of the value of the pound on the current account of the United Kingdom balance of payments.

88. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement regarding the effect

of the recent appreciation of the value of the pound on the current account of the United Kingdom balance of payments.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Members to the answer given earlier today by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald).

96. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the balance of payments for 1988-89.

Mr. Major: At Budget time my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer forecast a current account deficit of £4 billion for 1988. A new forecast will be published at the time of the Autumn Statement.

Benefit Withdrawals

13. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what weight he gives to the effect of benefit withdrawals when assessing marginal tax rates.

Mr. Major: The Government's policy is to reduce marginal rates of tax. Only about 3 per cent. of the working population face high rates of benefit withdrawal and the Budget reduced their number by 30,000.

Sub-Saharan African Debt

14. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to discuss with other Finance Ministers his proposals on sub-Saharan African debt.

Mr. Lawson: I shall be meeting the Finance Ministers of the other six major industrial nations in Toronto at the economic summit early next week. One of the United Kingdom's main objectives for the summit will be to agree a specific set of measures to implement my initiative to help the poorest most heavily indebted countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Income Tax

16. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost of administering and collecting income tax expressed as a percentage of the revenue raised; and what information he has on the comparable figure in the United States of America.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Precise comparisons across all taxes are difficult. Cost incurred by United States taxpayers are higher, but the United States Government's administrative costs are lower. Research in 1986 suggested that the cost-yield ratios were broadly similar when taxpayers' costs are taken into account.

17. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the number of people who will gain as a result of the abolition of the highest rates of income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Nine hundred and thirty thousand single people and married couples will benefit as a result of the top rate of income tax being set at 40 per cent. for 1988-89.

World Debt

18. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next intends to meet other Finance Ministers to discuss world debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be meeting other Finance Ministers at the economic summit in Toronto on Sunday.

Top Incomes

19. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average post-tax income now received by the wealthiest 2 per cent. of taxpayers.

86. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average post-tax income now received by the wealthiest 2 per cent. of taxpayers.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The average post-tax income in 1988-89 of the top 2 per cent. of income tax payers is expected to be about £46,000.

30. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the gain to a man earning £1 million a year who also inherits £1 million in the 1988-89 tax year as a result of the changes made in the Finance (No. 2) Bill.

38. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the gain to a man earning £1 million a year who also inherits £1 million in the 1988-89 tax year as a result of the changes introduced in the Finance (No. 2) Bill.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the gain to a man earning £1 million a year who also inherits £1 million in the 1988-89 tax year, as a result of the changes proposed in the Finance (No. 2) Bill.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A married man with earnings of £1 million and no other income in 1988-89 who claims no allowances or reliefs other than the married man's allowance would be liable to £193,914 less income tax as a result of the proposals in the Finance (No. 2) Bill. The inheritance tax liability on a £1 million legacy would normally be borne by the testator's residuary estate and not by the beneficiary.

60. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average share of post-tax income now received by the wealthiest 1 per cent. of tax payers.

95. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average share of post-tax income now received by the wealthiest 1 per cent. of taxpayers.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The top 1 per cent. of income tax payers will receive about 5 per cent. of income tax payers' total income after tax in 1988-89.

Inflation

20. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the current rate of inflation.

Mr. Lilley: The retail prices index rose by 3·9 per cent. in the year to April.

Labour Market (North of England)

21. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect on the labour market in the north of recent economic trends.

Mr. Major: Strong economic performance has benefited the labour market in all regions, especially the north, north-west and the west midlands, which have enjoyed the largest reductions in unemployment rates.

Family Income

22. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect of the income tax cuts since 1979 on the living standards of a married man on half average earnings with two children.

84. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect of the income tax cuts since 1979 on the living standard of a married man on half average earnings with two children.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Real take home pay is likely to have increased by 21½ per cent. between 1978-79 and 1988-89 for a married man, with two children on half average earnings. Income tax cuts have contributed to this, both directly and through their contribution to economic growth.

39. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect of the income tax cuts since 1979 on the living standard of a married man on average earnings, with two children.

52. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect of the income tax cuts since 1979 on the living standard of a married man on average earnings, with two children.

67. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect of the income tax cuts since 1979 on the living standard of a married man on average earnings, with two children.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Real take home pay will have increased 27½ per cent. between 1978-79 and 1988-89 for a married man, with two children on average earnings. Income tax cuts have contributed considerably to this, both directly and through their contribution to economic growth.

Departmental Manpower

23. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many officials of his Department are responsible for monitoring *(a)* the social security budget, and *(b)* other Department of Health and Social Security services.

55. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many officials of his Department are responsible for monitoring *(a)* the social security budget, and *(b)* other expenditure by the Department of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong).

VAT (Hospital Radio Broadcasting Equipment)

24. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received seeking zero rating for value added tax for hospital radio broadcasting equipment; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has received no further representations since the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) on 7 June, at column *528*.

Poverty

26. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the impact on the extent of poverty in the United Kingdom of public expenditure decisions taken by the Government since 1979.

Mr. Major: A reduction in the share of national income devoted to public expenditure is an important element of the Government's medium-term financial strategy, which has created conditions for steady economic growth and increasing employment, producing benefits for all sections of the community.

Tax and National Insurance

27. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the share of the income taken in tax and national insurance from a single man earning *(a)* £100,000 a year and *(b)* £10,000 a year.

48. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the share of income taken in tax and national insurance from a single man earning *(a)* £100,000 a year and *(b)* £10,000 a year.

90. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the share of income taken in tax and national insurance from a single man earning *(a)* £100,000 a year, and *(b)* £10,000 a year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A single man with no allowances or reliefs other than his personal allowance earning £100,000 a year in 1988-89 will pay 37·5 per cent. of his earnings in income tax and national insurance. A similar person earning £10,000 a year will pay 27·5 per cent.

Exchange Rate

42. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what mechanisms are available to him to affect alterations in the exchange rate.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the Prime Minister's statement on 17 May at columns 794-98.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Burnley on Tuesday 7 June, his Department discriminates for any purposes between inquiries from different sectors of industry on the exchange rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: No.

28. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement regarding the rise in the deutschemark-pound sterling exchange rate since the beginning of 1988 and its effects on British industry.

43. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement regarding the rise in the deutschemark-pound sterling exchange rate since the beginning of 1988 and its effects on British industry.

73. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement regarding the economic effects of further appreciation of the pound against the deutschemark.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew).

Tax and Prices Index

29. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rise in the tax and prices index in the 12 months to April.

56. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rise in the tax and prices index in the 12 months to April 1988.

77. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rise in the tax and prices index in the 12 months to April 1988.

Mr. Lilley: The tax and prices index rose by 1·7 per cent. in the 12 months to April.

Manufactures

31. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current United Kingdom volume share of world trade in manufactures.

36. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current United Kingdom volume share of world trade in manufactures.

Mr. Major: In 1987 the estimated United Kingdom volume share of total world trade in manufactures was about $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. As chart 3.5 in the FSBR shows, this share has been broadly stable since 1981, following previous decades of decline.

Budget (Redistributive Effects)

32. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to publish at the time of his Budget Statement a full study of the redistributive effects of the taxation changes he is introducing.

97. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to publish at the time of his Budget Statement a full study of the redistributive effects of the taxation changes he is introducing.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 10 June to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), at column *701*.

59. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the redistributive impact of his Budget changes.

63. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the redistributive impact of his Budget changes.

76. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the redistributive impact of his Budget changes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend has received a number.

Budget Surplus

33. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of the Budget surplus for 1988-89.

41. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of the Budget surplus for 1988-89.

72. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of the Budget surplus for 1988-89.

Mr. Major: The latest forecast for the PSBR in 1988-89 is for a net repayment of about £3 billion, $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. of GDP, as published in the 1988-89 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Business Investment

34. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for business investment in 1988.

61. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for business investment in 1988.

Mr. Major: Business investment is forecast to grow by 9 per cent. in 1988, as shown in chapter 3 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Regional Manufacturing Industry

35. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of successive Budget changes on investment in manufacturing industry in the regions.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) on 7 June 1988, at column *601*.

Public Expenditure Allocations

37. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of public expenditure was devoted to *(a)* housing, *(b)* education and *(c)* health in 1979 and in 1987.

Mr. Major: The table shows, for the financial years 1979-80 and 1987-88, public expenditure (net of receipts) on housing, education and science and health as a percentage of the public expenditure planning total, excluding privatisation proceeds and, for 1987-88 only, the adjustment made to bring the sum of individual estimated outturns in line with the Treasury's view of the likely overall outturn.

Percentages

	1979-80 outturn	*1987-88 estimated outturn*
Housing	7·3	2·4
Education and Science	14·0	13·8
Health[1]	12·0	13·6

[1] Excludes personal social services.

Source: Table 5.11, The Government's Expenditure Plans, 1988-89 to 1990-91, Cm 288-I

Manufacturing Productivity

40. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of manufacturing productivity in the United Kingdom economy since 1980.

54. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of manufacturing productivity in the United Kingdom economy since 1980.

69. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of manufacturing productivity in the United Kingdom economy since 1980.

Mr. Major: Since 1980, output per head in the manufacturing sector has grown at an average rate of 5·1 per cent. per year—faster than in any other major industrialised country.

Job Creation

44. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new jobs have been created in the economy since 1983.

57. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new jobs have been created in the economy since 1983.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin).

Pound Sterling

45. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current value of the 1979 pound; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: In real terms the sterling index averaged 90 in 1979 and is estimated to have been 100·3 in May 1988.

Productivity

46. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the annual growth of productivity for the whole economy since 1980.

66. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the annual growth of productivity for the whole economy since 1980.

Mr. Major: Since 1980 output per head in the whole economy has grown at an average rate of 2·7 per cent. per year, about the same as Japan and faster than any other major industrialised country.

Personal Disposable Income

47. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the growth of real personal disposable income in 1987.

51. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the growth of real disposable income in 1987.

82. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the growth of real personal disposable income in 1987.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Real personal disposable income was some 3 per cent. higher in 1987 than in 1986.

Manufacturing Investment

49. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the level of investment by United Kingdom manufacturing industry in 1987-88.

Mr. Major: Investment by manufacturing industry (including leased assets) in 1987-88 was £7,595 million at 1980 prices.

Retail Price Inflation

50. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average level of retail price inflation over the past five years.

65. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average level of retail price inflation over the past five years.

93. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average level of retail price inflation over the past five years.

Mr. Lilley: Retail price inflation has averaged 4·7 per cent. over the five years to April 1988.

Labour Statistics

53. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the fall in adult unemployment over the past 12 months.

58. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the fall in adult unemployment over the past 12 months.

68. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the fall in adult unemployment over the past 12 months.

Mr. Major: Adult unemployment in the United Kingdom has fallen by 535,000 over the past year.

62. **Mr. Woodcock:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the fall in long-term unemployment in the year to January 1988.

64. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the fall in long-term unemployment in the year to January 1988.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson).

EC (Harmonisation)

71. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on progress within the European Community with regard to the harmonisation of value added tax and excise duties.

75. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on progress within the European Community with regard to the harmonisation of value added tax and excise duties.

Mr. Lilley: The Economic and Finance Council discussed the Commission's proposals at its informal meeting in May. My right hon. Friend reiterated the United Kingdom's view that tax approximation is unnecessary for the completion of the single market. Most other member states also expressed reservations.

80. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects the harmonisation of value added tax and excise duties to be discussed at the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Lilley: The Council of Ministers meets from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

Economic Trends (Labour Market)

74. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect on the labour market in the regions of recent economic trends.

Mr. Major: The recent favourable performance of the United Kingdom economy has benefited the labour market in all regions. Unemployment has fallen significantly in all regions over the past year.

Wage Inflation

78. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of wage inflation.

Mr. Lilley: Average earnings for the whole economy are currently increasing at an underlying rate of 8½ per cent. a year.

Income and Wealth Distribution

79. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on income and wealth distribution in the light of the Church of Scotland study entitled "Just Sharing", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on income and wealth distribution in the light of the Church of Scotland study entitled "Just Sharing", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Members to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

Interest Rates

81. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: Bank base rates are 8½ per cent.

94. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the recent reductions in United Kingdom interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: Bank base rates were reduced from 9 per cent. to 8½ per cent. on 18 March, from 8½ per cent. to 8 per cent. on 11 April, and from 8 per cent. to 7½ per cent. on 18 May. Bank base rates were increased to 8 per cent. on 3 June and to 8½ per cent. on 7 June.

Bank of England

85. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the governor of the Bank of England; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor meets the governor from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

National Economic Development Council

87. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last attended the National Economic Development Council; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor last attended and chaired the National Economic Development Council on Wednesday 13 January. The Council discussed the outlook for the economy; a report by the knitting industry; and international competitiveness, research and development, and action by economic development committees.

Business Activity

89. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate the rate at which business activity is currently expanding in the United Kingdom; and if he has any evidence of developing bottlenecks.

Mr. Major: The output measure of GDP is provisionally estimated by the Central Statistical Office to have increased by 4½ per cent. in the year to the first quarter of 1988. The CBI's latest quarterly industrial trends survey shows little evidence of capacity constraints, with the vast majority of firms (86 per cent.) reporting capacity at least adequate to meet expected demand over the next 12 months.

Government Revenue

91. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of total Government revenue in 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The latest estimate of total general Government receipts in 1988-89 is £185 billion, as published in the 1988-89 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Unemployment

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the fall in long-term unemployment in the year to January 1988.

Mr. Major: Long term unemployment fell by 234,000 in the year to January 1988, and by a further 71,000 between January and April.

Allowances

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing, for 1988-89, the level of the single person's tax allowance, the married man's allowance, the single age allowance and the married age allowance, their percentage increase since 1978-79 and the level of each allowance had they been updated in line with the percentage increase in the single person's allowance since 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is in the table.

Personal Tax Allowances in 1978-79 and 1988-89

Allowance	1978-79 £	1988-89 £	Increase since 1978-79 Per cent.	Real[1] increase since 1978-79 Per cent.	If increased in-line with single allowance £
Single person (and wife's earned income)	985	2,605	164	27	2,605
Married man	1,535	4,095	167	28	4,065
Single aged 65-79	1,300	3,180	145	17	3,440
Single aged 80 and over		3,310	155	22	
Married aged 65-79	2,075	5,035	143	16	5,495
Married aged 80 and over		5,205	151	20	

[1] Using the RPI for financial years.

Civil Servants (Northern Ireland)

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Upper Bann of 7 June, from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he will indicate who employs those civil servants in Northern Ireland who work for the Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Most of the civil servants who work for the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise in Northern Ireland are employed by the Board of Inland Revenue and the Board of Customs and Excise. There are, however, a few officials who are members of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and who are on secondment to the Inland Revenue.

Placement Students

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when the ceiling for tax exemption on earnings of placement students for periods spent on courses was first set at £5,000;

(2) what will be the level of maximum earnings exempt from tax for placement students during periods on courses for the tax year 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In accordance with the Inland Revenue's statement of practice 4/86—a copy of which I am placing in the Library—payments by employers to employees who are released to attend a full-time further education course are not regarded as taxable if the rate of payment does not exceed the higher of £5,000 a year or the amount payable to someone in similar personal circumstances by a public research body. The 1988-89 rate of £5,000 was introduced with effect from 1983-84; it remains well above the amount which would generally be payable to a single person living away from home by a public research body.

Departmental Staff

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff in post in central Government Departments at 1 April.

Mr. Major: On 1 April 1988 there were 579,627 staff in post in central Government Departments. Of these 506,565 were non-industrials and 73,062 were industrials.

The Government's declared target for this date has therefore been met. Staff in post figures will continue to be reported on a quarterly basis, although the move to running cost controls in place of manpower ceilings will give departments more freedom to adjust between manpower and other running cost expenditure in the pursuit of best value for money.

Business Expansion Scheme

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he proposes to make any changes to the Inland Revenue guidelines for approval of business expansion scheme funds.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have decided to remove the requirement that a fund must offer participants a spread of investment in companies carrying on different trades. From now on, an approved BES fund will be able to invest in companies specialising in a particular activity. We are also reviewing the rest of the guidelines to take account of the introduction of the Financial Services Act and the experience to date of the use of approved BES funds.

Gaming Machines

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much licence duty has been collected by Her Majesty's Government from gaming machines in the following financial years *(a)* 1985-86, *(b)* 1986-87 and *(c)* 1987-88 to date.

Mr. Lilley: The amounts of gaming machine licence duty collected were as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	86·0
1986-87	74·7
1987-88	194

[1] Provisional.

Bingo

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much bingo duty was paid or estimated to be paid by unlicensed clubs registered to play bingo in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lilley: The amounts of bingo duty paid by unlicensed clubs registered to play bingo are not separately recorded. Estimates of the amounts paid are as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	2·7
1986-87	3·0
1987-88	3·2

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost of enforcement,

supervision and collection of bingo duty from unlicensed clubs registered to play bingo in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lilley: The costs of collecting bingo duty are not recorded separately. They are thought to be comparable with the costs for collecting the betting and gaming duties generally, which are under 1 per cent. of the duty yield.

EEC (Contribution)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the European Economic Community in the year 1987; what were the comparable totals for 1986 and 1985; and what is his estimate for 1988.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) on 7 June 1988, at columns *540-41*. An estimate of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the Community budget for 1988 will be contained in the annual statement on the Community budget, which will be published as soon as possible.

Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing, for each region and for Great Britain, the number and percentage of taxpayers paying tax at their top marginal rate for each tax band; their total tax liability expressed in 1988 prices; and the number and percentage of non-taxpaying households; using the most recent available figures.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* The latest information available by region relates to 1985-86 and is limited to taxpaying units only. In the tables, married couples are counted as one unit, members of Her Majesty's forces and the Merchant Navy are included only in the national totals, and tax liability is measured before allowing for mortgage interest relief given at source. Estimates relating to tax rates of 40 per cent. or higher, whilst shown to the nearest thousand or £1 million, are in many cases based on small samples: where this means that the actual number or amount may be more than about one third higher or lower than shown in the table, the figures are shown in brackets. The corresponding percentages should also be treated with particular caution.

Taxpaying unit by marginal rate

	Thousands						*As a percentage of all taxpaying units*					
Region	*30 per cent.*	*40 per cent.*	*45 per cent.*	*50 per cent.*	*55 per cent.*	*60 per cent.*	*30 per cent.*	*40 per cent.*	*45 per cent.*	*50 per cent.*	*55 per cent.*	*60 per cent.*
North	1,000	11	6	5	(2)	(3)	97·2	1·1	0·6	0·5	0·2	0·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,570	24	13	8	3	5	96·8	1·5	0·8	0·5	0·2	0·3
North West	2,070	36	21	10	4	5	96·5	1·7	1·0	0·5	0·2	0·2
East Midlands	1,310	16	11	6	(4)	4	96·9	1·2	0·8	0·5	0·3	0·3
West Midlands	1,700	19	(18)	(11)	6	4	96·8	1·1	1·0	0·6	0·2	0·3
East Anglia	660	(12)	8	5	(3)	(5)	95·3	1·8	1·2	0·7	0·4	0·7
South East	6,200	190	119	75	38	60	92·8	2·8	1·8	1·1	0·6	0·9
South West	1,490	31	14	13	5	(7)	95·6	2·0	0·9	0·8	0·3	0·4
Wales	800	13	7	3	(3)	2	96·6	1·5	0·8	0·4	0·4	0·2
Scotland	1,690	36	18	11	4	6	95·7	2·0	1·0	0·6	0·2	0·3
Great Britain	18,500	388	235	148	70	101	95·1	2·0	1·2	0·8	0·4	0·5
Northern Ireland	430	7	(6)	(2)	(1)	(1)	96·0	1·6	1·4	0·5	0·2	0·2

The estimated tax liability in 1985-86 for these tax units was:—

Tax Liability in 1985-86

£ million

Region	*30 per cent.*	*40 per cent.*	*45 per cent.*	*50 per cent.*	*55 per cent.*	*60 per cent.*
North	1,540	60	39	51	33	85
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,300	133	90	86	49	151
North West	2,980	199	134	103	55	159
East Midlands	1,990	86	79	67	60	154
West Midlands	2,380	106	129	97	56	174
East Anglia	991	66	59	52	41	126
South East	9,970	1,060	852	758	567	2,070
South West	2,130	171	95	128	62	205
Wales	1,130	66	47	33	(49)	63
Scotland	2,610	195	131	113	59	206
Great Britain	28,000	2,150	1,660	1,490	1,030	3,340
Northern Ireland	593	41	46	25	14	32

In 1988-89, the index of retail prices is expected to be about 12 per cent. higher than in 1985-86.

The provisional estimate of the number of tax units in 1988-89 for the United Kingdom is 32·6 million, of which about 11·7 million are expected not to be liable to income tax.

Taxation

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the percentage share of tax paid by the top 1 per cent. and 5 per cent. of taxpayers from 1970-71 to 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* The information is given in the table.

Percentage of total income tax liability paid by top 1 per cent. and top 5 per cent. of income tax payers[1]

Year	Top 1 per cent.	Top 5 per cent.
1973-74	15·6	28·6
1974-75	13·9	26·9
1975-76	11·9	24·7
1976-77	11·4	24·6
1977-78	11·9	24·9
1978-79	11·2	24·0
1979-80	10·4	23·4
1980-81	10·9	24·4
1981-82	11·3	24·8
1982-83	11·7	25·4
1983-84	11·4	25·4
1984-85	11·8	26·4
1985-86	13·8	28·3
1986-87[2]	14·0	29·0
1987-88[2]	15·0	30·0
1988-89[2]	13·0	28·0

[1] Counting married couples as one and combining their incomes.
[2] Estimates are based on a projection of the 1985-86 Survey of Personal Incomes and are rounded to the nearest 0·5 per cent. Estimates are provisional.

I regret that information for earlier years is not available.

Rating Reform

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the information in his reply of 17 May, *Official Report*, column *424-30*, for 1988-89, on the basis of the community charge replacing domestic rates.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 June 1988]:* Information on the level of community charge equivalent to domestic rates in 1988-89 is not yet available. Information of the kind requested would be of doubtful value because patterns of spending by local authorities and by individuals are likely to change when the community charge is introduced.

VAT

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what representations he has received from disability organisations concerning proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to impose 14 to 20 per cent. value added tax on talking books for blind and disabled people, wireless sets for blind people and on aids equipment for disabled people; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received from charities concerning proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to impose 14 to 20 per cent. value added tax on charities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* Ministerial colleagues and I have received a number of such representations.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* those commodities formerly, or currently, subject to zero value-added tax rating, including all those in groups 1 to 17 listed in his note to the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service and published by it on page 8 of its third report of Session 1987-88, (HC 248), in five separate tables to show items that: *(a)* were zero rated by Her Majesty's Government, but have subsequently had their zero rated status changed by virtue of actions taken, or requests made, by either the Court or the Commission of the European Economic Communities, *(b)* items currently the subject of infraction proceedings before the court of the European Economic Communities, *(c)* items currently zero rated which have been the subject of specific pledges from Ministers concerning their continued zero rated status. *(d)* other items of zero rating subject to current proposals from the Commission of the European Communities and *(e)* other zero rated items not in categories *(a)* to *(d)*, showing for each item in each table *(a)* to *(d)* the rate or band of rates applied, or proposed to be applied, together with the approximate annual revenue, or range of revenue, which has accrued or is likely to accrue to Her Majesty's Government, at 1988 prices for each category, with totals for each table and grand total, and in respect of table *(c)* footnote references to the respective principal pledge made.

Mr. Lilley *[pursuant to his reply, 24 March 1988, c. 195-96]:* I regret that the first two figures in column (iii) of table *(d)* were mistaken. The correct figures are:

Sewerage services other than supplies to industry: £175 million—£250 million.

Water other than supplies to industry: £25 million—£75 million.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the (i) average and (ii) median income of *(a)* married couples and *(b)* single people, whether liable to income tax or not, for 1988-89; and if he will give the percentage of married couples and single people falling below the average for their group.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* The latest information on the distribution of income relates to 1984-85 and was published in the November 1987 edition of *Economic Trends*. The mean income of all married couples and single people in 1984-85 was £7,520 a year and the median income was £5,480. Some 65 per cent. of incomes were below the mean income of £7,520. Separate estimates for married couples and single people are not available.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Inland Revenue first became aware of the claim by the investment company Barlow Clowes, that the income from funds invested by it in Gibraltar could be paid to investors tax-free; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* The Inland Revnue's obligations of confidentiality prevent the disclosure of any information concerning a particular taxpayer's affairs.

Exchequer Revenues

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answer to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) of 7 July 1987, *Official Report*, column *84*, regarding Exchequer revenues to

(a) include 1988-89, *(b)* give the table at constant 1988-89 prices, and *(c)* break down customs and excise duties into (i) excise duties, (ii) customs duties, and (iii) agricultural levies.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 14 June 1988]*: Following is the information.

£ billion 1988-89 prices[4]

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*[2]	*1988-89*[3]
Income tax	38·6	38·3	41·1	40·0	39·8	40·0	40·7	42·3	43·4	42·1
Value added tax	15·0	17·0	16·7	18·1	19·1	22·3	21·9	23·5	25·2	26·2
Excise duties	15·3	14·6	16·4	16·2	17·7	17·7	17·9	19·0	18·6	18·8
Customs duties	1·7	1·3	1·4	1·3	1·4	1·6	1·4	1·4	1·5	1·6
Agricultural levies	0·4	0·4	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·2	0·1
Other Central Government taxes and royalties	27·7	25·1	28·5	28·7	28·3	30·4	32·1	28·4	31·7	33·4
Other Central Government receipts[1]	28·5	30·2	29·9	35·1	35·1	36·4	38·9	40·9	41·4	42·4
Total Central Government receipts	127·3	126·8	134·2	139·8	141·7	148·5	153·1	155·7	162·0	164·6
Local authority rates	12·7	13·5	15·4	16·0	15·4	15·5	15·6	17·1	17·7	19·0
Public sector borrowing	18·4	19·6	12·1	11·6	12·2	12·2	6·5	3·7	−3·2	−3·2

[1] Including National Insurance contributions and accruals adjustments.
[2] Outturn as estimated in the 1988 Financial Statement and Budget Report.
[3] Forecast from 1988 Financial Statement and Budget Report.
[4] Revalued using the GDP deflator.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what change in the level of United Kingdom exports of manufactured goods to the EEC he forecasts as a result of the completion of the internal market; and on what basis he has made such estimates.

Mr. Major: I would expect completion of the internal market significantly to boost exports to other member states of the Community, but have made no detailed estimates.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the deficit in United Kingdom trade with the EEC in manufactures in 1987; and what estimate he has made of the effects of the completion of the internal market on this figure.

Mr. Major: The deficit on direct trade in manufactured goods with other member states in 1987 is at present estimated to have been £10·2 billion. I expect completion of the internal market to boost both our exports to and imports from other member states, but I have made no estimates of the magnitude.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his forecast of the increase in United Kingdom exports of manufactured goods to the EEC as a result of the completion of the internal market; and if he will provide a similar forecast for the increase in exports.

Mr. Major: I expect completion of the internal market to boost trade with the other member states of the Community. No detailed estimates have been made.

Nationalised Industries (Fixed Assets)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a table showing the expenditure on fixed assets in the United Kingdom by nationalised industries for 1978-79 and 1989-90 plans, at constant 1988-89 prices and cash prices broken down in the form of table 4.4 of Cm. 288-1, giving the percentage of the industries capital requirements financed or expected to be financed internally.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 10 June 1988]*: The table shows the expenditure on fixed assets in the United Kingdom by nationalised industries for 1978-79 (consistent with table 3.2 of Cmnd. 7841 and table 3.2 of Cmnd. 9143) and 1989-90 plans (consistent with table 4.4 of Cmnd. 288) at cash prices and in real terms (base year 1988-89). Also included are the percentages of the industries' capital requirements financed internally for 1978-79. For reasons of commercial confidentiality the Government do not publish estimates of internal resources or external finance by industry for the later years in the public expenditure plans. But the current plans imply that, taken together, the industries' capital requirements for 1989-90 can be met entirely by internal resources.

Expenditure on fixed assets in the United Kingdom by nationalised industries

£ million

	1978-79 outturn (Cmnd. 7841)		*Percentage of capital requirements financed internally*	*1989-90 plans (Cm. 288)*	
	Cash	*Real terms*[1] *(base year 1988-89)*		*Cash*	*Real terms*[1] *(base year 1988-89)*
British Aerospace	26	55	54·3	—	—
British Airports Authority	33	70	100·0	—	—
British Airways Board	219	464	67·6	—	—
British Coal	495	1,049	0·0	649	627
British Gas Corporation	280	593	100·0	—	—
British National Oil Corporation	243	515	6·3	—	—
British Railways Board	349	740	0·0	655	633
British Shipbuilders	27	57	0·0	8	8
British Steel Corporation	334	708	0·0	274	265
British Transport Docks Board	9	19	100·0	—	—

	1978-79 outturn (Cmnd. 7841) Cash	Real terms[1] (base year 1988-89)	Percentage of capital requirements financed internally	1989-90 plans (Cm. 288) Cash	Real terms[1] (base year 1988-89)
British Waterways Board	2	4	0·0	9	9
Civil Aviation Authority *(a)*				34	33
Electricity (England and Wales)	715	1,515	100·0	1,727	1,669
Girobank *(b)*				14	14
London Regional Transport *(c)*				348	336
National Bus Company	54	114	0·0	—	—
National Freight Company Ltd.	36	76	9·4	—	—
North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board	48	102	30·7	82	79
Post Office *(d)*	1,040	2,204	100·0	165	159
Scottish Transport Group	17	36	16·7	17	16
South of Scotland Electricity Board	53	112	100·0	129	125
Water (England and Wales) *(e)*				1,255	1,213
TOTAL	3,980	8,436	54·7	5,365	5,184

[1] Real terms figures are the cash outturns or plans adjusted to 1988-89 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflators.

Notes:

(a) Civil Aviation Authority was not a Nationalised Industry in 1978-79[2].
(b) The figure for Girobank was included in that for Post Office for 1978-79[2].
(c) London Regional Transport was not a Nationalised Industry in 1978-79.
(d) The figure for Post Office included those for British Telecom and Girobank in 1978-79[2].
(e) Water (England and Wales) was not a Nationalised Industry in 1978-79[2].

[2] Figures for 1978-79 were allocated retrospectively, and the details (from Table 3.2 in Cmnd. 9143-II) are as follows:

1978-79 outturn (Cmnd 9143)

	Cash £ million	Real terms[1] £ million	Per cent.[2]
British Telecom	993	2,105	100.0
Civil Aviation Authority	23	49	0·0
Giro Bank	5	11	0·0
Post Office	43	91	100·0
Water (England and Wales)	555	1,176	43·3

[1] Base year 1988-89.
[2] Percentage of capital requirements financed internally.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Personal Incomes

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the average increase in income of the poorest 5 per cent. of people in the United Kingdom since 1979; and what has been the average increase in income of the wealthiest 5 per cent.

Mr. Portillo: Estimates of real household income changes, adjusted for family size and composition, are only available for individuals expressed in 10 per cent. bands. Between 1979 and 1985 the incomes of the bottom 10 per cent. of individuals in Great Britain (expressed net of tax and national insurance, after the receipt of any social security benefits and before payment of any housing costs) rose by an average of 6 per cent. in real terms. The real incomes of the top 10 per cent. rose by 18 per cent.

Macclesfield Health Authority

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will tabulate the revenue cash limit figures of the Macclesfield health authority at 31 March in each year since 1979 and the projected cash limit for 1988-89.

Mrs. Currie: Determination of the cash limits for individual district health authorities is the responsibility of regional health authorities. Following is the information requested, together with figures of total revenue expenditure for the Macclesfield health authority since its establishment on 1 April 1982. Prior to that date the authority's predecessor health district formed part of the Cheshire area health authority and district-based figures are not available.

Financial Year	Final Revenue Cash Limit[1] £000	Total Revenue Expenditure[2] £000
1982-83	26,949	26,664
1983-84	29,142	28,799
1984-85	30,306	30,594
1985-86	31,521	32,327
1986-87	33,211	[3]33,617
1987-88	37,187	—
1988-89	[4]38,355	—

Sources:

[1] Information provided by the Mersey regional health authority.
[2] Annual financial accounts submitted to the Department by the Macclesfield health authority.
[3] Latest available figure.
[4] Provisional figure.

Notes:

1. Capital cash limits and capital expenditure is excluded.
2. Cash drawings against revenue cash limit represent the main source of funds for health authorities in meeting their revenue expenditure but these drawings are supplemented by local income (not included in cash limits).

Housing Benefit

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioners will receive transitional protection in respect of losses in excess of £2·50 a week arising from the new housing benefit scheme; and if he will estimate the average amount of the weekly additional transitional payment.

Mr. Portillo: We estimate that some 350,000 people can benefit from the transitional payments scheme. Approximately one half of these are pensioners. The data are not reliable enough for us to estimate the average payment for a particular client group.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of housing benefit claimants who are likely still to be losers after transitional protection payments are made.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Members for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) and for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan) on 14 June.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which categories of claimants whose housing benefit have been reduced or withdrawn will not benefit from the transitional arrangements; if he will list those so involved; and if he will give the total numbers involved.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 3 May 1988]*: Payments will not be made to anyone who does not fall into one of the following groups:

Families with children (including lone parents).
Pensioners (over 60).
The long term sick and disabled (that is those to whom the disability or severe disability premium applies in the housing benefit calculation).
People in receipt of an industrial injuries benefit, a war disablement pension, a widow's pension or a war widow's pension.

The scheme is not designed for claimants of income support at the beginning of April as they will have been receiving maximum housing benefit. No accurate estimate exists of the numbers not covered.

Resource Management Initiative

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress of the resource management initiative.

Mr. Newton: Progress on the acute resource management projects has been encouraging and a new pilot site, south Lincolnshire, was announced in April. An evaluation report on the acute projects is scheduled for later this year. It is hoped that this will point the way to a phased extension to other districts from 1989.

The community projects are second generation sites and are making good progress in advancing their project plans and building on the work undertaken at the two first generation sites.

Social Workers

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what moneys are being made available for the training of social workers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Department's contribution to funding for social work training is about £20 million in this financial year. This sum includes £7 million to grant-aid the new £10 million training support programme for local authority social services staff working with elderly people, and about £11·6 million to the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work. The latter figure includes £7·6 million for direct student support and up to £1 million for improvements to present training arrangements.

AIDS

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the efficacy of the treatment of AIDS patients by means of hyperoxygenating blood with ozone as carried out by Dr. Horst Keif and others in Munich.

Mr. Newton: I am aware that there have been some claims that hyperoxygenating blood with ozone might be beneficial in relation to AIDS. The Department has no direct knowledge of Dr. Keif's work, but I understand that the idea involved is known to the Medical Research Council.

Meningitis

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue a circular on the notification of meningitis.

Mrs. Currie: The Department's chief medical officer, Sir Donald Acheson, wrote to all doctors in England about meningitis on 3 February, emphasising that it is a statutory requirement under the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984 for cases of meningitis to be notified to the proper officer, usually the medical officer for environmental health. A copy of the letter is in the Library.

Income Support

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether under the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987, he is empowered to direct that payments of income support related to accommodation charges be made to the organisation providing the accommodation in cases where such charges have been incurred but the claimant has moved on between the date of claim and the first pay day; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Direct payment may be made to another person to protect the claimant's interests. This power is used in exceptional circumstances where, for example, there is clear evidence that the claimant is failing to maintain his family.

The independent adjudicating authorities may also consider direct payment where the claimant has failed to budget for an accommodation charge. Direct payment may be made automatically to a hostel run by a voluntary organisation which provides facilities for alcoholics or drug addicts or which is akin to a resettlement unit.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of supplementary benefit claimants who had 19-year-old children in full-time education or training courses, for whom they were receiving additional dependants' benefit, who have since lost their entitlement because income support is available only for dependent children aged under 19 years; if he will estimate how much benefit they have lost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: No family receiving supplementary benefit including an addition for a 19-year-old dependant lost benefit as a result of the change to income support, because transitional protection ensures that they suffer no loss of income.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of disabled and mentally handicapped/disturbed claimants who were previously paid direct by order book who have been

notified of the change to income support which now requires them to be available for, work or claim sickness benefit; how many have *(a)* subsequently made claims as available for work, *(b)* been disqualified as not capable of, or available for work and *(c)* claimed modified income support as referred to in Department of Employment circular 109/279, 17 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The estimates requested are not available. One of the basic conditions for receiving income support is that claimants must be available for work unless specifically exempted. Anyone who is incapable of work because of disease or mental or physical disability is exempt and should also claim the appropriate incapacity benefit.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether directions have been issued to his Department's local offices to ensure that women who have moved out of the matrimonial home because of a violent partner, and have sought refuge in a women's refuge, are not denied income support because they are owners or joint owners of the home they have fled.

Mr. Portillo: Yes; and amending legislation came into force on 30 May.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of people claiming supplementary benefit from his Department's local offices in Kensington in 1979; and what is the current number of income support claimants from those offices.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* The total number of people in receipt of supplementary benefit on 15 May 1979 from the Department's office at Kensington was 9,107[1]. The total number of people in receipt of income support on 31 May 1988 at the same office was 8,454, although these figures are provisional and subject to amendment.

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

[1] This figure may, however, overstate the number of people receiving supplementary benefit. The footnote to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves), on 31 March 1988, at columns *660-61*, refers.

Nottingham District Medical Staff Committee Report

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will obtain for his Department's library a copy of the Nottingham district medical staff committee's report entitled "The Financial Situation and its Impact on Clinical Services."

Mrs. Currie: I understand that the report is regarded by the health authority as being confidential to it and it is for the authority to decide whether it should be made publicly available.

Spending Power

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish tables using the assumptions in his answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, columns *737* to *742* using expenditure and benefit figures appropriate for families in Leicester for which he has sufficient data, and with an additional column showing the extent of the differences that will result from the changes in benefits in April.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is set out in the tables. It should be noted that the results are essentially hypothetical. They compare the post-reform position in April 1988, not with the actual pre-reform cash situation but with a hypothetical position which they might have been in had the previous structure continued and been uprated on the assumptions in "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income Related Benefits" (October 1987).

Secondly,, the comparisons are based on average local authority housing charges in Leicester, but do not reflect the wide variety of rents and domestic rates that people actually pay.

Finally, the comparisons do not take account of the transitional cash protection arrangements announced on 27 April.

Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988
Leicester L.A.
Married couple with two children aged four and six

Earnings head	*Tax*	*NI*	*FIS*	*Child benefit*	*Rent*	*Rent rebate*	*Rates*	*Rate rebate*	*Fares to work*	*Free school meals*	*Free welfare milk*	*Net weekly spending power*
60·00	0·00	3·00	28·70	14·50	21·44	18·28	8·46	5·86	5·85	2·55	1·83	92·97
70·00	0·00	4·90	23·70	14·50	21·44	17·03	8·46	5·46	5·85	2·55	1·83	94·42
80·00	1·22	5·60	18·70	14·50	21·44	15·78	8·46	5·06	5·85	2·55	1·83	95·85
90·00	3·92	6·30	13·70	14·50	21·44	14·53	8·46	4·66	5·85	2·55	1·83	95·80
100·00	6·62	7·00	8·70	14·50	21·44	13·28	8·46	4·26	5·85	2·55	1·83	95·75
110·00	9·32	9·90	3·70	14·50	21·44	11·76	8·46	3·69	5·85	2·55	1·83	93·06
120·00	12·02	10·80	0·00	14·50	21·44	9·68	8·46	2·87	5·85	2·55	0·00	91·03
130·00	14·72	11·70	0·00	14·50	21·44	6·38	8·46	1·57	5·86	2·55	0·00	92·83
140·00	17·42	12·60	0·00	14·50	21·44	3·08	8·46	0·00	5·85	2·55	0·00	94·36
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	14·50	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	95·13
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	14·50	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	101·53
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	14·50	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	107·93

New benefit system from April 1988
Leicester L.A.
Married couple with 2 children aged 4 and 6

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
60·00	0·00	3·00	40·32	14·50	21·44	6·68	8·46	0·96	5·85	83·71	−9·26
70·00	0·00	4·90	34·65	14·50	21·44	5·10	8·46	0·00	5·85	83·60	−10·82
80·00	1·22	5·60	28·99	14·50	21·44	3·52	8·46	0·00	5·85	84·44	−11·41
90·00	3·92	6·30	24·37	14·50	21·44	2·23	8·46	0·00	5·85	85·13	−10·67
100·00	6·62	7·00	19·75	14·50	21·44	0·95	8·46	0·00	5·85	85·83	−9·92
110·00	9·32	9·90	16·67	14·50	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	86·20	−6·86
120·00	12·02	10·80	12·19	14·50	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	88·12	−2·91
130·00	14·72	11·70	7·71	14·50	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	90·04	−2·79
140·00	17·42	12·60	3·23	14·50	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	91·96	−2·40
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	14·50	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	95·13	0·00
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	14·50	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	101·53	0·00
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	14·50	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	107·93	0·00

Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988
Leicester L.A.
Married couple with 3 children aged 3, 8 and 11

Earnings head	Tax	NI	FIS	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Free school meals	Free welfare milk	Net weekly spending power
60·00	0·00	3·00	32·90	21·75	21·44	19·31	8·46	6·19	5·85	5·10	1·83	108·33
70·00	0·00	4·90	30·50	21·75	21·44	17·41	8·46	5·58	5·85	5·10	1·83	111·52
80·00	1·22	5·60	25·50	21·75	21·44	16·16	8·46	5·18	5·85	5·10	1·83	112·95
90·00	3·92	6·30	20·50	21·75	21·44	14·91	8·46	4·78	5·85	5·10	1·83	112·90
100·00	6·62	7·00	15·50	21·75	21·44	13·66	8·46	4·38	5·85	5·10	1·83	112·85
110·00	9·32	9·90	10·50	21·75	21·44	12·27	8·46	3·89	5·85	5·10	1·83	110·37
120·00	12·02	10·80	5·50	21·75	21·44	10·62	8·46	3·24	5·85	5·10	1·83	109·47
130·00	14·72	11·70	0·50	21·75	21·44	8·97	8·46	2·59	5·85	5·10	1·83	108·57
140·00	17·42	12·60	0·00	21·75	21·44	5·84	8·46	1·36	5·85	5·10	0·00	108·28
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	21·75	21·44	2·54	8·46	0·00	5·85	5·10	0·00	110·02
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	21·75	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	5·10	0·00	113·88
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	21·75	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	115·18

New benefit system from April 1988
Leicester L.A.
Married couple with 3 children aged 3, 8 and 11

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
60·00	0·00	3·00	51·72	21·75	21·44	5·02	8·46	0·00	5·85	99·74	−8·59
70·00	0·00	4·90	46·05	21·75	21·44	3·44	8·46	0·00	5·85	100·59	−10·93
80·00	1·22	5·60	40·39	21·75	21·44	1·86	8·46	0·00	5·85	101·43	−11·52
90·00	3·92	6·30	35·77	21·75	21·44	0·58	8·46	0·00	5·85	102·13	−10·77
100·00	6·62	7·00	31·15	21·75	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	103·53	−9·32
110·00	9·32	9·90	28·07	21·75	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	104·85	−5·52
120·00	12·02	10·80	23·59	21·75	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	106·77	−2·70
130·00	14·72	11·70	19·11	21·75	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	108·69	−0·12
140·00	17·42	12·60	14·63	21·75	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	110·61	+2·33
150·00	20·12	13·50	10·15	21·75	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	112·53	+2·51
160·00	22·82	14·40	5·67	21·75	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	114·45	+0·57
170·00	25·52	15·30	1·19	21·75	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	116·37	+1·19

Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988
Leicester L.A.
Single Person with 2 children aged 4 and 6

Earnings head	Tax	NI	FIS	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Free school meals	Free welfare milk	Net weekly spending power
60·00	0·00	3·00	28·70	19·40	21·44	17·05	8·46	5·47	5·85	2·55	1·83	96·25
70·00	0·00	4·90	23·70	19·40	21·44	15·80	8·46	5·07	5·85	2·55	1·83	97·70
80·00	1·22	5·60	18·70	19·40	21·44	14·55	8·46	4·67	5·85	2·55	1·83	99·13
90·00	3·92	6·30	13·70	19·40	21·44	13·30	8·46	4·27	5·85	2·55	1·83	99·08
100·00	6·62	7·00	8·70	19·40	21·44	11·79	8·46	3·71	5·85	2·55	1·83	98·61
110·00	9·32	9·90	3·70	19·40	21·44	10·14	8·46	3·06	5·85	2·55	1·83	95·71
120·00	12·02	10·80	0·00	19·40	21·44	8·06	8·46	2·24	5·85	2·55	0·00	93·68

New benefit system from April 1988
Leicester L.A.
Single person with 2 children aged 4 and 6

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
60·00	0·00	3·00	40·32	19·40	21·44	0·60	8·46	0·00	5·85	81·57	−14·68
70·00	0·00	4·90	34·65	19·40	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	83·40	−14·30
80·00	1·22	5·60	28·99	19·40	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	85·82	−13·31
90·00	3·92	6·30	24·37	19·40	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	87·80	−11·28
100·00	6·62	7·00	19·75	19·40	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	89·78	− 8·83
110·00	9·32	9·90	16·67	19·40	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	91·10	− 4·61
120·00	12·02	10·80	12·19	19·40	21·44	0·00	8·46	0·00	5·85	93·02	− 0·66

Old tax and benefit system—assuming average local authority rent and rates for Leicester and a simple rescaling of April 1987 benefits to April 1988.
Lone mother with 2 children aged 4 and 6.

	a. Not working-after one year on benefit	b. Working part-time earning £20	c. Working part-time earning £40
Supplementary Benefit	45·93	30·89	14·35
Earnings	—	20·00	40·00
Tax	—	0·00	0·00
Nat. insurance	—	0·00	2·00
Fares to work	—	2·92	2·92
Rent	21·44	21·44	21·44
Rates	8·46	8·46	8·46
Housing benefit	28·32	28·32	28·32
CHB	19·40	19·40	19·40
FSM	2·55	2·55	2·55
FWM	1·83	1·83	1·83
Net weekly spending power	68·13	70·17	71·63

(a) Not working after one year on benefit
Benefit system from April 1988
Assumptions as in "Impact of reformed structure of income related benefits" October 1987
Average rent and rates for Leicester local authority
Lone mother with two children aged 4 and 6

	£
Income support	45·35
Rent	21·44
Rates	8·46
Housing benefit	26·94
CHB	19·40
FSM	2·55
FWM	1·83
Net weekly spending power	66·17
Difference between systems	−1·96

	b. Working part time—earning £20	c. Working part time—earning £40
Income Support	40·35	20·35
Earnings	20·00	40·00
Tax	0·00	0·00
NI	0·00	0·00
Fares to work	2·92	2·92
Rent	21·44	21·44
Rates	8·46	4·86
Housing Benefit	26·94	26·94
CHB	19·40	19·40
FSM	2·55	2·55
FWM	1·83	1·83
Net weekly spending power	78·25	78·25
Difference between systems	+8·08	+8·08

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how far *(a)* the fall in the numbers of persons living below supplementary benefit level and below 40 per cent. of supplementary benefit level and *(b)* the rise in the number of persons living on supplementary benefit is accounted for by changes in the real value of supplementary benefit scale rate between 1983 and 1985.

Mr. Portillo: Changes in the real value of the scale rates between these dates were insufficient to allow reliable estimates to be made, but any effect would be minor.

Sheepdips

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many complaints have been received by his Department about allergic reactions caused by the use of sheepdips containing organophosphorus pesticide in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Currie; We received one complaint in 1987 involving two people. None was received in the previous four years.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he is taking to investigate the possible link between allergic reactions and the use of sheepdips containing organophosphorus pesticides; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have been asked to reply.

Organophosphorus sheepdips are subject to the licensing requirements of the Medicines Act 1968. A licence is issued only after the licensing authority is satisfied as to the safety, efficacy and quality of the product concerned. Safety includes the safety of operators handling the product. In licensing veterinary medicines, the licensing authority is advised by the veterinary products committee, a statutory body of independent experts in human and animal health.

All organophosphorus sheepdips contain warnings on the labels and accompanying literature to ensure that operators are aware ot the dangers and take appropriate precautions.

Suspect adverse reactions to organophosphorus sheepdips should be reported to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and to the Health and Safety Executive. All such reports are investigated.

As with many other types of chemical compounds, there are some people who are allergic to organophosphorus compounds. Anyone who is known to be allergic to organophosphorus sheepdips is advised to use alternative licensed products.

Leicester Night Shelter

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the decision by staff of his Department's Leicester offices to discontinue their practice of visiting the Leicester night shelter to take fresh claims; what reason has been given for this decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: A number of representations have been received about this decision, which took effect in October 1987.

The decision to discontinue the visits—a system which worked soley on the voluntary co-operation of local office staff—was taken as a result of a physical assault on a member of staff outside the night shelter.

Family Credit

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action is being taken to reduce the delays in assessing family credit.

Mr. Portillo: Clearance rates should improve as staff become more proficient and as more experienced staff are released from work on family income supplement now that the latter has come to an end. In the meantime, overtime is being worked and casual staff are being taken on to allow more of the permanent staff to concentrate on assessment work. In addition, further computer enhancements are due to come into effect shortly, which should improve administration, and consideration is being given to procedural changes which could speed up the action on cases which are most at risk of difficulties arising out of delays.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many times he has exercised his discretion under the Social Security (Payments on Account, Overpayments and Recovery) Regulations, part 11, paragraph 2(i); and how many times this was in respect of family credit.

Mr. Portillo: Information is not available about the making of interim payments of benefits generally and could be collected only at disproportionate cost. However, the discretion to make an interim payment on account of family credit has not been exercised.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities have suspended or diminished cervical cancer screening tests during the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: By April of this year all district health authorities in England had implemented computerised call and recall systems for cervical cancer screening. Health authorities are not required to report temporary suspension or reduction of the screening programme to the Department. However, we know that a small number of DHAs have taken action of this kind when problems have arisen in their laboratories. Those of which we are aware are:

Winchester DHA and Basingstoke DHA—routine call and recall suspended because of shortage of laboratory staff in Winchester. Every effort is being made to find a laboratory to examine smears on a temporary basis until more staff can be recruited. Basingstoke expects to restore full service shortly.

Bassetlaw DHA—reduced rate of call at present to allow clearance of laboratory backlog.

East Dorset DHA—suspended call and recall during April but now restarted.

Single Payments

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was paid in single payments to social security applicants in Tameside in the last complete financial year; and how much has been allocated under the social fund for the current year.

Mr. Portillo: The metropolitan borough of Tameside is served by the Department's local offices at Ashton, Hyde and Openshaw. The boundaries of the areas covered by these offices are not conterminous with those of the borough. The amount paid in single payments of supplementary benefit in the year 10 April 1987 to 8 April 1988 is shown in the table. The figures are provisional and subject to amendment.

	£
Ashton	385,725
Hyde	562,320
Openshaw	582,242
Total	1,530,287

Information on the social fund allocations to local offices for 1988-89 was contained in the reply of my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November 1987, at columns *774-81*.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the backlog in single payment claims, made before 11 April, at his Department's offices in *(a)* Coventry and *(b)* nationally; and what instruction he has issued to managers as to the time limits for clearing the backlog.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has two local offices in Coventry, Coventry, east and west. On 31 May there were 5,125 cases awaiting action on single payment requests in Coventry, east office and 2,124 cases at Coventry, west. On 29 April the national total was 349,827 cases. These figures are provisional and subject to amendment. All claims are examined on receipt and priority was given to urgent cases.

No national instructions on clearance times have been issued. Every local office manager is, however, aware of the importance of clearing the arrears as a matter of urgency, and in many offices the task has already been completed. In both Coventry, east and west additional manpower resources are being used to clear the backlog as quickly as possible.

Additional Payments

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current backlog of claims for additional payments at each of the offices of his Department in the metropolitan borough of Tameside; what is the estimated time needed to clear them, given the present staffing levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The metropolitan borough of Tameside is served by the Department's local offices at Ashton, Hyde

and Openshaw. The boundaries of the areas covered by these offices are not conterminous with those of the borough. On 13 June there were no cases at Ashton or Openshaw awaiting action on claims for single payments of supplementary benefit. At Hyde there were fewer than 10 cases. These will be cleared as soon as the claimants concerned provide further information to allow their claims to be determined.

Research Trials

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans for the central registration of research trials; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have no plans for the central registration of research trials.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration his Department has given to the publication, funded by the Greater London Association for Disabled People, entitled "How Do We Get To Hospital"; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The publication has only just been received by the Department. We have not yet had time to consider it.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current waiting list of visits by occupational therapists to disabled persons in the county of Leicestershire.

Mr. Newton: This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may care to write to the chairman of Leicestershire health authority for the information he seeks.

Royal Homoeopathic Hospitals

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will list the date or dates of visits made by Ministers in his Department to any of the royal homoeopathic hospitals since June 1979; and what further visits are planned.

Mrs. Currie: There is only one royal homoeopathic hospital, the Royal London homoeopathic hospital, which is at Great Ormond street, WC1. No ministerial visits have been made since June 1979 and none is planned.

Benefits

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the position of patients in community care living in village community schemes established in hospital grounds under the current legislation for income support payments and other benefit payments.

Mr. Portillo: A patient's entitlement to income support and other benefit payments will depend on individual circumstances. These include whether the person has been discharged from hospital, or is still an in-patient, whether he is in paid employment and whether he has any other resources.

Low-income Families

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of persons in low-income families in Wales (i) on supplementary benefit, (ii) below 100 per cent. of supplementary benefit and (iii) below 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit, for each of the years 1979, 1981, 1983 and 1985.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 27 May 1988 at columns *413-14*.

Leicestershire Health District (Cleaners)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cleaners were employed by the Leicestershire health district in (i) 1980, (ii) 1984, (iii) 1987 and (iv) the present day.

Mr. Newton: The latest available figures to this level of detail are for 1986. The information is given in the following table.

Cleaners[1,2]—ancillary staff in post in Leicestershire district health authority

At 30 September	*Whole time equivalents[3]*
[4]1980	1,050
1984	980
1986	720

Source: DHSS annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.

[1] Includes mechanical scrubbing machine operators and cleaner-domestic assistants. Excludes domestic supervisors and window cleaners.

[2] Part of the reduction since 1984 may be attributable to the effects of competitive tendering.

[3] Figures are rounded to nearest ten (10) whole time equivalents.

[4] Figures related to Leicestershire area health authority.

Foetal Tissue (Committee of Inquiry)

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *557*, what account was taken in his selection of candidates for membership of the committee of inquiry into the use of foetal tissue for transplant surgery of their publicised views on abortion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The members of the committee to review the report of the advisory group on the use of foetuses and foetal material for research were selected because of their expertise in their respective fields, which are relevant to the issues involved.

"Doctors and their Careers"

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether organisations representing women as consumers of the National Health Service, appropriate trade unions, and the Equal Opportunities Commission will be attending the two seminars which he is holding to discuss the Policy Studies Institute report, "Doctors and their Careers".

Mr. Newton: Those invited include representatives of the royal colleges and faculties, health authorities, the British Medical Association, medical schools and universities, women doctors' groups, and the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Departmental Premises (Bradford)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what property in Easby road, Bradford his Department has purchased recently; what was the purchase price; and for what purpose the property was bought.

Mrs. Currie: Neither this Department nor the Property Services Agency which acts on behalf of Government Departments in this regard, has purchased any property recently in Easby road. I understand, however, that 48 Ash grove, Bradford, which stands on the corner of Ash grove and Easby road and is owned by Bradford metropolitan district council is about to be leased to Bradford health authority for use as a mental health resource centre. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Bradford health authority for any further details he may be seeking.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to change current arrangements for patient referrals to the dental reference service at the request of general dental practitioners.

Mrs. Currie: We have no such plans. However, as mentioned in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health", we are consulting about the possible introduction of dental practice advisers in some family practitioner committees. It is expected that examination of patients at the request of their dentists would be one of the functions undertaken by dental practice advisers. Decisions about the introduction of dental practice advisers will be announced in due course.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases have been referred to family practitioner committees for possible service committee proceedings by the Dental Estimates Board in each of the last 10 years in respect of treatment carried out and treatment proposed.

Mrs. Currie: The number of cases taken up with family practitioner committees in England and Wales by the Dental Estimates Board as recorded in the board's annual reports, is set out in the table. Information about the numbers which concerned proposed or completed treatment is not available.

Year	*Number of treatments*
1977	55
1978	77
1979	30
1980	139
1981	259
1982	176
1983	491
1984	384
1985	186
1986[2]	42[1]
1986-87	214[1]

[1] The period of the board's annual report was changed from calendar to financial year, beginning in 1986-87.
[2] January to March.

Clinical Thermometers

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the European Economic Community proposals for the harmonisation of standards on clinical thermometers; which problems the directive is designed to overcome; and what assessment he has made of the benefits which will accrue from this to the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie: Directive 76/764/EEC relates to clinical mercury-in-glass maximum reading thermometers designed to measure the internal temperature of humans or animals. The directive describes instruments eligible to bear the EEC mark and thus assist the removal of a hindrance to trade. An amending directive is designed to ensure that such instruments which bear the EEC mark and sign to indicate conformity with pattern approval and initial verification do so conform. No assessment of the benefits to the United Kingdom has been made, but it is expected that British manufacturers will find it easier to sell their products to EC member states. Regulations will be laid to give effect to the requirements of the directives.

Publicity Budget

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 10 June, *Official Report*, column *725*, he will itemise the £14 million social security publicity budget.

Mr. Portillo: The Department's planned spending for 1988-89 on publicising social security is as follows:

	£ million
Press and television advertising:	
Pensions, Housing benefit, Family credit	5·00
Literature:	
Leaflets and posters	8·70
Services:	
Regional information services, radio and television fillers, Prestel etc.	0·30

Residential Homes

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the guidance given by his Department to local authority social service departments about the standards relating to the size of rooms and staffing arrangements which they should require from private residential homes under the Registered Homes Act 1984; and how he intends that those standards should relate to those obtaining in the local authority's own homes.

Mrs. Currie: Private residential homes have to comply with the requirements of the Residential Care Home Regulations 1984. These regulations require suitable and sufficient accommodation and staffing but do not lay down room sizes or staffing levels. The regulations are complemented by "Home Life: a Code of Practice for Residential Care", published by the Centre for Policy on Aging in 1984, a copy of which is in the Library. "Home Life" gives guidance on staffing levels. Local Authority Building Note No. 2, "Residential Accommodation for Elderly People" gives guidance on room sizes. Circular LAC(86)1 explained to registration authorities how this note should be applied to private and voluntary homes (copies of both are also in the Library). In circular LAC(86)6 we advised registration authorities not to expect higher standards in private and voluntary homes than those achieved in their own homes.

Babies (Deaths)

9. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the numbers and rates for stillbirths, infant, perinatal, early neonatal and late neonatal deaths in England and Wales, jointly and separately for the years 1985 to 1987 inclusive.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is shown in the table.

Numbers and rates for stillbirths, infant, perinatal, early neonatal, late neonatal deaths in England and Wales 1985-87

Year	England		Wales		England and Wales	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Stillbirths[1]						
1985	3,426	5·50	214	5·79	3,645	5·52
1986	3,337	5·32	209	5·61	3,549	5·34
1987[6]	3,224	4·99	196	5·16	3,423	5·00
1985-87[6]	9,987	5·27	619	5·51	10,617	5·28
Perinatal mortality[2]						
1985	6,100	9·80	378	10·22	6,498	9·84
1986	5,977	9·53	384	10·31	6,372	9·59
1987[6]	5,742	8·88	351	9·23	6,107	8·92
1985-87[6]	17,819	9·40	1,113	9·92	18,977	9·44
Infant mortality[3]						
1985	5,716	9·23	362	9·84	6,141	9·36
1986	5,917	9·49	352	9·50	6,313	9·55
1987[6]	5,845	9·09	359	9·49	6,272	9·20
1985-87[6]	17,478	9·27	1,073	9·61	18,726	9·37
Early neonatal mortality[4]						
1985	2,674	4·32	164	4·46	2,853	4·35
1986	2,640	4·23	175	4·72	2,823	4·27
1987[6]	2,518	3·91	155	4·10	2,684	3·94
1985-87[6]	7,832	4·15	494	4·43	8,360	4·18
Late neonatal mortality[5]						
1985	621	1·00	51	1·39	678	1·03
1986	630	1·01	32	0·86	666	1·01
1987[6]	722	1·12	35	0·93	764	1·12
1985-87[6]	1,973	1·05	118	1·06	2,108	1·05

[1] *Stillbirths:* Late fetal deaths after 28 weeks of gestation.
[2] *Perinatal deaths:* Stillbirths plus 0·6 days of life.
[3] *Infant mortality:* Deaths at ages under one year.
[4] *Early neonatal deaths:* At ages 0·6 days of life.
[5] *Late neonatal deaths:* Deaths at ages 7-28 days of life.
[1], [2] Rates per thousand live and still births.
[3], [4], [5] Rates per thousand live births.
[6] Provisional.
England: Deaths registered in England and Wales to usual residents of England.
Wales: Deaths registered in England and Wales to usual residents of Wales.
England and Wales: Deaths registered in England and Wales (includes residents for outside England and Wales).

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The Department provides the United Kingdom civilian medical member of the NATO joint civil military medical group. The other United Kingdom member is a military doctor representing the Ministry of Defence.

The group, which meets twice a year, advises and reports to the NATO civil defence committee on matters involving joint civil/military planning and co-operation in peace and war and conducts a number of relevant studies. Members maintain liaison outside the formal meetings by acting as national points of postal contact.

The Department also takes an appropriate advisory and playing part in NATO exercises from time to time.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will identify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: There are no terms of reference specific to this Department for work on civil emergencies and home defence planning. However, in concert with other Government Departments, we are committed to planning for peacetime emergencies and the effects of warfare, whether conventional or nuclear; plans for these are kept under constant review.

In this Department 5·5 whole-time equivalent staff are engaged in the work of civil and home defence planning.

Departmental costs for the last three years are as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	1·36 outturn
1986-87	1·12 outturn
1987-88	1·64 estimate

These costs are attributable largely to storage of medical supplies and equipment. In addition, approximately £200,000 per annum is spent on staff costs.

The Department issues specific guidance to the National Health Service on several aspects of emergency planning. We expect shortly to issue a new circular on civil defence planning in the NHS which also includes revised guidance in response to nuclear accidents.

Health Care

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of gross domestic product each member of the European Community devoted to health care in 1987.

Mr. Newton: International comparisons of expenditure on health care are not available for 1987. Comparative data for 1985, the latest year for which comprehensive data are available from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, are as follows:

Expenditure on Health Care as a Percentage of GDP, 1985

Country	*Public*	*Private*	*Total*
Belgium	5·5	1·7	7·2
France	6·7	1·7	8·4
Denmark	5·2	1·0	6·2
Germany	6·4	1·8	8·2
Greece	4·1	0·1	4·2
Ireland	6·9	1·6	8·0
Italy	5·4	1·3	6·7
Netherlands	6·5	1·8	8·3
Portugal	4·1	1·6	5·7
Spain	4·3	1·7	6·0
United Kingdom	5·2	0·8	6·0

Source: OECD.
Note: Luxemburg is excluded from the table because of inconsistencies in the national health accounts.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all hospitals where he has been notified of *(a)* total closure and *(b)* partial closure in the areas covered by the following health authorities: North West Thames, South West Thames, North East Thames, South East Thames, Basingstoke, Winchester, Portsmouth, Southampton, Isle of Wight, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury, Wycombe, East Berkshire, West Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

Mrs. Currie: It is important to note that closures may be offset or balanced by openings or reprovision elsewhere. The hospitals or units approved for total or partial closure from 1979 to end 1986 in the specified regional and district health authorities are in the table.

The following districts have not approved any closures in the period:—
Southampton and South West Hampshire
Milton Keynes
Wycombe
North West Thames

Hospital	*District*	*Type*	*Year*
Soho Hospital for Women	Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	pc	1979
St Mary's Harrow Road	Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	pc	1979
St. Charles	Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	pc	1979
St. Helena's Recovery Home	Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	tc	1979
Paddington Green Childrens	Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	tc	1979
St. Elizabeth's	Barnet	tc	1979
Orme Lodge	Barnet	tc	1979
Stanmore Cottage	Barnet	tc	1979
West Middlesex	Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	pc	1980
Luton and Dunstable childrens annexe	Bedfordshire	tc	1980
Tolmers Park	Hertfordshire	tc	1980
St. Columba's	Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	tc	1980
St. Mary's Harrow Road renal unit	Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	pc	1981
Gordon	Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	pc	1981
West Middlesex	Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	pc	1981
Daneswood Convalescent Home	Bedfordshire	tc	1981
Temple Hill	Ealing Hamersmith & Hounslow	tc	1981
Harpenden Memorial	North West Hertfordshire	pc	1982
Highlands	Enfield	pc	1982
Shenley	Brent and Harrow	pc	1982
Banstead	Victoria	pc	1983
Park	North Bedfordshire	pc	1983
Leamington Park	Brent	tc	1983
West Hendon	Barnet	tc	1983
North Hertfordshire Maternity	North Hertfordshire	tc	1983
All Saints	Victoria	tc	1983
Clapham	North Bedfordshire	pc	1984
Hertford County	East Hertfordshire	pc	1984
Banstead	Hammersmith and Fulham	pc	1984
Charing Cross	Hammersmith and Fulham	pc	1984
West London	Hammersmith and Fulham	pc	1984
St. Stephens	Victoria	pc	1984
Westminster	Victoria	pc	1984
Central Middlesex	Brent	pc	1984

Hospital	District	Type	Year
West Middlesex	Hounslow and Spelthorne	pc	1984
Ashford	Hounslow and Spelthorne	pc	1984
Chepstow Lodge	Paddington and North Kensington	tc	1984
Hereford Lodge	Paddington and North Kensington	tc	1984
St. John's	Hounslow and Spelthorne	tc	1984
St. John's	Hillingdon	tc	1984
Houndswood annexe at Harperbury	North West Hertfordshire	tc	1984
Ealing St. Bernard's wing	Ealing	pc	1985
Harpenden Memorial	North West Hertfordshire	pc	1985
Harrow	Harrow	pc	1985
St. Charles	Paddington and North Kensington	pc	1985
Westminster	Victoria	pc	1985
Park	North Bedfordshire	tc	1985
Priory	South Bedfordshire	tc	1985
St. Stephen's surgical ward	Riverside	pc	1986
Charing Cross	Riverside	pc	1986
Tenterden House	North West Hertfordshire	tc	1986
Hendon district	Barnet	tc	1986
St. Mary's Harrow Road	Paddington and North Kensington	tc	1986
Banstead	Riverside	tc	1986
North East Thames			
St. Margaret's	Essex	pc	1981
Whipps Cross	Waltham Forest	pc	1983
Highlands	Enfield	pc	1984
North Middlesex	Haringey	pc	1985
Orsett	Basildon and Thurrock	pc	1986
Garret Anderson	Camden and Islington	tc	1979
Thomas Barlow	Camden and Islington	tc	1980
Cromwell Lodge	Camden and Islington	tc	1980
London Jewish	City and East London	tc	1980
Bearstead Memorial	Enfield and Haringey	tc	1980
Waltham Abbey War Memorial	Essex	tc	1981
St. Faith's	Barking and Haringey	tc	1981
Aldersbrook	City and East London	tc	1981
Queen Mary's Newham	City and East London	tc	1981
St. Mary's Newham	City and East London	tc	1981
City of London maternity	Camden and Islington	tc	1982
Whittington Home	Camden and Islington	tc	1982
Enfield War Memorial	Enfield	tc	1982
Royal National Orthopaedic Great Portland street	Bloomsbury	tc	1983
Prince of Wales	Haringey	tc	1983
Clacton Maternity	North East Essex	tc	1983
Essex Hall	North East Essex	tc	1983
The Mothers	City and Hackney	tc	1984
The German	City and Hackney	tc	1984
St. Matthews	City and Hackney	tc	1984
Mildmay Mission	Tower Hamlets	tc	1984
Harts	Waltham Forest	tc	1984
Lugano nursing home	Waltham Forest	tc	1984
Royal Throat Nose and Ear	Bloomsbury	tc	1985
Brunswick House	North East Essex	tc	1986
Dagenham Hospital	Redbridge	tc	1986
Bethnal Green	Tower Hamlets	tc	1986
South East Thames			
Queen Mary's	Greenwich and Bexley	pc	1981
Joyce Green	Dartford and Gravesham	pc	1982
South Western	West Lambeth	pc	1982
Preston Hall	Maidstone	pc	1983
Sevenoaks Hospital	Tunbridge Wells	pc	1986
Lewisham unit children	Lewisham	pc	1986
Beckenham Hospital	Bromley	pc	1986
Holmhurst	West Lambeth	tc	1979
Bexhill convalescent home	Hastings	tc	1980
Mansell House	Tunbridge Wells	tc	1982
Newhaven Valley	Brighton	tc	1983
St. Giles'	Camberwell	tc	1983
St. John's	Lewisham and Southwark	tc	1983
Hawkenbury	Tunbridge Wells	tc	1983
Dreadnought Seamans	Greenwich	tc	1985

Hospital	District	Type	Year
Sussex Throat and Ear	Brighton	tc	1985
New Cross Hospital	Lewisham and North Southwark	tc	1986
Lennard	Bromley	tc	1986
Beckenham	Bromley	tc	1986
St. Nicholas	Greenwich	tc	1986
South West Thames			
Haslemere	South West Surrey	pc	1985
Horsham	Mid Downs	pc	1985
Farnham	West Surrey and North East Hampshire	pc	1985
St. James' Hospital	Wandsworth	pc	1986
Schiff	Mid Surrey	tc	1979
St. George's Hyde Park Corner	Merton Sutton and Wandsworth	tc	1979
Caterham main	East Surrey	tc	1980
Clerks croft	East Surrey	tc	1980
East Surrey	East Surrey	tc	1980
Horley	East Surrey	tc	1980
Smallfield	East Surrey	tc	1980
Cuddington	Mid Surrey	tc	1980
Queen Elizabeth House	Merton Sutton and Wandsworth	tc	1980
St. Benedict's	Merton Sutton and Wandsworth	tc	1980
Wimbledon	Merton and Sutton	tc	1981
Waddon	Croydon	tc	1983
South London Hospital for Women	Wandsworth	tc	1983
Cheam	Merton and Sutton	tc	1984
Murray House Ottershaw	North West Surrey	tc	1984
Bletchingley	East Surrey	tc	1984
Roffey Park	Mid Downs	tc	1984
Rowley Bristow	North West Surrey	tc	1985
Westmoor House	Richmond Twickenham and Roehampton	tc	1985
Queens	Croydon	tc	1986
St. Mary's	Croydon	tc	1986
District Health Authorities			
Winchfield	Basingstoke and North Hampshire	tc	1981
Tichbourne Down House	Winchester	tc	1984
Victoria	Winchester	tc	1986
St. John's Hospital	Winchester	tc	1986
King George's	Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	tc	1981
Sandy Point	Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	tc	1983
King George's	Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	tc	1986
Longford	Isle of Wight	tc	1985
Tindal ward 3	Aylesbury Vale	pc	1985
Canadian Red Cross memorial	Berkshire	pc	1979
Peppard	Berkshire	tc	1979
Canadian Red Cross memorial	Berkshire	pc	1981
King Edward VII Windsor	East Berkshire	tc	1982
Farnham Park rehabilitation centre	East Berkshire	tc	1983
Henley War Memorial	West Berkshire	tc	1983
Canadian Red Cross Memorial	East Berkshire	tc	1984
Slade	Oxfordshire	pc	1979
Cowley Road	Oxfordshire	pc	1979
Cowley Road	Oxfordshire	tc	1979
Longworth	Oxfordshire	pc	1981
St. Mary's	Oxfordshire	tc	1981
Neithrop and Pines	Oxfordshire	tc	1983
Longworth	Oxfordshire	tc	1984

General Practice Finance Corporation

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how it is proposed to meet the expenses incurred in connection with the reconstitution of the General Practice Finance Corporation.

Mr. Newton: Parliamentary approval for this expenditure has been sought in the Supply Estimate for the Family Practitioner and Other Services, England, Vote (class XIV, vote 2) presented to Parliament on 15 March 1988. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure, estimated at £100,000, will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

Medical Secretaries

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the annual average salary of a qualified medical secretary;

(2) if he will give, for each regional health authority, district health authority and special health authority *(a)* the number of funded establishments for qualified medical secretaries and *(b)* the number of qualified medical secretaries in post;

(3) if he will give the average annual salary of a trained medical secretary.

Mr. Newton *[holding answers 6 May 1988 and 9 May 1988]:* Medical secretaries are employed in the NHS on various grades with basic pay scales ranging from £4,733 to £8,990 per annum for an adult according to their individual responsibilities. In addition, allowances up to £635 per annum may be payable for tested proficiency in typing, shorthand and audio skills. London weighting allowances of £1,201 per annum within the inner zone and £718 per annum in the outer zone are also payable as appropriate.

Payroll information identifying medical secretaries is not centrally available for all parts of the NHS. Based on information from eight regions and six special health authorities in the period April to December 1987, the average gross salary was estimated to be £6,620 per annum inclusive of proficiency allowances but excluding London weighting. There is no central classification or payroll identification of a trained or qualified medical secretary.

The table shows the number of medical secretaries in post in each regional, district and post-graduate special health authority at September 1986. Figures for funded establishments are not held centrally.

National Health Service Medical Secretaries at September 1986

Regional Health Authority and District Health Authority	*Whole-time equivalent*[1]
Northern	0
Hartlepool	13
North Tees	41
South Tees	75
East Cumbria	45
South Cumbria	31
West Cumbria	25
Darlington	30
Durham	35
North West Durham	5
South West Durham	22
Northumberland	42
Gateshead	36
Newcastle-upon-Tyne (T)	126
North Tyneside	32
South Tyneside	27
Sunderland	12
RHA Total	596
Yorkshire	0
Hull	33
East Yorkshire	28
Grimsby	38
Scunthorpe	45
Northallerton	13
York	35
Scarborough	21
Harrogate	25
Bradford	68
Airedale	38
Calderdale	26
Huddersfield	30
Dewsbury	31
Leeds Western (T)	87
Leeds Eastern (T)	91
Wakefield	44
Pontefract	25
RHA Total	678
Trent	
North Derbyshire	35
South Derbyshire	59
Leicestershire (T)	108
North Lincolnshire	68
South Lincolnshire	58
Bassetlaw	16
Central Nottinghamshire	44
Nottingham (T)	174
Barnsley	31
Doncaster	62
Rotherham	40
Sheffield (T)	148
RHA Total	841
East Anglian	
Cambridge (T)	59
Peterborough	46
West Suffolk	31
East Suffolk	62
Norwich	84
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	38
West Norfolk and Wisbech	36
Huntingdon	20
RHA Total	377
North West Thames	
North Bedfordshire	38
South Bedfordshire	37
North Hertfordshire	25
East Hertfordshire	17
North West Hertfordshire	36
South West Hertfordshire	30
Barnet	48
Harrow	33
Hillingdon	65
Hounslow & Spelthorne	46
Ealing	31
Brent	30
Paddington & North Kensington (T)	26
Riverside	116
RHA Total	576
North East Thames	
Basildon & Thurrock	31
Mid Essex	30
North East Essex	63
West Essex	1
Southend	37
Barking/Havering/Brentwood	76
Hampstead (T)	49
Bloomsbury (T)	94
Islington	31
City & Hackney (T)	58
Newham	20
Tower Hamlets (T)	83
Enfield	30
Haringey	41
Redbridge	25
Waltham Forest	39
RHA Total	708
South East Thames	0
Brighton	40
Eastbourne	21
Hastings	14
South East Kent	46
Canterbury and Thanet	68
Dartford and Gravesham	40
Maidstone	25
Medway	52
Tunbridge Wells	56

Regional Health Authority and District Health Authority	*Whole-time equivalent*[1]
Bexley	2
Greenwich	27
Bromley	60
West Lambeth (T)	46
Camberwell (T)	40
Lewisham and North Southwark (T)	71
RHA Total	607
South West Thames	0
North West Surrey	43
West Surrey and North East Hants	36
South West Surrey	30
Mid-Surrey	32
East Surrey	32
Chichester	30
Mid-downs	49
Worthing	41
Croydon	38
Kingston and Esher	32
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	33
Wandsworth (T)	98
Merton and Sutton	55
RHA Total	549
Wessex	0
East Dorset	54
West Dorset	10
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	7
Southampton and South West Hampshire (T)	61
Winchester	29
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	10
Salisbury	36
Swindon	50
Bath	33
Isle of Wight	25
RHA Total	313
Oxford	1
East Berkshire	38
West Berkshire	41
Aylesbury Vale	34
Wycombe	38
Milton Keynes	27
Kettering	51
Northampton	66
Oxfordshire (T)	109
RHA Total	405
South Western	0
Bristol and Weston (T)	88
Frenchay	10
Southmead	33
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	69
Exeter	50
North Devon	26
Plymouth	83
Torbay	33
Cheltenham	43
Gloucester	44
Somerset	89
RHA Total	567
West Midlands	0
Bromsgrove and Redditch	31
Herefordshire	33
Kidderminster and District	21
Worcester and District	27
Shropshire	48
Mid-Staffordshire	37
North Staffordshire	99
South East Staffordshire	15
Rugby	17
North Warwickshire	24
South Warwickshire	40
Central Birmingham (T)	147
East Birmingham	64
North Birmingham	29
South Birmingham	75
West Birmingham	64
Coventry	70
Dudley	74
Sandwell	49
Solihull	30
Walsall	21
Wolverhampton	41
RHA Total	1,055
Mersey	0
Chester	32
Crewe	34
Halton	16
Macclesfield	29
Warrington	27
Liverpool (T)	151
St. Helens with Knowsley	38
Sefton North	16
Sefton South	41
Wirral	56
RHA Total	439
North Western	0
Lancaster	28
Blackpool Wyre and Fylde	51
Preston	47
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	44
Burnley, Pendle & Rossendale	49
West Lancashire	17
Chorley and South Ribble	23
Bolton	11
Bury	32
North Manchester	75
Central Manchester (T)	67
South Manchester (T)	52
Oldham	39
Rochdale	46
Salford (T)	80
Stockport	41
Tameside and Glossop	43
Trafford	36
Wigan	44
RHA Total	826

London Postgraduate Special Health Authorities

Authority	*Whole-time equivalent*[1]
Hospitals for sick children	33
National hospital for nervous diseases	15
Moorfields eye hospital	23
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley hospitals	49
National heart and chest hospitals	54
The Royal Marsden hospital	36

Authority	Whole-time equivalent[1]
Hammersmith hospital and Queen Charlotte's hospital	51
The Eastman dental hospital	5
Total	264
England total for all authorities	8,801

Source: DHSS(SR7) Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the possibility of transferring to regional health authorities functions currently carried out by his Department.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 25 May 1988]:* The need to exercise functions centrally is kept under continuing consideration. For example, following a review of the Department's works function, authority for execution of capital building schemes at all stages subsequent to approval in principle was delegated to regional health authorities.

60 to 70-year-olds

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of men and women, respectively, for each year between the ages of 60 and 70 who in 1987 *(a)* were in full-time employment, *(b)* were known to be retired and who were working part-time or *(c)* whose status was unknown; and what percentage of their year each represented.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 7 June 1988]:* Information is not available in exactly the form requested. The available information is in the table and is for spring 1987:

Great Britain, Thousands

	Men				Women			
	60-64		65-69		60-64		65-69	
	No.	Per cent.	No.	Per cent.	No.	Per cent.	No.	Per cent.
Total	1,381	100	1,211	100	1,506	100	1,445	100
Economically active	753	55	158	13	283	19	80	6
of whom								
employed	676	49	143	12	272	18	77	5
full-time	615	45	56	5	73	5	14	1
part-time	60	4	88	7	193	13	62	4
unemployed	77	6	14	1	12	1	[2]—	
Economically inactive[3]	628	45	1,053	87	1,223	81	1,365	94
of whom								
retired[5]	254	18	837	69	651	43	[4]—	
other	374	27	216	18	572	38	[4]—	

Source: Labour Force Survey, Spring 1987 (preliminary estimates).

[1] Includes those in employment and people unemployed and seeking work.

[2] Number below 10,000.

[3] Includes those who are retired, sick or disabled, or not seeking work for all other reasons.

[4] Question not asked of women in the 65-69 age group.

[5] Details are not available of the numbers of those who regarded themselves as retired but nevertheless undertook some paid work.

Note: Numbers do not sum to total because of roundings.

Capenhurst (Cancers)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what have been the recorded levels of childhood leukaemia, malignant brain tumours among young people and the number of adult thyroid cancers, in the area covering a six-mile radius around the British Nuclear Fuels plc plant at Capenhurst; and how this compares with the incidence of these conditions in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 7 June 1988]:* The precise information is not readily available in the form requested. In a report published last year in the OPCS series "Studies on Medical and Population subjects" (No 51) [1] the following relevant information is given in relation to Capenhurst:

Local Authority Area with at least two-thirds of the population resident within 6 miles of BNFL site at Capenhurst

Age Group	1961-80	Rate in area as a percentage of regional rate
0-24	Cases	[2]
All leukaemias		
Incidence	38	104·2
Mortality	33	95·8
Malignant Brain Tumours		
Incidence	29	122·7
Mortality	10	77·0
25-74		
Thyroid		
Incidence	48	166·0
Mortality	31	171·0

Copies of this Report are available in the Library.

[1] "Cancer incidence and mortality in the vicinity of nuclear installations England and Wales 1959-80" (HMSO 1987)

[2] This column shows the local incidence of disease and mortality expressed as a percentage of the regional average.

Common Cold

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what research is currently undertaken into the prevention of the common cold; which institutions are undertaking such research; how much money is being provided, publicly and privately, for such research and by whom; and if he will make a statement on policy and research in this area.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* The Department is not at present funding any research on the prevention of the common cold. The main agency through which the Government promote medical and related biological research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. I understand that the Medical Research Council is at present funding research at the common cold unit, which is part of the clinical research centre's division of communicable diseases. In the financial year 1986-87 (the last for which figures are available) the council's expenditure on this research was £304,000.

The Medical Research Council has agreed that the common cold unit should close in 1990 following the retirement of the director. A committee has been set up to evaluate the future need of a facility for studying infections in human volunteers.

Details of research other than that funded directly by Government Departments or by research councils are not held centrally.

EMPLOYMENT

Tourists (Expenditure)

98. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimates he has in sterling equivalent of the amount *(a)* spent in the United Kingdom by foreign tourists, and *(b)* spent overseas by British tourists.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated that overseas residents spent £6·2 billion in the United Kingdom in 1987 and that United Kingdom residents spent £7·3 billion abroad.

Urban Greening Initiatives

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will provide details of the number of Manpower Services Commission staff and participants employed on urban greening initiatives in the voluntary sector;

(2) if he will provide details of the number of Manpower Services Commission staff and participants employed on urban greening initiatives in local authority sponsored schemes.

Mr. Nicholls: There are no Manpower Services Commission staff employed directly on urban greening initiatives under the community programme. One of the programme's national initiatives, UL2000, includes amongst its five themes "greening the cities", but separate figures of participants on the different themes are not available.

At 31 March some 6,782 people were employed on the UK2000 community programme national initiative in Great Britain. Of these, some two thirds are employed in the voluntary sector and around one fifth in local authorities.

Training Schemes (Fatalities and Accidents)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many fatalities have occurred on Manpower Services Commission building and construction schemes under YTS, the job training scheme and the community programme for each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls: One fatality occurred in May 1986 to a YTS trainee in the construction and civil engineering occupations. There have been no fatalities to trainees on the job training scheme in these occupations. Central records of fatalities on the community programme are not held, although accidents on the community programme have to be notified to the Health and Safety Executive in the same way as for other employment.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many accidents have occurred on Manpower Services Commission building and construction schemes under YTS, the job training scheme and the community programme for each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls: Accident information by industries is available only for YTS and where the accident occurred after 1 July 1986. Comparable accident figures for adult trainees on the job training scheme and employees on the community programme are not available centrally. Accidents on the community programme have to be notified to the Health and Safety Executive in the same way as for other employment. The following table gives quarterly figures of fatal, major and minor YTS accidents in the construction and civil engineering occupations and includes accidents to both one-year and two-year YTS participants.

Period	*Accidents*[1]		
	Fatal	*Major*	*Minor*
1 July 1986—30 September 1986	Nil	21	74
1 October 1986—31 December 1986	Nil	26	136
1 January 1987—31 March 1987	Nil	15	162
1 April 1987—30 June 1987	Nil	35	145
1 July 1987—30 September 1987	Nil	30	199
1 October 1987—31 December 1987	Nil	32	234
1 January 1988—31 March 1988	Nil	41	209

[1] MSC accident figures for YTS have been compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive on employed persons. However, the commission's figures include a number of accidents, in particular road traffic accidents during scheme time and accidents to trainees in educational establishments which may not have been reportable to the executive had the individuals been employed.

Mines and Quarries

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, South of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *315*, why the inspector was concerned only with the security of the stockpiles on his visit to Penlee quarry on 5 January; how long was the visit; why no check was made on machinery guards and conveyors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The inspector visited Penlee quarry, not to carry out a routine inspection of the site, but to investigate a specific complaint from the public. The investigation took approximately three hours, was restricted to the extensive stockpiling areas and did not include the preparation plant area where the conveyors are sited.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether training managers under the proposed employment training scheme will be able to *(a)* charge trainees for any protective clothing, safety footwear and special equipment they may be issued with, *(b)* deduct any part of a trainee's training allowance as a deposit on any protective clothing, safety footwear or special equipment they are issued with and *(c)* impose any fines or deductions from any part of a trainee's training allowance for any trainee's unauthorised absences, lateness or irregular attendance.

Mr. Nicholls: Training managers will not be able to make any financial demands on trainees for protective clothing, safety footwear or special equipment, nor will they be able to impose fines or deductions from a trainee's training allowance.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many placements on the new employment training scheme will at any one time be available for use by voluntary sector agencies.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training will provide for about 300,000 trainees at any one time with about 600,000 trainees taking part during a full year. The emphasis will be on the individual training needs of trainees, and they may spend time in a variety of training opportunities during their period on the programme. I hope voluntary organisations will be extensively involved in employment training and so continue the valuable contribution which they have made to existing programmes. Training Commission officials are currently considering proposals from organisations interested in taking part.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many voluntary sector agencies have indicated that they will not take placements under the new employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training is a locally planned and locally delivered programme and the majority of discussions and negotiation with organisations which may wish to participate is being done at local level. There is no central record of organisations which have indicated that they either do or do not wish to take part. The voluntary sector has an important part to play in employment training and I hope most existing managing agents and sponsors will move forward into the new programme.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what alternative support will be offered to voluntary groups which are not offered placements from the new employment training scheme and to those which decide not to use such placements;

(2) what consideration the Government have given to the probable impact of the withdrawal of the community programme on voluntary agencies which provide community services.

Mr. Nicholls: The community programme will be replaced from 5 September by employment training. Project-based training will be an important part of the new programme, with some 194,000 project-based opportunities in the first year, broadly the present level of community programme provision. I hope that most current CP projects will move forward into employment training bringing with them the worthwhile services that they currently provide.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently met representatives of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations to discuss the scope for the fullest involvement of the voluntary sector in employment training. Discussions are continuing between officials, including the role of the voluntary sector in providing worthwhile voluntary activities for those participants who, at the end of employment training, do not move directly into a job.

YTS Agents

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether there are any exemptions to the requirement for agents of YTS to have approved training status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: There are no exemptions to the requirement that agents of YTS must achieve approved training organisations status. New organisations contracting with the Training Commission to deliver YTS programmes must apply for ATO status within one month of signing a contract and their training arrangements are monitored against the ATO criteria. A decision on whether to award ATO status will be made within a year of their contracting with the commission to provide training.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether there are any agents of YTS who have not acquired approved training status still operating as agents of that scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Only 136 (4 per cent.) of all agents contracted to deliver YTS by the Training Commission have yet to acquire approved training organisation status. All these organisations have recently contracted with the Training Commission to deliver YTS training and their training arrangements are being monitored against the 10 ATO criteria prior to a decision on their status.

Community Programme

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a full list of voluntary sector community programme placements classified according to type of work undertaken.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the number of filled places is not available in the form requested. The table shows the number of authorised places on the community programme as at 29 April 1988 (the latest date available) allocated to agents and sponsors in the voluntary sector, classified according to the type of work undertaken.

Table of Authorised Places in the Voluntary Sector at 29 April 1988

Type of Work Undertaken	*Number of Places*
Building and landscaping	55
Home insulation	6,248
Research and surveys	2,771
Library	2,472
Youth work	14
Other social services	67
Cultural	3,695
Workshop	11,138
CP agency management	10,079

Type of Work Undertaken	*Number of Places*
Environmental and landscaping	27,519
Building and construction	18,227
Archaeological digs	734
Children's services	5,813
Young people's services	11,084
Services for the elderly	29,746
Services for the disabled	13,176
Centres for the unemployed	407

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many voluntary sector community programme placements are allocated for work with *(a)* the elderly, *(b)* the disabled, *(c)* under-fives, *(d)* women, *(e)*black people, *(f)* children aged five to 13 years and *(g)* young people aged 14 to 25 years.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the form requested. The nearest categories and the number of authorised places in each are shown in the table:

Type of work undertaken	*Number of authorised places at 29 April, 1988*
Services for the elderly	29,746
Services for the disabled	13,176
Children's services (Up to 16)	5,813
Young people's services (16 to 18)	11,084

Health and Safety Commission

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the specific matters in relation to the establishment and activities of the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive and their subordinate agencies on which he answers parliamentary questions.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for all matters concerned with the staffing and establishment of the Health and Safety Commission and Executive which do not fall to the Prime Minister as arising from the position of HSE staff as civil servants. He is also responsible for all the aspects of the commission's and the executive's work which cover primarily the protection of workers. He answers for the protection of the public from the generality of hazards, except where other Secretaries of State have responsibilities which involve the commission and executive. For a description of these responsibilities, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister today.

Remploy

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further steps he proposes to take to enable Remploy to increase its work force, its range of products and its subsidy.

Mr. Lee: The longer-term arrangements for supporting people with severe disabilities in employment, including the support given to Remploy, are among the matters to be considered within the internal review of the assistance offered by my Department to people with disabilities announced in March. We aim to complete this review as quickly as possible this year.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when was the last occasion on which he visited Remploy factories to discuss subsidies, pay, bonuses and working conditions.

Mr. Lee: I welcome the opportunity to visit Remploy factories whenever possible to meet both management and work force, and most recently visited the Burnley factory on 26 February. Discussions on the matters raised by the right hon. Member are generally held at a national level. I met members of the consortium of Remploy trades unions on 28 September 1987 to discuss pay issues and met the board of directors on 15 June to discuss a range of issues.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what special provision is made in Remploy for those severely disabled people who may not be able to participate in bonus schemes.

Mr. Lee: By effective placement and training Remploy has increased the number of severely disabled workers who earn bonus from 86 per cent. of the disabled work force in 1980 to 98 per cent. in 1988. Those who are unable to achieve the bonus standard receive the basic Remploy wage.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of Remploy workers who lose money, compared with benefits, by working.

Mr. Lee: This information is not available.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many disabled people are seeking work with Remploy but are unable to get jobs.

Mr. Lee: Information on the number of severely disabled people seeking work with Remploy is not held. The company recruits and trains between 1,000 and 1,200 new employees each year.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average cost to the Government of each Remploy worker who benefits from the subsidy.

Mr. Lee: In 1987-88 the average cost to the Government of subsidising each severely disabled worker employed by Remploy, excluding loans to the company in respect of capital expenditure, was £5,529.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to provide new, modern skills for those Remploy workers who require them.

Mr. Lee: This is essentially a matter for the management of Remploy to determine within the resources available to it, taking account of the characteristics of those people with severe disabilities in its employment.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the cost to the Government in terms of benefits which would have to be paid if all Remploy workers become unemployed.

Mr. Lee: A reliable estimate could be made only if information were available about the entitlement to

benefit of each Remploy worker. However, it is estimated, using general survey information, that the cost to the Government would have been of the order of £27·5 million if all the severely disabled people employed by Remploy had remained unemployed and claimed benefits during the whole of the financial year 1987-88. This estimate is based on information about the characteristics of severely disabled people in employment collected in 1986. It does not take account of changes in benefits introduced since that date.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are in supervisory jobs in Remploy and how many of them are disabled.

Mr. Lee: Comprehensive information is not available, but 283 (42 per cent.) of the 667 supervisory staff in Remploy factories are severely disabled.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are in management jobs in Remploy; and how many of them are disabled.

Mr. Lee: Comprehensive information is not available, but four of Remploy's 94 factory managers are severely disabled.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many disabled workers are employed by Remploy; in which areas they are located; and what is their basic weekly wage.

Mr. Lee: On 31 March 1988 Remploy employed 9,042 severely disabled workers. This figure has been broken down into employment service regions as follows:

Region	*Number of Severely Disabled Workers at 31 March 1988*
Northern	920
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,104
East Midlands and Eastern	653
London and south-east	990
South-west	516
Wales	1,492
West midlands	646
North-west	1,647
Scotland	1,074

The basic weekly wage is £102·43 for workers in London and £90 elsewhere. With skill and productivity payments, average weekly earnings are £121·86 in London and £109·43 elsewhere.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next intends to meet the management and trade unionists of Remploy to discuss the present subsidy.

Mr. Lee: I shall continue to meet the management of Remploy, and representatives of the trades unions with which the company negotiates, as and when the need arises.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the annual subsidy to Remploy for each of the past 10 years; if he will increase the present subsidy to enable Remploy to pay higher wages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The annual subsidy (excluding loans for capital expenditure) to Remploy for each of the past 10 years is given in the table:

	£000
1978-79	22,530
1979-80	27,263
1980-81	32,235
1981-82	39,195
1982-83	42,578
1983-84	44,572
1984-85	47,825
1985-86	48,415
1986-87	47,770
1987-88	49,726

In the past three years pay settlements for Remploy's manual work force have been above the annual rate of inflation. I am informed that Remploy's manual work force has voted by a substantial majority to accept a pay offer negotiated between the company and the consortium of Remploy trades unions earlier in the year, operative from 1 April.

It is estimated that average weekly earnings of Remploy workers outside London have risen from £83·03 in April 1984 to £109·43 in April 1988. Workers at Remploy's London factories receive higher rates of pay. The new pay arrangements will be operated within the subsidy for 1988-89.

Sheltered Workshops (Wage Rates)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is *(a)* the national average wage, and *(b)* that paid in local authority sheltered workshops.

Mr. Lee: The average gross weekly earnings (excluding bonuses, overtime and shift premiums) taken from the new earnings survey April 1987 for full-time adult employees whose pay was not affected by absences was £170·70. In April 1987 the average weekly rate of pay in most local authority sheltered workshops was estimated to be £95·10; the current average weekly rate of pay in these workshops is estimated to be £102·28.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Department of Employment has no liaison arrangements, and does no collaborative work, with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will identify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, the

number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Work in the Department of Employment on civil emergencies and home defence planning is carried out within guidelines laid down by the Government. The work is done by staff, both in London and in the regional offices, who also have other duties. It is estimated that the total effort devoted to emergency planning is equivalent to about five full-time staff. This area of work is not costed separately, but is included in overall administrative costs and amounted to around £100,000 in the 1987-88 financial year; no figures are available for previous years.

Single European Market

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish an analysis of the regional impact on jobs in the United Kingdom of the Commission's proposals to achieve a single market in the European Community by 1992.

Mr. Cope: The impact of the single European market should be beneficial on output growth in the United Kingdom and so on jobs. The impact on jobs in different regions in the United Kingdom cannot be predicted with confidence.

Sheltered Employment

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total cost, in each of the years 1985, 1986 and 1987, and by each standard region, of providing *(a)* sheltered placement scheme places, *(b)* sheltered employment places in Remploy and *(c)* sheltered employment places in local authority workshops.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 17 May 1988]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Total expenditure nationally and by Training Commission regions (excluding the Department's expenditure on administration and capital expenditure, for which information in this form is not available) is given in the table for the last three financial years for which information is available.

	Sheltered placement scheme			*Remploy operating deficit*			*Local authority workshops*		
	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
	£000	*£000*	*£000*	*£000*	*£000*	*£000*	*£000*	*£000*	*£000*
South-east	64	222	497	1,600	1,654	1,699	1,545	1,714	1,851
London	173	284	409	4,336	4,179	4,228	3,054	3,259	3,386
South-west	644	1,457	2,545	3,345	3,405	3,645	2,542	2,734	2,937
West midlands	76	123	264	2,286	2,404	2,256	1,678	1,843	2,142
East midlands and eastern	302	382	510	5,382	4,911	4,797	1,992	2,118	2,157
Yorkshire and Humberside	184	249	473	5,510	5,026	5,643	2,658	2,520	2,400
North-west	215	368	504	9,267	9,893	10,612	2,386	2,448	2,623
Northern	77	79	99	5,354	5,363	5,269	1,088	1,065	1,126
Wales	6	18	58	9,825	9,034	9,697	1,976	2,011	2,494
Scotland	212	401	705	6,053	4,995	6,060	2,833	3,439	3,385
Great Britain	1,953	3,583	6,064	52,958	50,864	53,906	21,752	23,151	24,501

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 17 June 1988

PRIME MINISTER

Food Surpluses

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she has responded to the petition delivered to No. 10 Downing street on 20 April requesting the fairer distribution of European Economic Community food surpluses.

The Prime Minister: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food replied on 18 May to the petition from the Common Market fair food campaign.

Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the written reply of 26 April, *Official Report*, column *96*, to the hon. Member for Brent, East, on what date she wrote to the Chairman of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee.

The Prime Minister: I wrote the letter to which I referred on 12 March 1987.

Parliamentary Questions

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister on what basis it was judged appropriate in her reply to the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison), *Official Report*, 6 May, columns *628-44*, on Government achievements in the United Kingdom since May 1979, to incur an expenditure above the standard upper limit for resourcing answers to parliamentary questions.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General on 14 March 1988, at column *429*. On this occasion it was decided that since the question concerned a large number of Departments it was appropriate to give a consolidated answer.

"Strategies for Deception"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister for what reason Her Majesty's Government have intervened to halt the publication of the academic work on "Strategies for Deception" by Professor Sir Nicholas Howard, All Souls.

The Prime Minister: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the volume in the "Official History of British Intelligence" series prepared by Professor Sir Michael Howard, Regius Professor of Modern History and Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. Publication of this volume is still under consideration. At such time as a decision is taken, I shall, of course, inform the House.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Birmingham Pub Bombings

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General what guidance the Director of Public Prosecutions gave to the City of London police on their inquiry into contacts between the two principal Crown witnesses at the recent appeal hearing relating to the Birmingham pub bombings trial.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions passed to the City of London police the information that he had received. In all cases in which the director requests police inquiries it is for the police themselves to determine how those inquiries are conducted.

On occasion, advice is offered to assist the police in their investigation. It is not the practice of either the director or myself to disclose whether any advice has been offered, and, if so, in what terms, in any particular case.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of value added tax refund claims under Customs and Excise notice No. 719 processed for the fiscal year 1986-87.

Mr. Lilley: I presume my hon. Friend refers to the fiscal year 1987-88 as my hon. Friend's question on notice No. 719 for the year 1986-87 was answered on 26 November 1987 at column *291*. The number of claims processed in the fiscal year 1987-88 was 9,254.

Business Registrations

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many businesses were registered for value added tax in the Corby district at the end of *(a)* 1981 and *(b)* 1986;

(2) how many businesses were registered for value added tax in the East Northants district at the end of *(a)* 1981 and *(b)* 1986.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that records are not maintained on a town or district basis. Corby and east Northants lie within the area covered by the local VAT office at Peterborough. There were 15,097 businesses registered at this office at the end of 1981 and 19,070 at the end of 1986.

Dredging

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many firms were licensed to carry out industrial dredging off the United Kingdom coast in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lawson: The number of firms to which licences have been issued by the Crown Estate Commissioners to extract sand and gravel off the United Kingdom coastline is as follows:

Year	*Firms*
1979	19
1980	20
1981	19

Year	Firms
1982	20
1983	19
1984	19
1985	20
1986	20
1987	20

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many firms were licensed to carry out dredging off the North sea coast in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lawson: The number of firms to which licences have been issued by the Crown Estate Commissioners to extract sand and gravel off the North sea coast is as follows:

Year	Firms
1979	9
1980	9
1981	9
1982	9
1983	8
1984	8
1985	8
1986	8
1987	8

Inflation

Mr. Latham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on inflationary pressures within the economy; and what action he envisages in that regard.

Mr. Lawson: The central objective of economic policy is the elimination of inflation.

Life Assurance

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when, in the course of his review of the taxation of life assurance, he will be consulting the industry and other interested parties.

Mr. Lawson: Work done so far on the review of the taxation of life assurance has highlighted a number of unsatisfactory features. The present tax regime has built up piecemeal over many years and has proved increasingly out of line with developments. The incidence of tax between offices is very uneven; some offices pay very much less tax than might be expected given their profits and the investment returns they earn for their policy holders; and in consequence the yield from the industry overall is also less than might have been expected. For many policy holders, the current rules may even so mean a higher effective burden—particularly on their capital gains—than they would face if investing in other ways. And there are many technical weaknesses and uncertainties which call into question the effectiveness of the regime.

With my agreement the Inland Revenue is today publishing a consultative document which examines the position in detail and sets out a number of different ways in which the issues could be tackled.

Economic Growth

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the growth in the volume of trade, both inward and outward, between the United Kingdom and mainland Europe in the next 12 months.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* No specific forecasts of these flows are available.

Financial Institutions (Investments)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the cost of rebasing to 1982 market value investments held by financial institutions which will not benefit from the 1982 rebasing under the capital gains tax provisions in the Finance (No. 2) Bill 1988;

(2) if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of an indexation allowance for investments held by financial institutions which do not benefit from the capital gains tax allowance.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answers 13 June 1988]:* I regret that the information needed to provide estimates for these proposals is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Tax Evasion

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was spent by his Department to prevent tax evasion in each year since 1979, in cash and real terms, at 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 9 June 1988]:* The estimated cost of resources devoted by the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise to preventing tax evasion was as follows:

	Inland Revenue		*Customs and Excise*	
	£ million	*£ million (1987-88 prices)*	*£ million*	*£ million (1987-88 prices)*
1978-79	*	*	46·7	93·9
1979-80	*	*	52·6	91·3
1980-81	*	*	65·9	98·4
1981-82	*	*	74·3	99·5
1982-83	*	*	80·1	100·1
1983-84	54·6	65·2	89·8	107·2
1984-85	63·2	71·8	102·5	116·5
1985-86	67·7	72·6	113·6	121·9
1986-87	71·4	74·2	130·4	135·6
1987-88	84·1	84·1	151·2	151·2

Notes:

The inland Revenue figures relate to accounts investigation work in tax districts, investigations by specialist units and checks by the Revenue's PAYE auditors. Costs for 1982-83 and earlier years were not recorded in a way which permits extraction of the figures requested; the 1983-84

figure is also not strictly comparable to those for later years.

The Customs and Excise figures relate to the overall cost of VAT control officers and specialist staff employed in VAT fraud investigation. Control officers deal mainly with legitimate traders but equally have a duty to pursue VAT fraud. The 1987-88 figure is provisional.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will identify *(a)* liaison arrangements between his Department and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil emergency planning boards and committees, concerning civil emergency and home defence planning, and *(b)* the extent of collaborative work carried out with these bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* Any matters affecting the Treasury are covered by the Home Office in its liaison role with NATO.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will identify the terms of reference of work on *(a)* civil emergencies and *(b)* home defence planning carried out in his Department, the number of staff involved and the annual budgets for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* The role of my Department in an emergency situation would be to maintain economic activity. The staff and cost implications are small and not separately identifiable within existing budgets.

TRANSPORT

Dredging

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many vessels were operating as industrial dredgers off the coast of the United Kingdom for each of the years from 1980 to 1987;

(2) how many vessels were operating as industrial dredgers off the North sea coast for each of the years from 1980 to 1987.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information is not available within my Department. Figures from Crown Estate Commissioners, who issue licences, indicate that 55 industrial dredgers operate around the United Kingdom coast. Of these, about 20 operate off the North sea coast. A more detailed breakdown of these numbers is not available.

Driving Tuition

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to maintain high standards of driving tuition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Good instruction is important for good driving skills and behaviour. The Department has agreed with the national instructors associations five measures to help maintain high standards in the compulsory registration system for driving instructors. They are:

(a) introduction of "banding" into the written examination to ensure an adequate level of knowledge over the whole syllabus;

(b) expansion of the syllabus of the written examination to include questions on the theory and practice of learning, teaching and assessment;

(c) a limit of three attempts at each of the two practical qualifying tests within a period of two years from passing the written examination:

(d) extension of the minimum period of cancellation of tests without forfeiture of fee from three days to 10;

(e) targeting checks of registered instructors more effectively on those who need it.

These measures will be introduced progressively over the next nine months.

We are also co-operating with the national instructors associations in their development of an industry-approved register of establishments that train instructors, including the appropriate standards for instructor training courses.

These measures are designed to maintain and improve driving standards and to reduce accidents.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Higginson Committee (Report)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the total cost of establishing, servicing, and publishing the report of the Higginson committee on the future of A-levels.

Mrs. Rumbold: The total salary, and other non-pay costs, including travel, of establishing and servicing the Higginson committee and publishing its report on the future of A-levels was £68,234, which included £7,584 for printing.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Industrial Investment

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will estimate the amount spent per head in industrial support and investment promotion in *(a)* the northern region and *(b)* Scotland.

Mr. Atkins: The amount spent per head on industrial support and investment promotion as regional preferential assistance, in the most recent year for which figures are available, is as follows:

Expenditure per head of civilian working population, 1986-87

	£
Northern Region	96·6
Scotland	99·6

Notes:

1. The expenditure figures are based on regional development grants, regional selective assistance (under section 7 of the Industry Act 1982), expenditure on land and factories by the English Industrial Estates Corporation, the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

2. Civilian working population comprises employees in employment, the self-employed and the unemployed.

Inward Investment

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his latest estimate of the number of jobs created in Scotland, England and Wales as a result of investment by non-United Kingdom European Community companies since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: The following are the Invest in Britain Bureau (IBB) figures for the number of jobs expected to be

created or safeguarded, in the long term, by inward investment projects announced by companies from member states of the European Community, other than the United Kingdom, in each year since 1979 for England, Wales and Scotland. The figures are based on information provided by the companies themselves and include only those jobs associated with inward investment projects currently known to the IBB.

The number of jobs (created or safeguarded) associated with inward investment projects announced by companies from other member states of the European Community

	England		*Scotland*		*Wales*	
	Created	*Safeguarded*	*Created*	*Safeguarded*	*Created*	*Safeguarded*
1979	2,574	n.a.	158	n.a.	0	n.a.
1980	2,517	n.a.	405	n.a.	105	n.a.
1981	977	n.a.	331	n.a.	17	n.a.
1982	1,266	n.a.	152	n.a.	56	n.a.
1983	666	2,252	151	705	255	10
1984	1,302	7,026	459	68	683	500
1985	2,236	845	743	393	461	10
1986	3,398	1,237	524	114	431	0
1987	3,483	1,322	336	1,125	510	120

n.a. = Not available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of public expenditure was devoted to overseas aid in 1979 and in 1987.

Mr. Chris Patten: Gross public expenditure on overseas aid represented 1·25 per cent. of total public expenditure in 1979 and 0·90 per cent. in 1987.

ENERGY

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will seek to obtain for his departmental library the report by Large and Associates No. LA1817/274 concerning the investigation of allegations of malpractices at British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., Sellafield, issued in May.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that the report to which the hon. Member refers was commissioned privately from Large and Associates by the two organisations Greenpeace and Cumbrians Opposed to a Radioactive Environment (CORE). Those organisations have not sent a copy of it to my Department.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what will the final expected cost of the capping of the near-surface trenches of radioactive wastes at the Drigg dump site near Sellafield.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

B205 Reprocessing Plant

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the chief nuclear installations inspector is satisfied with the current reporting arrangements concerning the entering and leaving of the B205 reprocessing plant, in terms of the accountability of the whereabouts of workers at the plant.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This matter was raised during the Health and Safety Executive's safety audit of BNFL Sellafield in 1986. BNFL subsequently introduced improvements to the health physics control arrangements at the entrance to B205. The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate is considering, with BNFL, the need for further improvements and is awaiting the results of an experimental system in use on a new plant on the site.

WALES

Welsh Water Authority

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the name, age and occupation of each member of the Welsh water authority.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is given in the following table:

Name	*Age (January 1988)*	*Occupation*
Mr. John Elfed Jones, CBE	55	Chairman
Professor Ronald Walter Edwards	58	Professor of Applied Ecology
Mr. Timothy Knowles	50	Managing Director
Mr. Gareth Edwards, MBE	41	Company Director
Major Howard Robert Jackson	67	Farmer
Councillor Sir John Cotterill	53	Farmer
Councillor Graham Jones	55	Steel Worker
Councillor John Thompson, JP	56	Farmer
Councillor Lloyd Turnbull	54	Company Director
Councillor William Elwyn Conway	63	Club Steward
Miss Elizabeth Jean Muir	40	Marketing Consultant
Mr. John William Ray	55	Managing Director
Dr. Martin Owen	41	Executive Director and Group Treasurer

Perinatal Intensive Care

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce his proposals for a perinatal

intensive care service for Wales and the proposed role within that service of the Morriston hospital special care baby unit.

Mr. Grist: I have agreed in principle the designation of a regional perinatal intensive care centre at the University Hospital of Wales. To advise on the operational structure of the centre and its relationship with other services in Wales for new-born babies, including the need for satellite units, I am setting up an expert advisory group under the chairmanship of Professor C. E. Stroud, Professor of Child Health, King's College school of medicine and dentistry.

DRIVE

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many projects have taken advantage of the DRIVE initiative *(a)* in the area convered by Mid Wales Development, and *(b)* in the area covered by the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Peter Walker: At 31 March 1988 52 projects had accepted offers of assistance from Mid Wales Development and 27 from the Welsh Development Agency.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drugs

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received for the decriminalisation of narcotic drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: From time to time the Home Office receives representations for the decriminalisation of certain activities relating to controlled drugs. We take the view that action on these lines would be irresponsible.

Drugs Charges (Mr. Alan Waite and others)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the reasons for the dropping of drugs charges against Mr. Alan Waite, Mr Geoffrey Pope, Mr. Marcel Mullins, Mr. Mark Wittaker, Mr. Paul Brown and Ms. Theresa James.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that, following arrests in 1984, the charges in these cases were dropped in view of doubts about the reliability of police evidence upon which the prosecutions depended.

Drugs (Police Operations)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the implications for the management of police operations relating to dangerous drugs in London of the conviction of Inspector Norman McGowan and Police Constable Michael Buchanan for theft of drugs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The management of police operations is a matter for chief officers. Since the conviction of Mr. McGowan and Mr. Buchanan, the coming into force of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 has introduced new procedures for the treatment of suspects. Since then also, and following a major review of the organisation and management of the Metropolitan police, area drug squads have been established which are under the supervision of an officer whose responsibilities extend beyond drugs matters. I understand that both these changes have helped to improve the supervision and management of officers engaged in the investigation of drug-related crime.

Prison Population

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the prison population is represented by ethnic minorities.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: According to the records held centrally, on 31 December 1987 about 14 per cent. of the population of prison department establishments in England and Wales was from the ethnic minority communities. More detailed information, for 30 June 1987 and previous years, was published in table 6 of Home Office statistical bulletin 8/88 on "The Prison Population in 1987", copies of which are in the Library.

Police (Vetting Powers)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will provide a list of the legislation and other powers under which the police claim the authority to vet members of the public; and if he will summarise the reasons why such vetting takes place.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In most cases the police do not vet members of the public. The police supply information about an individual to other organisations which would decide in the light of this information, and any other information in their possession, whether a person was suitable for the post applied for.

The principles governing the disclosure of police information are set out in section 17 of the consolidated circular to the police on crime and kindred matters and in Home Office circular 45/1986, copies of which are in the Library.

Information from police records is supplied only where there are important considerations of public interest to justify departure from the general rule of confidentiality. These are, broadly speaking:

(i) where there is a statutory obligation to provide information;
(ii) to the courts for the administration of justice;
(iii) to ensure probity in the administration of law;
(iv) for the protection of vulnerable members of society; and
(v) national security.

Electronic Tagging

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received on the proposals to introduce electronic tags both for defendants on bail and as an alternative sentence to imprisonment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce electronic tagging on an experimental basis for remand prisoners.

Mr. John Patten: Letters from hon. Members and interested organisations have suggested various uses for electronic monitoring, including checking the whereabouts of people remanded on bail and as an element in non-custodial sentences. We are examining the equipment which is available.

Drunkenness

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to control drunken behaviour amongst young people.

Mr. Hurd: The Government entirely accept the importance of this issue. That is one reason why we set up the ministerial group on alcohol misuse under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council. The Licensing Act 1988 tightens the offence of selling alcohol to under-age drinkers, increases the penalties for those found guilty of doing so and makes it an offence for wholesalers to sell alcohol to people under 18. We hope that these measures will increase the number of successful prosecutions for offences connected with under-age drinking.

Action has been taken on two recent reports to the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention which made proposals for dealing with this problem. Successful pilot schemes based on the recommendations of the 1986 working group report on violence associated with licensed premises have taken place in several towns. Progress in implementing the recommendations of the 1987 working group report on young people and alcohol was reported by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 26 April at columns *85-86*.

The recent ACPO survey of disorder in non-metropolitan areas, carried out in consultation with the Home Office, confirmed the police view that much disorder is drink-related. We are considering urgently with the police the problems they have in dealing with this sort of disorder and what measures, including the wide dissemination of the results of successful crime prevention schemes, can best be taken to help the police tackle them.

Young Offenders

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy towards the future involvement of the probation service in providing alternatives to custody for young offenders.

Mr. John Patten: The Government would like to build on the experience of the probation service in supervising juvenile and young adult offenders in the community. We are encouraging and enabling the probation service to develop programmes for young offenders aged 17 to 20 which make them face up to the consequences of the offending behaviour, both for themselves and for their victims. We are strengthening community service orders. We want also to examine the scope for exercising more control over offenders in the community; punishing them for the harm they have done; enabling them to make recompense and helping them to tackle problems which stand in the way of their becoming law-abiding citizens. The probation service will have a central role in these developments and we are already having constructive discussions with it about our proposals which we hope to publish before long.

Illegal Travellers' Encampments

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what discussions he has had with the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police about the use of Public Order Act powers to remove illegal travellers' encampments; and with what result;

(2) on how many occasions Public Order Act powers have been used in the Metropolitan police area to remove illegal travellers' encampments; and in which local authority areas.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is an operational matter for the senior police officer present at the scene of an unlawful occupation to decide whether or not in all the circumstances it would be appropriate to use the power in section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986. I understand that the Metropolitan police do not collect statistics on the use of the power and the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Football Hooliganism

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the possible extension of the terms of section 9 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 to cover crimes of violence committed by British citizens outside the jurisdiction as a means of combating football hooliganism by Britons abroad.

Mr. John Patten: I would not wish to rule out of consideration any effective means of tackling the problem of violence by British football supporters abroad. Given the evidential difficulties, however, it seems doubtful whether extraterritorial jurisdiction would in fact be an effective approach to the problem, or offer sufficient advantage to justify such a radical departure from the essentially territoral basis of our criminal law.

Hooliganism

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to enable the courts in appropriate cases to withdraw, for any period to be fixed by them, the right to hold a British passport of anyone convicted of a hooligan-type offence and who, in their opinion, is likely to bring Britain into disrepute if allowed to travel abroad.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: As part of the measures announced by the Government on 16 June to deal with problems of football hooliganism, we shall be considering whether the courts should have powers in the longer term to impose restrictions on overseas travel following conviction for an offence.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what will be the position of a trainee who is receiving income support on the proposed employment

training scheme, whose spouse or partner gets *(a)* a job for more than 24 hours a week, or *(b)* a job for less than 24 hours a week, during the trainee's time on the programme; whether such persons will be obliged to inform his Department of these change in circumstance; and what impact the spouse or partner's earnings will have on the trainee's training allowance.

Mr. Nicholls: All those in receipt of income support, including employment training participants, are obliged to inform the DHSS of any change in their, or their partner's circumstances. Income support can normally only remain payable so long as neither partner works for 24 hours a week or more. A partner's wages from part-time employment will be taken into account after allowing the appropriate earnings disregard (£5 or £15 per week). If the income support entitlement of an employment training participant is reduced, the basic training allowance payable may also be reduced to ensure an element of income support remains in payment and entitlement to "passported benefits" is safeguarded.

YTS

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if it is his intention to renew contracts to organisations which have failed to gain approved training organisation status in relation to YTS.

Mr. Cope: The Training Commission which administers YTS does not intend to renew contracts to organisations which have failed to gain approved training organisation status.

Young People

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if organisations which have failed to meet minimum standards of the Manpower Services Commission are still being paid to offer places to young people.

Mr. Cope: No. All organisations providing YTS must achieve approved training organisation status. Where a YTS provider has had its application for approved training organisation status rejected, and its rights of appeal have been exercised without the rejection being reversed, the Training Commission moves to close the contract at the earliest permissible date. In these cases also steps are taken to require recruitment to cease. Where closure occurs, existing trainees are transferred to other places offering suitable training as soon as practicable. In cases where a YTS provider is in breach of contract, urgent remedies are sought under threat of contract closure, or contracts are closed immediately or with a period of notice. During closure procedure it is standard practice to require recruitment to cease.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Warsaw Pact (Verification)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement, in the context of United Kingdom membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the offer of on-site physical verification of Warsaw pact bases, depots and troop deployments in the conventional weapon sector, with less than 12 hours' notice, made by the Soviet negotiators to the United States delegation during the recent Moscow summit.

Mr. Mellor: We understand that during the summit the Soviet Union proposed an exchange of data on force levels accompanied by verification through on-site inspections, as well as elimination of asymmetries. This movement towards the Western approach in the conventional arms control field is welcome. An Alliance priority now is to reach a balanced outcome in the CSCE review conference in Vienna which will allow the conventional stability talks to commence. Any agreement reached in the talks will certainly require an exchange of data, verified by on-site inspection.

Nuclear Tests (Verification)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to resume active negotiations with the United States of America and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on verifications of nuclear tests following the joint verification plans announced by Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev at the Moscow summit.

Mr. Mellor: No. The United States/Soviet joint verification experiments on nuclear testing are bilateral and relate to the bilateral United States/Soviet threshold test ban treaty.

Asia/Pacific Conference

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department received any invitation to send a representative or observer to the conference for a nuclear-free Asia/Pacific in Hong Kong on 8 to 12 June.

Mr. Mellor: No.

SCOTLAND

Health Boards

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the total spending on mental health for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The table shows health boards' expenditure on mental health in each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87. Information is not available for years before 1981-82.

Scottish health boards' expenditure on mental health[1]

(£'000)

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Argyll and Clyde	17,037	18,098	19,173	19,899	21,006	21,967
Ayrshire and Arran	6,636	7,299	8,444	9,349	10,284	11,793
Borders	3,498	3,897	3,953	4,207	4,470	4,616

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Dumfries and Galloway	6,798	7,361	8,127	8,949	9,146	9,531
Fife	11,100	12,320	13,787	15,240	17,311	18,727
Forth Valley	[2]14,140	[2]15,238	16,171	17,055	18,694	21,343
Grampian	19,250	20,464	21,444	22,816	24,647	25,910
Greater Glasgow	48,263	50,615	54,080	57,562	61,175	64,423
Highland	8,451	8,524	9,083	9,555	9,877	10,320
Lanarkshire	14,844	16,067	16,967	19,284	20,693	21,842
Lothian	30,847	32,651	33,218	34,768	36,358	38,938
Orkney[3]	11	17	17	18	20	22
Shetland	44	49	52	116	122	155
Tayside	21,698	23,015	24,096	25,446	26,452	27,319
Western Isles	38	22	43	49	60	n.a.
Total	[2]202,655	[2]215,637	228,655	244,313	260,315	[4]276,906

[1] Mental Health covers Mental Illness, Care of the Elderly with Mental Disability, and Mental Handicap.
[2] On a different basis from later years.
[3] Excludes Care of the Elderly with Mental Disability.
[4] Excludes Western Isles.
n.a.—Not available.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the spending on mental handicap for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The table shows health boards' expenditure on mental handicap in each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87. Information is not available for years before 1981-82.

Scottish health boards' expenditure on mental handicap

£ thousands

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Argyll and Clyde	3,107	3,273	3,317	3,619	3,780	3,801
Ayrshire and Arran	856	1,011	1,104	1,162	1,295	1,522
Borders	662	743	795	781	729	697
Dumfries and Galloway	282	338	600	1,237	1,084	932
Fife	4,527	4,953	5,493	5,510	5,800	6,052
Forth Valley	7,239	7,944	8,379	8,944	9,833	10,866
Grampian	5,307	5,770	6,107	6,520	6,956	7,216
Greater Glasgow	9,548	9,997	10,417	10,835	11,628	12,901
Highland	2,275	2,382	2,610	2,702	2,704	2,861
Lanarkshire	3,987	4,340	4,557	5,374	5,931	6,421
Lothian	7,329	7,504	8,046	8,976	9,458	8,405
Orkney[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tayside	5,022	5,187	5,619	5,864	6,152	6,430
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Total	50,142	53,443	57,045	61,525	65,351	[2]68,105

[1] Expenditure on mental handicap is included in returns of expenditure on mental illness.
[2] Excludes Western Isles.
n/a = Not available.

Child Care

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has in relation to the number of social workers, teachers, medical staff, ancillary staff and other members of the public in Scotland, who have been vetted by police before they are employed in jobs where they work with children; and whether his Department keeps information as to the number of people refused employment and the reasons therefor.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Licence Holders (Vetting)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has in relation to the number of licence holders who have been vetted by police before a licence is given; and whether his Department keeps information as to the type of licence applied for, the number of people refused a licence and the reasons therefor.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are many different activities which are, or may be, subject to licensing under a wide range of enactments. In some cases —for example, under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 or the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982—the chief constable has a statutory right to object to the grant or renewal of a licence. No information is collected centrally about the number of licences granted or refused under these enactments.

Radioactivity (Monitoring)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department conducts any environmental monitoring *(a)* alone and *(b)* in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence at the ports of Rosyth, Holy Loch and Coulport, to assess the radiological impact of nuclear-powered and nuclear-capable Royal Navy and United States navy ships that use the dockyards.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Marine monitoring for radioactivity in these areas is undertaken both by MOD

and by MAFF whose programme provides an independent check on behalf of the Secretary of State for Scotland. MOD publish results of its own surveys while the MAFF work is included in aquatic environment monitoring reports entitled, "Radioactivity in Surface and Coastal Waters of the British Isles," which are in the Library. The MAFF reports, which include assessments of the monitoring results, confirm that the levels of radioactivity around the naval establishments in Scotland remain very low and of no significance in radiological terms.

Scottish Homes

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his decision to commission Coopers and Lybrand to handle the establishment of Scottish Homes, including the terms of reference of his agreement with that firm, the fee to be paid and the reason why he has decided not to have the work done by civil servants; and what relevant experience Coopers and Lybrand has in the provision and management of rented housing to meet social needs in Scotland or elsewhere.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member will recall that I informed the First Scottish Standing Committee on 4 February, during its consideration of the Housing (Scotland) Bill, that we were likely to commission consultants to assist Scottish Homes to produce proposals in relation to its structure below board level. In pursuit of that intention, eight firms of consultants were invited in May to produce proposals in relation to the task of advising the board and chief executive of Scottish Homes on possible options for the organisational structure; and on an implementation and development plan in relation to the action necessary to enable Scottish Homes to establish itself as fully operational. Coopers and Lybrand was selected to carry out the task after thorough consideration of the proposals submitted by consultants, which involved the general manager of the Scottish Special Housing Association and the director of the Housing Corporation in Scotland as well as officials of the Scottish Office. It has been asked to complete the work by 1 September 1988.

The use of consultants for work of this type by Government Departments is not uncommon and recognises their specialist knowledge in relation to large-scale organisational and project management tasks, which is not widely available within the Civil Service. Coopers and Lybrand has a wide range of relevant experience including work for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Scottish Special Housing Association and a number of local authorities in Scotland and elsewhere. It will work in close consultation with the Scottish Development Department, the Housing Corporation in Scotland and the Scottish Special Housing Association; and with the chairman-designate and chief executive designate of Scottish Homes once they have been appointed.

The estimated cost of the work is a matter of commercial confidence, which it would be inappropriate to disclose.

Fish Farms

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will describe the scope and remit of the current review of the present arrangements for fish farming applications; when he expects it to be completed; and if its findings will be published in full.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend is reviewing the operation of the consultation arrangements introduced by the Crown Estate Commissioners in 1986 and is taking into account representations from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and a number of other organisations about the procedures currently operated by the commissioners in relation to the establishment of offshore fish farms. The review is not yet complete but he hopes to announce its conclusions before long. No decision about the form of announcement has yet been taken.

Women Prisoners

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* adult and *(b)* young offender women prisoners received accredited vocational training during 1986.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No accredited vocational training courses were held at Cornton Vale during 1986.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of women prisoners in 1986 had had psychiatric in-patient treatment prior to their trial and sentence; and what percentage of these women were mothers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not available in the form requested. Details of previous psychiatric treatment of inmates in penal establishments is obtained, if necessary, in individual cases but is not recorded centrally.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of women prisoners in 1986 *(a)* had previously been in prison and *(b)* had previous convictions and non-custodial sentences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The only statistical information held centrally on the previous sentences and convictions of inmates is obtained from the inmates on reception into the penal establishment and may not be completely reliable. The figures from this source are as follows:

Women received under sentence into prisons in Scotland: 1986

Percentage admitting:	*per cent.*
Previous direct prison sentence	60·8
Other direct custodial sentence (but not direct prison sentence)	4·2
Other previous sentence only (non-custodial or custodial sentence in default of fine/compensation order)	14·1
No previous sentence	20·9

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* adult and *(b)* young offender women prisoners acquired qualifications; and if he will list those qualifications.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The question cannot be answered in precisely the terms stated. The position in relation to individual educational qualifications gained during the past two years was as follows:

1986	*gained by 13 candidates*
O grades	23
Highers	Nil
1987	*gained by 9 candidates*
O grades	17
Highers	1

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what percentage of men with no previous convictions were sent to prison in the most recent five years for which statistics are available;

(2) what percentage of women with no previous convictions were sent to prison in the most recent five years for which statistics are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The only available statistical information on previous convictions is obtained from inmates on reception into the penal establishment and may not be completely reliable. The figures from this source are as follows:

Adults received under sentence in prisons in Scotland: Percentage admitting no previous convictions, 1983-87

	Men	*Women*
1983	3·4	7·4
1984	3·5	7·9
1985	5·3	15·3
1986	6·7	20·9
1987	6·2	18·7

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of convicted *(a)* men and *(b)* women were sent to prison in (i) 1977 and (ii) 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is given in the table:

Percentage of adults, with a charge proved against them, given a sentence of imprisonment

Year	*Men*	*Women*
1977	5·1	1·7
1987	8·0	3·5

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women convicted of crimes of violence were sent to prison in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is given in the table:

Percentage of adults convicted of a crime of violence given a sentence of imprisonment

Year	*Men*	*Women*
1983	42·6	7·7
1984	41·4	7·3
1985	45·4	8·8
1986	43·7	9·3
1987	40·0	9·6

Prisoners (Facilities)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what physical training and recreation activities are available to *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A wide variety of facilities for physical education and recreation are available in all penal establishments in Scotland. Usage by individual inmates is influenced by considerations of security and control as well as priorities of need.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which of the vocational courses of the industrial training boards, currently available to *(a)* adult and *(b)* young offender male prisoners, are also available to the same categories of women prisoners.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At present there is no fully accredited vocational training available for female inmates at Cornton Vale, although skill training is provided in sewing, garment making, cookery and horticulture. Plans are well in hand to introduce properly accredited courses in catering and hairdressing in the near future.

Cornton Vale Prison

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions the electronic link between the central office and each room in Cornton Vale women's prison malfunctioned between 1985 and 1987; and what was the average time taken for repairs to be carried out.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The system malfunctioned on 34 occasions in 1985, 32 in 1986 and 40 in 1987. The average time taken to complete repairs was $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. When it was thought the work on individual rooms might take more than one hour, the inmate was moved temporarily to another room.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average number of days of in-service training provided to staff at Cornton Vale prison in 1986.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not immediately available, but I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many body and strip searches in Cornton Vale in 1986 and 1987 were carried out on prisoners who were pregnant.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women prisoners who gave birth while imprisoned in Cornton Vale in 1985, 1986 and 1987, respectively, *(a)* kept their babies with them following the births and *(b)* did not keep their babies following birth; and what was the length of sentence served by each such mother following the births.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of inmates who gave birth while in the custody of Cornton Vale was:

Year	*Inmates*
1985	6
1986	3
1987	4

Two of these inmates were released from custody directly from hospital without returning to Cornton Vale. Of the 11 who did return to Cornton Vale, 10 returned with their babies and one did not.

Of the 11 who returned to Cornton Vale, one has not yet been released and the following is the length of time spent in custody after the birth and before liberation by the remaining 10:

	Inmates
Under 2 months	3
3 months	2
5 months	1
6 months	2
7 months	1
15 months	1

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland until what age babies are permitted to remain with their mothers in Cornton Vale prison.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton In general children do not remain at Cornton Vale with their mothers beyond the age of 12 months.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of (i) female staff and (ii) male staff at Cornton Vale women's prison in 1986 were on sick leave for *(a)* less than one week, *(b)* between one week and up to one month, *(c)* between one month and up to six months and *(d)* for six months or more.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not immediately available but I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Prisoners (Photographs)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether women prisoners who are mothers are able to keep photographs of their children during the course of their imprisonment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes.

Prisoners (Children)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what percentage of mothers imprisoned in 1986 in Cornton Vale prison, whose children were in local authority care, were visited by their children at least once during their imprisonment; what was the average length of time, from initial imprisonment before such a visit took place; and whether visits took place at the usual visiting hours and in the visiting area used by mothers whose children were not in care;

(2) what percentage of mothers imprisoned in Cornton Vale prison in 1986, who had access orders in respect of their children, fulfilled those orders *(a)* in full and *(b)* partially during the course of the mother's imprisonment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not available in the form requested. Visits by children in local authority care to mothers who are inmates at Cornton Vale are arranged in appropriate cases on an individual basis and in consultation with the relevant local authority social work department. Such visits would normally take place in less formal surroundings and outwith usual visiting hours and are a significant feature of the regime at Cornton Vale.

Detailed information on children in local authority care subject to access orders, or visits by children subject to such access, is not routinely collected in respect of those admitted to Cornton Vale.

Prisoners (Children)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what percentage of women imprisoned in 1986 were mothers whose children were in local authority care before their trial and conviction; and what percentage of these women were single mothers;

(2) what percentage of women prisoners in 1986 were mothers with children under school leaving age; and what percentage of those children, while their mothers were in custody *(a)* continued living in the same family situation and *(b)* moved into local authority care;

(3) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women prisoners presently have children requiring to be taken into care.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available.

Details of child care arrangements may be volunteered by the inmate or may be obtained for social work or other purposes in individual cases. Such details, however, are not routinely collected or centrally recorded in respect of those admitted to penal establishments in Scotland.

Prisoners (Outside Work)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners were employed outside their prisons in 1986.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The percentage of male prisoners employed outside their prisons during 1986 was 1·2 per cent. No female prisoners were so employed.

Prisoners (Disciplinary Action)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the amount of disciplinary action against *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners; and what proportion of such disciplinary action in each case was for the mutiny or violence category of offence.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest available information on numbers and types of disciplinary offences by inmates is given in appendix 5 of the "Prisons in Scotland—Report for 1986" (Cm. 223), copies of which are available in the Library.

In 1986 there were no disciplinary findings or punishments on inmates for the offence of "mutiny". There is no category of offence of "violence". Figures are given in the "Prisons in Scotland" report for specific offences of assaulting officers or assaults on other inmates, and for the general offence of "offending against good order and discipline" which may include other acts of violence such as fighting.

Children in Care

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* girls and *(b)* boys, between the ages of 10 and 16 years, held in care have committed no crimes.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is estimated that at 31 March 1987 60·5 per cent. of boys and 86·5 per cent. of girls in local authority care were there for reasons not related to the commission of crimes or offences.

Hostel Accommodation

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what amount of hostel accommodation is available for *(a)* men and *(b)* women offenders; and what facilities for children are available at these establishments.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Offenders' hostels grant-aided by my right hon. and learned Friend under section 79 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 presently offer a total of 80 places, 17 of them for women; they do not contain accommodation for children. Information is not held centrally about other residential accommodation catering for offenders which may be provided by local authorities or voluntary bodies.

Prisoners (Meat Allowance)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will consider increasing the current meat allowance for prisoners in Cornton Vale prison; and if he will state the current allowance for prisoners in other prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The current allowance of meat for prisoners is the same at Cornton Vale as in other prisons in Great Britain. It is based on properly balanced dietary scales for inmates as a whole. I see no reason to change it.

Deportation

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the light of violence against persons of ethnic minorities awaiting either deportation to the country of their origin or appealing against deportation in Her Majesty's prisons in Scotland, he will take steps to safeguard them by placing them in establishments outwith Her Majesty's prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* There is no evidence of widespread or systematic abuse against inmates of ethnic origin. Prison staff are particularly vigilant in detection of abuse against all inmates, including ethnic minorities. All instances of inmate assault, for whatever reason, are fully investigated, including police involvement where sufficient evidence exists to bring charges against the suspected perpetrators.

From 1 January to 1 May 1988 only 13 people were held in detention in Scottish prisons, at any one time, under the provisions of the Immigration Act 1971. Such a small number does not justify the provision of special accommodation. However, I have asked Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons to advise me on what improvements, if any, might be made to the arrangements for accommodating such detainees.

Cancers

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest figures for the incidence of all types of cancers, including leukaemia, for all age groups, broken down to the smallest geographical areas available; and if he will also give the comparable figures for similar periods over the past 10 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 9 June 1988]:* This information could not be provided except at disproportionate expense.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the incidence of cancers in babies in Scotland; how this compares with previous years, broken down by area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 9 June 1988]:* The tables set out the information requested, by health board, for registered cases of cancer in children aged less than one year at date of registration over the period 1977 to 1986.

Cancer registrations in children aged <1, by health board: 1977-1986

Health board	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Argyll and Clyde	1	—	1	2	—	—	3	1	—	1
Ayrshire and Arran	1	—	1	2	4	1	2	1	—	2
Borders	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	1
Fife	2	—	1	1	—	—	1	2	2	2
Forth Valley	—	—	1	—	2	—	1	1	—	—
Grampian	—	1	—	2	2	1	3	2	3	—
Greater Glasgow	4	2	1	3	2	2	2	3	1	—
Highland	—	1	—	—	1	1	1	—	—	1
Lanarkshire	—	—	4	5	—	4	2	—	4	1
Lothian	4	1	1	3	—	2	1	—	2	2
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tayside	—	1	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Scotland	13	6	10	19	12	11	17	12	12	10

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what monitoring systems he has initiated, in pursuance of his commitment to providing equality of opportunity for all employees in, and potential recruits to, the Ministry of Defence to comply with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively; and what such exercises have revealed concerning the employment of people from ethnic minorities and of women respectively.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence, in common with other Government Departments, has been carrying out a voluntary survey of the ethnic origins of all non-industrial and industrial staff. The survey of non-industrial staff is being conducted in six phases. To date, three phases have been completed, and of the

respondents 1·9 per cent. are from the ethnic minorities. The survey of industrial staff commenced this month and the results are not likely to be available for some time. The ethnic monitoring of recruitment commenced in 1987 and as yet no results are available.

As regards women, there are no specific monitoring exercises currently taking place but records are kept which show the proportion of males and females in each grade. Consideration is being given to ways in which the progress of women and ethnic staff can be effectively monitored.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has established an equal opportunities unit; and whether his equal opportunities efforts are co-ordinated by an equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes.

Harrier

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the integrity of Royal Air Force Harrier wing structures; and what investigations are currently being made into defects in these structures.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am fully satisfied that the integrity of the Harrier wing is being maintained through a planned programme of inspection and repair.

Tornado

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the Tornado F3 aircraft currently in store at Royal Air Force St. Athan will be held there awaiting modification and upgrading.

Mr. Sainsbury: All the F3 aircraft currently in storage at RAF St. Anthan will receive modifications to bring their capability and maintainability to a level comparable with the latest production aircraft.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the delivery rate for Tornado F3 aircraft was first agreed with British Aerospace; and what changes in that agreed rate have occured since that date.

Mr. Sainsbury: The delivery rate for the Tornado programme was first agreed with Panavia, the Tornado prime contractor, in 1974. In 1982, following full consultation with Germany and Italy, it was agreed that the peak annual delivery rate for the Tornado should be adjusted to 44 for the United Kingdom. Although there have been some changes since then in the balance of deliveries between Tornado variants to accommodate export sales requirements, there has been no change to the agreed peak delivery rate.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of upgrading the 18 RAF Tornado F2s to F2A standard.

Mr. Sainsbury: The estimated cost of upgrading 18 RAF Tornados F2 to F2A standard is about £20 million.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the sale of the RAF Tornado F2 and F3 aircraft, currently in store at RAF St. Athan, to Italy.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Departmental Staff (South-east England)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to reduce the proportion of the total manpower of his Department that is based in the south-east of England from its present level.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is established policy in the Department that every effort should be made to relocate work from London and the south-east to the regions whenever it proves operationally and economically viable. Whenever potential opportunities for relocation arise they are carefully considered.

Gruinard Island

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the membership of the independent advisory group that endorsed the conclusion that Gruinard island was safe for disposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Independent Advisory Group (IAG) on Gruinard Island was appointed in 1985 under the chairmanship of Professor W. D. P. Stewart, BSc, PhD, DSc, FIBiol, FRSE, FRS, head of microbiological sciences at Dundee university. Its other members were:

J. P. Duguid, CBE, BSc, MD, FRCPath.,
Emeritus Professor of Bacteriology,
University of Dundee.

A. J. Stevens, MA, BVSc, MRCVS, Dip.Bact.,
Formerly Director, Central Veterinary Laboratories,
M.A.F.F, Weybridge, Surrey.

J. A. Strong, CBE, MD, FRCP, FRCPE, FRSE,
Emeritus Professor of Medicine, University of Edinburgh.
Past President, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.

T. S. West, CBE, BSc, PhD, DSc, CChem., FRSC, FRSE,
Formerly Director, Macaulay Institute for Soil Research, Aberdeen.
Honorary Professor of Chemistry and Soil Sciences, University of Aberdeen.

J. G. White, MSc, PhD, CBiol., MIBiol.,
Adviser to the Director on Soil Partial Sterilants,
AFRC Institute of Horticultural Research,
Wellesbourne, Warwick.

J. A. N. Emslie, MB, ChB, MD, Dip.Bact.,
Consultant Epidemiologist,
Ruchill Hospital, Glasgow.
(Observer on behalf of the Scottish Home and Health Department).

A. J. Alexander, BSc,
Department of Biological Sciences,
University of Dundee.
Secretary.

The IAG reviewed and endorsed the plans prepared by my Department's chemical defence establishment (CDE) for decontaminating Gruinard island; provided consultancy advice to the CDE in the selection of a contractor to carry out the decontamination work; and monitored the subsequent tests carried out by both the CDE and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food central veterinary laboratory to establish the success of the treatment. The IAG's report, which was completed earlier this year and a copy of which will be placed in due course in the Library of the House, concluded that

"the chances of persons or animals contracting anthrax on Gruinard island are so remote that the island can be returned to civil use".

As provided in the terms of transfer to the Ministry of Defence, we are proposing to return Gruinard island to its previous owners.

Modular Stand-off Weapon

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the consequences for British participation in this and similar collaborative projects of the announced withdrawal by France from the modular stand-off weapon project.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom will be expected to make a larger percentage contribution to the cost of project definition. There are no consequences for other collaborative projects.

Radiological Hazards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what definition of radiological hazard is used by his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: MOD recognises that some ionising radiations are a potential hazard to health. Procedures adopted for limiting the exposure of workers and members of the public are in accord with the philosophy of the International Commission on Radiological Protection and are governed by the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 and the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

Super VC10

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many super VC10 aircraft have been purchased from British Airways; what was the cost of the purchase; how many are now in service as tanker aircraft; how much has been spent on converting super VC10s to tankers; and what is the intended fate of the remaining aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: In March 1981, at a cost of £3·75 million, 14 Super VC10s were bought from British Airways as spares to support the rest of the VC10 fleet: some additional spare parts were included in the package. Six aircraft remain, five of which are earmarked for conversion to tankers. The rest were used as sources of spare parts.

Out-of area Operations

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail all the steps taken since 1982 to improve the effectiveness of the armed forces in mounting out-of-area operations, with particular reference to those aspects where deficiencies or gaps in capability led Her Majesty's Government to seek assistance from the United States Administration during the Falklands war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The enhancements to our out-of-area capability since 1982 are detailed in the annual "Statement on the Defence Estimates". Some particular improvements introduced as a result of experience in the Falklands conflict were indicated in Cmnd. 8758 ("The Falklands Campaign: The Lessons").

Major enhancements since 1982 include the creation of a joint force headquarters which would be activated in response to a crisis outside the NATO area; the fitting of point defence systems in Royal Navy ships and the provision of an organic airborne early warning capability for the fleet; significant enhancements to 5 Infantry Brigade (re-named 5 Airborne Brigade); and a substantial strengthening of the RAF's long-range transport capability. Of these, some of the point defence systems were acquired from the United States.

Nuclear Reactor Plants

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek to obtain for his Departmental library a copy of the study for the United States Navy Department, released in May 1984, entitled "Environmental Impact Statement on the Disposal of Decommissioned, De-fuelled Naval Submarine Reactor Plants".

Mr. Sainsbury: Copies of this document have been available in the Ministry of Defence since it was published.

Ships (Radioactive Releases)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the level of monitoring undertaken by his Department on radioactive releases from nuclear-powered and nuclear-capable ships in *(a)* Royal Navy dockyards and *(b)* United Kingdom territorial waters.

Mr. Sainsbury: Marine monitoring for radioactivity around Royal Navy dockyards and in United Kingdom territorial waters is undertaken both by MOD and by MAFF, whose programme provides an independent check. Both MOD and MAFF publish the results of these surveys. The results indicate that the levels of radioactivity around the naval establishments in the United Kingdom remain very low and of no significance in radiological terms, thus confirming the effectiveness of our radiation control procedures.

Nuclear-powered Submarines

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications of the report, "Environmental Monitoring and Disposal of Radioactive Wastes from United States Naval Nuclear-Powered Ships and their Support Facilities, 1987," by J. J. Mageno, J. M. Steele and L. F. Poletti, for the United States Navy Department naval nuclear propulsion unit, report NT-88-1, published February 1988, for the long-term management of Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: The report concludes that United States navy procedures to control the release of radioactivity are effective in protecting the environment and the health and safety of the general public. It therefore has no bearing on the long-term management of Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines. However, the Royal Navy's maintenance, operation and safety standards are no less exacting and no less effective in protecting the environment. As a consequence, there has never been an incident involving such submarines which has posed any radiological hazard to service men, base personnel, or members of the public.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the expenditure to date, and what is the expected expenditure to be incurred over the next 50 years, towards the decommissioning of nuclear-powered submarines of the Royal Navy.

Mr. Sainsbury: Much of the work to date on the disposal of decommissioned nuclear submarines has been undertaken as part of more wide-ranging planning for the defuelling, de-equipping and refitting of nuclear submarines. The expenditure on the disposal of decommissioned nuclear submarines over the next 50 years will depend on the method of disposal ultimately chosen.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been conducted by his Department on the radiological implications of decommissioning nuclear-propelled submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: Studies of the preparation of nuclear submarines for disposal, including the radiological impact on the work force, have been completed. A study of the radiological impact on the environment of the disposal of decommissioned nuclear submarines is currently under way.

Thompson Sub-machine Guns

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy as to the use of American Thompson sub-machine guns by the Army in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* The Thompson sub-machine gun was withdrawn from Army service over 30 years ago.

NORTHERN IRELAND

YTP Scheme

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much finance has been made available each year to each of the area education boards in Northern Ireland for the implementation of the YTP scheme; and how much of that money has been allocated by each board to the particular provision for young people with special educational needs.

Dr. Mawhinney: The financial allocations made available to the education and library boards from the 1982-83 financial year for this purpose are:

(£000s)

	Belfast	*North-Eastern*	*South-Eastern*	*Southern*	*Western*
Recurrent					
1982-83	355	323	371	161	225
1983-84	814	606	764	788	551
1984-85	1,050	736	809	929	647
1985-86	945	712	873	585	549
1986-87	996	674	919	776	752
1987-88	943	756	896	854	750
1988-89	1,336	1,036	1,105	971	892

Note: These allocations exclude the salaries of full-time lecturers paid directly by the Department of Education.

(£000s)

	Belfast	*North-Eastern*	*South-Eastern*	*Southern*	*Western*
Capital					
1982-83	273	341	689	227	161
1983-84	466	554	542	359	620
1984-85	303	552	262	244	236
1985-86	187	172	210	271	461
1986-87	268	425	197	615	485
1987-88	205	295	126	178	485
1988-89	194	467	317	99	466

Information on provision for young people with special educational needs is available only for recurrent expenditure in the following years:

(£000s)

	Belfast	*North-Eastern*	*South-Eastern*	*Southern*	*Western*
1986-87	467	288	164	164	187
1987-88	491	330	159	187	197
1988-89	517	347	183	197	212

In addition, the following sums have been offered to the boards for improving access for the physically disabled at further education colleges:

(£000s)

	Belfast	North-Eastern	South-Eastern	Southern	Western
1988-89	45	nil	116	15	48

EC (Free Food)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which organisations are assisting with the distribution of European Community free foods; whether the European Community free food scheme is being operated within all district council areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: Thirteen organisations have been designated to participate in the distribution of food in Northern Ireland under the European Community free food scheme. A list of designated organisations in the United Kingdom has been placed in the Library.

Given the voluntary nature of the scheme it is not possible to ensure that all parts of Northern Ireland are covered. However, although most of the designated organisations in Northern Ireland will be distributing the food in their immediate locality, two have indicated that they intend to operate more widely in the Province.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agriculture and Food Research Council

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what have been the cuts in scientific staff engaged by Government-funded Agriculture and Food Research Council research establishments since 1984; and whether further redundancies are contemplated detailing numbers and establishments.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

Since April 1984 the number of permanent scientific staff posts in the AFRC has been reduced by 1,081.

Further losses may be required as a consequence of reductions in research and development expenditure by the Agricultural Departments. It is not yet possible to quantify these losses or to say where they might fall.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the location and staff numbers in Agriculture and Food Research Council establishments and an outline of the work undertaken at each.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

The current staff complements of the eight institutes of the AFRC at 1 April 1988 are as follows:

	Number
Institute of Arable Crops Research	748
Institute for Animal Health	584
Institute of Animal Physiology and Genetics Research	499
Institute of Engineering Research	329
Institute of Food Research	730
Institute of Grassland and Animal Production Research	678
Institute of Horticultural Research	618
Institute of Plant Science Research	401
Total	4,587

Staffing figures for individual sites are not available.

Details of the locations of the sites and of the research work undertaken at the institutes are set out in the AFRC's corporate plan 1988-93 and annual report 1986-87. Copies of both publications are available in the Library.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will name the Government-funded research establishments formerly funded by the Agriculture and Food Research Council that have been transferred to the private sector.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

Part of the council's plant breeding institute has been transferred to the private sector.

Research and Development and Advisory Services

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department intends to reduce its support for research and development and advisory services; and if he will identify the economies likely to be made.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In his Autumn Statement last year my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced reductions of £5 million and £10 million for 1989-90 and 1990-91 in planned public expenditure on agriculture, fisheries and food research and development. These reductions reflected the Government's view that industry should contribute more to the funding of research from which it benefits. The report on the recent internal examination of agriculture departments' R and D expenditure is currently under consideration and no decisions have yet been reached.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what reason he set up an inquiry into his Department's support for research and development and advisory services; when it intends to report; and whether it will be published.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department's examination of its research and development programme took place against the objectives outlined in the July 1987 White Paper on civil research and development (Cm. 185) and the Government's general view that industry should fund more of the work from which it benefits. It therefore sought to identify those areas of research which are closest to the market—that is to say, which have the most direct commercial potential. It did not cover advisory work as such, except in respect of technology transfer services. The review was an internal exercise and it would not be appropriate to publish the report, which is currently under consideration. A separate internal review of the first year's experience of ADAS charging is also being undertaken, as explained in the reply to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 26 May 1988 at column *261*.

Dry Sow and Tether Stalls

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of pig farmers in England and Wales are estimated still to employ dry sow stalls and tether stalls; how this proportion compares with 10 years ago; and what action he proposes to ensure the phasing-out of such stalls.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is estimated that approximately half the pig farmers in England and Wales still use dry sow stalls or tether stalls. No accurate information is available on the position 10 years ago, but it is believed that the proportion of farmers using such systems has declined. The Farm Animal Welfare Council has recently completed a review of pig production systems, which makes a number of recommendations to ensure that future trends in housing the dry sow are away from the use of stalls and tethers. We are currently consulting interested parties on that report and no decision will be taken until their comments have been fully considered.

Home Brewery (Takeover)

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking in response to the representations made to him by the National Licensed Victuallers Association concerning the takeover of Home Brewery by Scottish and Newcastle and the decision of the latter to end current agreements with tenants.

Mr. Donald Thompson: This is a commercial matter in which it would not be appropriate for me to intervene, but, having regard to the Brewers' Society code of practice on tenants' security, I have drawn the attention of the society to the concerns of the National Licensed Victuallers' Association.

Domestic Waste Imports

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on the import of domestic waste from New York to Warrington; what are the risks of the generation of animal or plant diseases from this waste; and if he will receive a delegation from Cheshire county council on this matter.

Mr. Gummer: My Department has received a number of representations on this matter and is assessing whether such imports would endanger animal or plant health. Overall responsibility for imports of domestic waste rests with the Department of the Environment and it would therefore be for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to receive a delegation from Cheshire county council. I understand that he will be happy to do so.

Industrial Dredging

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies he has conducted as to the effects of industrial dredging on fish life and breeding grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Applications to dredge are carefully considered by Ministry scientists in order to ensure that extraction does not seriously damage fishery resources including breeding grounds.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has held with his European Economic Community colleagues as to the effects of industrial dredging upon fish stocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: None. The primary international forum for consideration of the effects on fisheries of marine sand and gravel extraction is the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, in whose discussions Ministry scientists participate with representatives of other EC countries.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies he has conducted as to the effects of industrial dredging on the seabed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr.Gummer: In considering applications to dredge, the Ministry assesses the nature, depth and extent of deposits, if necessary by conducting surveys. Controls can then be applied to ensure that the nature of the sediment is not changed by dredging, thus allowing recolonisation once dredging operations have ceased.

Public House Licensees

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what response he is proposing to make to the representations from the National Licensed Victuallers Association urging greater security for tenant licensees in view of the refusal on the part of some landlords to abide by the Brewers' Society code of practice.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) on 14 June.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the National Licensed Victuallers Association regarding Grand Metropolitan's proposals to introduce a 20-year lease policy for licensees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The National Licensed Victuallers Association has expressed concern that the proposed 20-year leases appear not to be covered by the provisions of the Brewers' Society code of practice on tenant security. The matter is being pursued with the Brewers' Society.

Salmon

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the Irish Government about the effect of illegal drift netting on United Kingdom salmon stocks, following the publication of the report of the Irish Government's salmon review group which was presented to the Minister for the Marine in November 1987.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* I have seen with interest the report of the Irish Government's salmon review group. No doubt the Irish Government are considering their response to the various recommendations contained in the report and it is, of course, entirely a matter for that Government to regulate salmon fishing in their waters. United Kingdom Fisheries Departments do monitor the effects of the Irish salmon fishery and there is an exchange of scientific information. I shall raise the issues considered in the report with the Irish Minister when we next meet.

Pesticides

Mr. Hood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all publications from his Department on pesticides used in the agricultural industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* My Department produces jointly with the Health and

Safety Executive "Pesticides 1988" which is published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. This lists all pesticides approved for sale in the United Kingdom under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. Her Majesty's Stationery Office also publishes the annual reports of the advisory committee on pesticides and reports of the working party on pesticide residues.

The Ministry itself publishes leaflets about the Control of Pesticides Regulations and related information, and draft codes of practice on the use and storage of pesticides. We also publish from time to time circular letters and consultation documents on specific aspects of the developing statutory controls, such as residues, off-label approvals and evaluations of new pesticide active ingredients.

Other information on pesticides is included within the many publications available to farmers and growers from the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service. I have arranged for lists of these, and copies of the specific publications I have mentioned to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of the expenditure of his Department on research into the effects of pesticides on meat products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* Pesticides are approved for use only when it has been established that such use will not lead to harmful residues in food, including animal products. The working party on pesticide residues monitors for residues in animal products as part of its ongoing surveillance programme. In addition, my Department is undertaking research relating specifically to residues in beef, milk and sheepmeat at a cost of £58,000 per annum. Other work costing £279,000 per annum and relating to crops which may be used in animal feedstuffs also has some relevance.

Blue-marked Sheep

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the answer of 13 June to the hon. Member for South Shields, if he will publish in the *Official Report* a breakdown of the age and sex of the 9,357 sheep marked blue and released for further fattening.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* This information is not available.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is being taken to eliminate the risk that bovine spongiform encephalopathy may be contracted from the blood and bone meal in compound feed.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* Legislation comes into force on 18 July which will suspend the use in feed rations for ruminants of any animal protein, including blood and bone meal, which is derived from ruminants.

Potatoes

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement outlining the arrangements for protecting potato growing in the United Kingdom, giving the amount of potatoes withdrawn from the market over the past 12 months and the cost of such withdrawals.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* In Great Britain potato market support involves control by the Potato Marketing Board (PMB) of the area planted and intervention by the board to remove potatoes from the market in times of surplus. The Government set a target area each season to be planted by producers registered with the PMB and the board must ensure as far as possible that that area is planted. Intervention is triggered when market prices are below the support prices set by the Government. The Government share the cost of market support with the PMB up to 500,000 tonnes each season on the following basis:

Size of surplus (000 tonnes)	*0-200*	*201-300*	*301-500*
Board's share (percentage of tonnage)	100	50	0
Government's share (percentage of tonnage)	0	50	100

Over the past 12 months the board has removed just over 150,000 tonnes of potatoes from the market. The cost is estimated to be about £6 million, which will be met entirely by the board from its levies on registered potato producers.

Separate market support arrangements exist in Northern Ireland, involving intervention, financed by the Government, if average market prices for the season are likely to be below a specified target price. No potatoes have been withdrawn from the market in the last 12 months.

Sugar

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current international price of sugar; and what subsidy is offered for the export of surplus sugar, expressed in pounds per tonne.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* On 8 June 1988 the London daily price for white sugar (which is representative of world prices) was £146·9 per tonne. On the same day the EC sugar management committee approved a maximum export refund for Community sugar of 424·9 ecu per tonne which, if the sugar was exported from the United Kingdom, would be equivalent to £267·4 net of the current MCA.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Co-operatives

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the terms of reference, membership and method of working of the departmental committee on the future funding of housing co-operatives.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle).

Water Authorities

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the name, age and occupation of each member of each water authority in England.

Mr. Moynihan: The details are as follows:

Anglian Water Authority

B. V. Henderson, CBE	59	Chairman AWA
A. G. Semple	54	Managing Director AWA
P. F. Bullock	60	Technical Services Director AWA
J. A. Simpson	49	Operations Director AWA
A. F. Smith	43	Finance Director AWA
Miss A. C. Abbey	37	Community worker
J. V. Boodle	61	Managing Director, British Fermentation Products Ltd.
Dr. J. R. G. Bradfield, CBE	63	Senior Bursar, Trinity College, Cambridge
A. Bridgewater	52	Company Director, Norwich Union
Dr. Jane P. Carmichael	44	Managing Director, Anglo Maribo Seed Co. Ltd.
The Earl of Cranbrook, DL	55	Farmer
C. J. Groome	47	Industry Group Head National Economic Development Office
Dr. S. W. Kingsnorth	62	Management Consultant
J. L. Roughton, CBE, DL*	65	Farmer
P. H. Tombleson, OBE*	62	Executive Director, National Anglers' Council

Northumbrian Water Authority

Sir M. Straker, CBE	60	Chairman NWA
W. F. Ridley	62	Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive NWA
D. G. Cranston	50	Finance Director NWA
Dr. R. Iley	62	Executive Director, Cookson Group plc
Mrs. J. Johnson	55	Various public appointments
D. R. C. Kelly	51	Chairman R. C. Kelly (Packing) Ltd
Prof. M. B. Pescod, OBE	55	Head of Dept and Head School of Civil and Mining Engineering, University of Newcastle upon Tyne
N. J. B. Prynn	50	Bursar, Durham School
P. L. Tennant*	58	Various public appointments
E. A. Wrangham*	60	Farmer

North West Water Authority

W. D. Grove	60	Chairman NWWA
J. B. Oldfield	60	Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive NWWA
B. Alexander	56	Planning and Engineering Director NWWA
T. A. F. Barnes*	63	Chartered Surveyor
J. A. Cropper, DL	49	Chairman, James Cropper plc (Papermaking)
A. G. Pendleton	59	Business Counsellor
Mrs. M. C. Bolton	36	Chartered Accountant
J. B. Robinson*	62	Farmer
F. Sanderson	61	Company Director, Elga Ltd, Butterworth Clifford Co. Ltd. (high purity water equipment)
Hon. W. R. F. Vane	36	Farmer

Severn-Trent Water Authority

J. G. Bellak	57	Chairman STWA
F. E. Earnshaw	59	Operations Director STWA
C. G. McMillan	59	Finance Director STWA
J. E. Anthony	53	Miner
R. H. Boisser	57	Company Director, Pressac Holdings plc (Electro-mechanical)
C. G. Hawthorne*	56	Farmer
A. W. Henn	57	Chairman, T. A. Henn & Sons Ltd. (Retail Jewellery)
T. C. Heywood-Lonsdale	51	Property Manager
F. A. Jennings*	56	Director, Executive Chairman, Birmingham Anglers' Association
R. J. H. Parkes, BEM	62	Chairman, Industrial & Heating Services Ltd.
A. H. Simon	43	Chairman, Evode Group plc
D. M. Woodroffe	49	Engineer
B. P. Zissman	53	Director, Adagio Ltd. (Menswear)

Southern Water Authority

W. J. W. Courtney, CBE	63	Chairman SWA
B. R. Thorpe, CBE	58	Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive SWA
D. J. Arnold	49	Management and Marine Consultant
Lord Chapple of Hoxton	66	Director, Inner City Enterprises and Horserace Totalisator Board
P. A. Girle	61	Director, SE Region, Natwest Bank
H. J. L. Harris*	67	Farmer
J. R. Hitch	51	Chairman, Proptran Ltd. (Business and Computer Consultancy)
A. Humbert*	56	Farmer
Rear-Admiral D. G. Spickernell, CB	67	Chairman, Ocean Control plc

South West Water Authority

K. Court	53	Chairman and Chief Executive SWWA
S. J. Day	53	Farmer/Company Director, Godfrey Syrett Ltd & Peal Furniture (Durham) Ltd
Lady Mary Holborow	51	Various public appointments
Dr. J. R. Lawrence	57	Director ICI Laboratory
G. C. Manning*	49	Farmer
D. Mitchell*	57	Managing Director (Deputy) Watts, Blake Bearne Co.
Sir Kenneth Sharp, TD	61	Chartered Accountant
C. Stuart	60	Company Chairman/Chief Executive Brymon Airways
R. E. Trenerry	44	Chief Accountant of E.C.C. International

Thames Water Authority

R. Watts, CBE	62	Chairman TWA
Mr. Davies, JP*	60	Farmer
Sir Peter Harrop, KCB	62	Consultant
Sir Christopher Leaver, GBE	50	Managing Director, Russell, McIver Group of Companies (Wine Merchants) and other directorships
H. P. Parry*	63	Chartered Accountant
K. J. Salter	40	Chartered Accountant
J. M. Thompson	60	Chairman of London & Manchester Group plc and other directorships
R. T. Whiteley, OBE, DL	56	Businessman/Farmer
Mrs. J. K. Wykes	65	Company Director, C. E. Wykes & Co.

Wessex Water Authority

W. N. Hood	52	Chairman WWA
R. H. Baker*	57	Farmer
Dr. A. K. Barbour, OBE	61	Environmental Scientist
Lady Digby, DL	54	Director, SW Region Natwest Bank
Major-General P. H. Lee, CB, MBE	59	Company Director, Wincanton Transport Ltd.
D. N. A. McLure	62	Management Consultant
Major J. M. Mills, TD, DL*	68	Farmer
O. Oldham	61	Various directorships and public appointments
K. F. Roberts, CBE	65	Chartered Civil Engineer

Yorkshire Water Authority

G. P. Jones	61	Chairman YWA
J. P. Coverdale, OBE*	58	Farmer

D. Cramb, CBE	62	Deputy Chairman, Rowntree Mackintosh plc
J. A. Fawcett*	57	Managing Director, Thos Fawcett & Son (Maltsters)
B. P. Hogg	52	Deputy Managing Director, Provident Financial Group plc
T. Jackson	63	Bookseller
H. G. Masterson	57	Science & Technical Manager (Northern Area) CEGB
M. C. Simpson	59	Retired (Former Director of Finance, Leeds City Council)
Mrs. P. V. Smith, MBE	50	Housewife
A. J. T. Unwin	63	Chartered Engineer

* Member appointed by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

District Councils (Agency Arrangements)

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to review agency arrangements between shire counties and their districts in order that districts may give their own priorities to matters including lighting, footpath maintenance, car parking and traffic management.

Mr. Chope: The Department of Transport expects local authorities to consider how to ensure that agency arrangements for highways between counties and districts are put on a more systematic and businesslike footing, in the light of last year's Audit Commission report. The Government have no other plans for a review.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider transferring powers currently exercised only as agents from shire counties to their districts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Government have no plans for major changes in the responsibilities of county and district councils. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is, however, considering the proposal in the recent Audit Commission report on improving the condition of local authority roads that the responsibility for street cleansing, grass-cutting and other horticultural work should be transferred to district councils.

Property Searches

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any recent representations concerning the time taken by London boroughs to process property search applications.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received a number of representations expressing concern about the length of time taken by some local authorities to respond to search inquiries. The Government share this concern. The problem and possible solutions are currently being examined by the conveyancing standing committee of the Law Commission whose recommendations we will study carefully.

Countryside Commission

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional funds he intends to allocate to the Countryside Commission in 1989-90 to ensure the effective implementation of its "Enjoying the Countryside" initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government's expenditure plans for 1989-90 make provision for an allocation of £19·535 million to support the Countryside Commission's programme, which includes the enjoying the countryside initiative. Any changes to these plans will be announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement.

Homelessness

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the present level of homelessness in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales; and what was the corresponding figure for 1979.

Mrs. Roe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 10 June at column *737*. For information about Wales I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

HOTCHA

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average value of discounts provided under the HOTCHA scheme in each region of England during the latest six-monthly period for which figures exist.

Mrs. Roe: The average discount provided under the HOTCHA scheme in each Housing Corporation region in England during the period October 1987 to March 1988 is as follows:

	£
London and Home Counties North	17,209
London and Home Counties South	17,440
West	13,043
East Midlands	10,000
West Midlands	9,231
North-East	8,823
North-West	10,000
Merseyside	8,125

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tenants have bought houses under the HOTCHA scheme in each six-monthly period since the scheme was introduced.

Mrs. Roe: The information requested is as follows:

		tenants
1984-85	September to March	159
1985-86	April to September	1,280
	October to March	1,292
1986-87	April to September	794
	October to March	521
1987-88	April to September	931
	October to March	460

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., Sellafield

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring takes place of the radioactive nitrogen oxide gases released from the B 268 medium active evaporation and uranium finishing plant at British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., Sellafield.

Mr. Moynihan: British Nuclear Fuels plc is required to monitor radioactive gaseous discharges from the Sellafield

site as a condition of the certificate of authorisation issued by my Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. The radioactive content of the nitrogen oxide gases discharged from B 268 is monitored for alpha and beta, plutonium alpha, americium and curium radioactivity.

American Domestic Waste (Warrington)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the import of American domestic waste to Warrington; how many lorries daily will be required to transport this waste from Liverpool to Warrington; what type of lorry will be used; what will be included in the domestic waste; whether any risk to human life will arise; if he will receive a delegation from Cheshire county council on this matter; and if he will ban the importation of this waste.

Mr. Moynihan: We have received a number of representations about these proposals which I understand to be the subject of negotiation between the interested parties. The matter is, in the first instance, for Cheshire county council to determine, as operator of the site concerned and as planning and waste disposal authority. I have agreed to meet members of the council to discuss the matter.

Tap Water (Greater Liverpool)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the level of aluminium in tap water in the Greater Liverpool area.

Mr. Moynihan: All drinking water supplies in the Greater Liverpool area comply with the standard for aluminium set by the EC drinking water directive.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the importing of toxic waste for disposal in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: All special waste imported into the United Kingdom is subject to the same controls as special waste generated in this country. The provision of disposal services for imports of special wastes is a legitimate business provided it is carried out with proper environmental safeguards, does not involve risks to public health and does not jeopardise the availability of suitable facilities for United Kingdom waste. Within this framework this service can benefit the environment where suitable facilities are not available in the country of origin.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to which countries exporting toxic waste to Britain do so because such disposal would be illegal in their countries.

Mr. Moynihan: To the best of our knowledg no waste imported into the United Kingdom would be illegal to be disposed of in its country of origin.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that all mixed consignments of toxic waste imported for disposal in the United Kingdom contain chemicals that are compatible.

Mr. Moynihan: The European agreement concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by road contains stringent requirements that incompatible chemicals including waste chemicals should not be carried together. When a consignment of waste reaches the United Kingdom its deposit, storage and handling will be subject to licensing by the waste disposal authorities, which should impose conditions to ensure the waste is handled safely and that incompatible chemicals are kept separately.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding waste transfer stations being used to obscure the nature and origin of toxic waste prior to its disposal.

Mr. Moynihan: I have received no such representations.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take urgent steps to ensure that all major landfill sites disposing of toxic waste have analysis facilities on site.

Mr. Moynihan: The licensing of waste disposal facilities is a matter for waste disposal authorities. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution has advised them that all major landfill sites licensed for special wastes should have laboratory facilities on site and that this should be a requirement of the licence.

Water Pollution (Aluminium)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that immediate measures are taken to eliminate pollution of water by aluminium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Most water supplies already comply with the aluminium standard set in the EC drinking water directive. Action is being taken by water undertakers to ensure that all remaining supplies comply.

Current concentrations in these supplies are not considered to be a health risk. The directive standard was set in relation to the appearance of water; it was not set on health grounds.

Research into possible health risks from aluminium in water is kept under review by the Government's medical advisers, who are in contact with researchers, including the University of Southampton which is carrying out a study on aluminium in drinking water and Alzheimer's disease. When the full report on this study is available, probably later this year, it will be assessed by medical experts. In the meantime, medical advisers consider that too much weight should not be placed on the results on any single study.

Aluminium salts are widely used in the United Kingdom and many other countries as coagulants in water treatment to remove contamination by undesirable suspended matter. Aluminium can also occur naturally in some raw waters.

There are a number of alternative theories about the cause of Alzheimer's disease, of which a possible link with aluminium is only one. Over 90 per cent. of the daily intake of aluminium comes from food even when the water contains the maximum concentration allowed by the EC drinking water directive. Other evidence and scientific considerations also weigh against the suggestion that aluminium derived from drinking water is likely to be a cause of Alzheimer's disease.

Unfurnished Dwellings (Rents)

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for *(a)* England, *(b)*

Yorkshire and Humberside and *(c)* Barnsley district, the average level of local authority rents and fair rents registered for unfurnished dwellings for each year since 1979, indicating the percentage in each year on an annual and cumulative basis; and what was the change in the retail price index over the same period.

Mrs. Roe: The latest available figures on local authority rents, the average rents registered by rent officers and the movements in the retail prices index up to 1987 are as follows:

(A) Average weekly unrebated rents at April for local authority dwellings

	England			*Yorkshire and Humberside*			*Barnsley*		
	Average rent	*Per cent. increase*		*Average rent*	*Per cent. increase*		*Average rent*	*Per cent. increase*	
	£	*over year*	*since 1979*	*£*	*over year*	*since 1979*	*£*	*over year*	*since 1979*
1979	6·41	—	—	5·45	—	—	4·53	—	—
1980	7·70	20	20	6·63	22	22	6·32	40	40
1981	11·42	48	78	10·02	51	84	9·73	54	115
1982	13·48	18	110	11·39	14	109	10·99	13	143
1983	13·97	4	118	11·88	4	118	11·99	9	165
1984	14·66	5	129	12·47	5	129	12·55	5	177
1985	15·54	6	142	13·77	10	153	13·29	6	193
1986	16·36	5	155	14·88	8	173	14·39	8	218
1987	17·20	5	168	15·93	7	192	15·10	5	233
1988[1]	18·67	9	191	17·09	7	214	15·77	4	248

[1] Provisional.

	(B) Fair rents[1] (£ per week) unfurnished tenancies[2] second half-year averages		*Retail price index United Kingdom April*	
	England	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*Percentage increase*	
	£	*£*	*over year*	*since 1979*
1979	[3]9·55	[4]6·85	—	—
1980	[3]11·40	[4]8·05	22	22
1981	13·00	9·85	12	36
1982	14·25	11·35	9	49
1983	15·60	12·35	4	55
1984	16·80	13·55	5	63
1985	18·05	14·90	7	75
1986	19·95	17·15	3	80
1987	21·20	17·85	4	87

[1] Service charges, if any, are included.
[2] Registered rents are for private regulated tenancies only.
[3] England and Wales.
[4] Annual average (second half-year not available).

The mix of properties for which rents are registered varies from year to year for a number of reasons; for example, extension of decontrol in 1981; the reduction from three to two years in the minimum period for re-registration which led to re-registrations in 1983 of rents previously registered in 1980 and 1981. Therefore, comparisons of averages for consecutive years do not properly reflect rent movements. Better estimates of rent movements are derived from previous and new registered rents for tenancies where there has been no material change in terms or in the physical condition. For properties with rents fixed in the second halves of 1979, 1982, 1984 and 1986, the estimated increases are:

	England		*Yorkshire and Humberside*	
	Percentage increase		*Percentage increase*	
	in period	*annualised*	*in period*	*annualised*
1979-82	47	14	58	16
1982-84	18	9	18	9
1984-86	17	8	18	9

The estimated annualised increase for properties with rents fixed in the second half of 1987 was 9 per cent. for both England, Yorkshire and Humberside. Information provided by rent officers is not available below county level outside London.

Cash Limits

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Wells on 24 March, *Official Report*, column 192, whether he has yet received final returns of outturn on the DOE/LA1 cash limit for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: No, but sufficient returns have now been received to confirm that the DOE/LA1 cash limit for 1987-88 will have been underspent by at least £141·7 million; that is, 5 per cent. of the original cash limit. The cash limit for 1988-89 will, under the end-year flexibility arrangements, be increased by that amount.

The capital expenditure returns submitted by local authorities for 1988-89 do not suggest that the revised cash limit will be overspent. I and my colleagues responsible for services within the DOE/LA1 cash block will therefore now be making further capital allocations of £41·7 million for 1988-89. These are additional to the £100 million announced in my reply of 24 March.

The sum available for my Department's services from the £41·7 million is £24·1 million. I propose to direct £3 million of this to areas of poor quality private sector housing. The remaining £21·1 million will be for further direct help to the homeless. This will be the third tranche of additional resources in the last seven months, totalling over £74 million, and targeted to those local authorities with particular homelessness pressures. As before, we will expect authorities to use these extra resources to bring empty property back into use to house their homeless people, relieving the burdens of temporary accommodation.

Aluminium

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the levels of

aluminium in the water supply provided by the North West water authority, and current EEC permitted levels of aluminium in water supplies.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* All drinking water supplies provided by the North West water authority comply with the standard for aluminium set by the EC drinking water directive except for the following: parts of Sefton MB, Stockport MB, Bolton MB, Tameside MB, Oldham MB, Carlisle district, Eden district, Lancaster borough, Ribble Valley district.

I also refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham).

Illegal Dumping (London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has received regarding the illegal dumping of building waste in London.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* The Department has received many representations about fly-tipping in London, including dumping of building waste, both from hon. Members and from the general public. We recognise this as a serious problem and have consulted on legislative proposals which assist its solution. We expect to announce the conclusions of the consultation shortly.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Social Services what is his latest estimate of how many people have lost entitlements to receive housing benefit as a result of recent changes to the social security system.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 7 June 1988 at column *561*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Social Services if he will make it his policy, in responding to hon. Members' representations on behalf of constituents affected by changes in the calculation of entitlement to housing benefit, to comment on the individual concerns of each constituent rather than issuing a duplicate reply.

Mr. Portillo: The appropriate reply to a letter from hon. Members is always judged according to the letter in question. When we receive a large volume of correspondence about a single subject, it is often appropriate to use a comprehensive standard reply. This ensures that hon. Members receive a consistent explanation of Government policy and that replies are sent out as quickly as possible. If Ministers were to ask for a detailed report on the individual circumstances in every case affected by a change of policy, and to reply accordingly, this would result in inordinate expense and delay.

Local authorities are best placed to explain the detail of the calculations they have made in individual housing benefit cases.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the cost of restoring the housing benefit to all those who will not gain from the transitional arrangements.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 3 May 1988]:* The cost would be very substantial, but would largely depend on the manner in which losses were restored and the account that was taken of increases in other benefits.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if local authorities are able to submit details of claimants' housing benefit losses of more than £2·50 direct to his Department's central unit responsible for making transitional payments.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 20 May 1988]:* An applicant for transitional payments will have to give his consent to the transfer if any information between his local authority and the transitional payments unit. This has been taken into account in the discussions with the local authorities associations on the detailed arrangements for handling applications for transitional payments and obtaining the necessary information.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to provide a substantive reply to the question from the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford, which received a holding answer on 20 May, concerning claims in respect of housing benefit losses of more than £2·50; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I replied to the hon. Member today.

Travel Costs

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what percentage of the health budget accounts for travel costs in the following regional health authorities *(a)* Northern, *(b)* North East Thames, and *(c)* Merseyside in the latest year for which figures are available.

(2) what were the costs both in absolute terms and as a percentage spent on transporting of patients to and from medical establishments in the latest year for which figures are available in the following regional health authorities *(a)* Northern, *(b)* North East Thames, and *(c)* Merseyside.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that information precisely as requested is not held centrally. Following is the information available from annual accounts submitted to the Department by the regional and district health authorities comprising the Northern, North-East Thames and Mersey regions for 1986-87 (the latest year available):

(1) Total revenue expenditure on ambulance services

Region	*£'000*	*As a proportion of all revenue expenditure per cent.*
Northern	20,629	3·10
North East Thames	21,820	2·24
Mersey	13,390	2·47

(2) Total revenue expenditure on non-ambulance transport[1]

Region	*£'000*	*As a proportion of all revenue expenditure per cent.*
Northern	2,510	0·38
North East Thames	4,263	0·44
Mersey	2,317	0·43

[1] Includes costs for the transportation of staff, stores, materials, etc. and patients. (These components are not separately identifiable).

Note: The figures at (1) and (2) include the travelling and subsistence costs of the staff employed in providing ambulance and non-ambulance transport services. Other staff travelling and subsistence costs are excluded.

Adult Training (Benefits)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if people participating in the adult training scheme will continue to receive any transitional protection they are eligible for on their social security benefits;

(2) if participants finishing their adult training programme and returning to income support will continue to be eligible for transitional protection on their social security benefits.

Mr. Portillo: Claimants participating in the adult training programme will continue to receive transitional protection while participating in the programme. Protection will continue after the programme ends provided they continue to be eligible for income support.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish a table showing the take-up of family income supplement in 1985, broken down into *(a)* the total likely to be entitled to benefit, *(b)* the proportion receiving benefit, *(c)* the numbers not receiving benefit, *(d)* the estimated amount of benefit unclaimed and *(e)* the average weekly amount unclaimed;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the take-up of supplementary benefit in 1985, broken down into *(a)* the total likely to be entitled to benefit, *(b)* the proportion receiving benefit, *(c)* the numbers not receiving benefit, *(d)* the estimated amount of benefit unclaimed and *(e)* the average weekly amount unclaimed, broken down into pensioners, sick and disabled, unemployed, families with children and one parent families.

Mr. Portillo: The latest take-up estimates for supplementary benefit are for 1983 and those for family income supplement are for 1983-84. A convenient summary is shown on pages 272 and 273 of the 1988 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 288). More detailed technical reports are available in the Library.

Notifiable Diseases

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if any action is taken in respect of general practitioners who fail to notify all cases of notifiable diseases.

Mrs. Currie: We are aware that the level of notification of communicable disease is not satisfactory although notification is a legal responsibility of the diagnosing clinician. However, one of the recommendations of the recently commissioned report "Public Health in England" is that the Department circulates to all doctors a brief explanatory guide to the notification procedure and its purpose. That guide is being prepared and will be circulated in the next few months. I hope it will encourage a substantial improvement.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will set out in tabular form the distribution of all supplementary benefit recipients in respect to their relationship to 100 per cent. entitlement along the lines of paragraph 7 of chapter 2 of the "Low Income Statistics" report of a technical review.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is set out in the table:

Distribution of persons in income units receiving supplementary benefit & housing benefit supplement 1983

Relative net resources	*Per cent. of persons*
Less than 100	2·7
100 but less than 105	32·7
105 but less than 110	22·6
110 but less than 120	19·6
120 but less than 140	14·7
Over 140	8
Total	100

Notes:

1. "Persons" in an income unit are defined as a single person or married couple with their dependent children (if any)
2. "Relative Net Resources" are defined in terms of the supplementary benefit scale rate applied to each income unit. The scale rate is defined as 100. Since two sets of scale rates are in use, for pensioners and others, two individuals shown as having income at the same scale level may have significantly different incomes.
3. Percentages do not total to 100 due to rounding.
4. *Source:* 1983 Supplementary Benefit Annual Statistical Inquiry.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the total number of recipients and dependants on supplementary benefit who were on benefit for one year or more, broken down into the following categories: *(a)* two-parent families with children, *(b)* one-parent families with children, *(c)* pensioners and *(d)* others, for each year from 1978 to the latest available date.

Mr. Portillo: The information is as follows:

thousands

	(a) Two parent families with dependants aged under 19 years	(b) One parent families with dependants aged under 19 years	(c) Pensioners	(d) Others
November 1978	82	238	1,569	646
November 1979	70	225	1,570	615
December 1980	72	227	1,548	634
December 1981	153	267	1,570	882
December 1982	226	306	1,598	1,178
December 1983	260	334	1,494	1,427
December 1984	308	376	1,509	1,633
February 1986	326	447	1,551	1,864
May 1987	318	485	1,566	1,918

Source: Annual Statistical Inquiries.

Dental Services

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people aged up to 16 years have used dental services paid in full or in part by the National Health Service for each year since 1975;

(2) how many people over the age of 21 years have used dental services paid in full or in part by the National Health Service, for each year since 1975;

(3) how many people between the age of 16 and 21 years have used dental facilities paid in full or in part by the National Health Service, for each year since 1975.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry that the information sought by the hon. Member is not available in precisely the form requested. Figures for the number of courses of treatment in the general and community dental services, by age of patient, in England from 1975 are set out in the tables. Such information for the hospital dental service is not available. Figures are by calendar year up to 1985; thereafter by financial year for the latest year available.

England—General Dental Service Number of Courses Completed

	Age Group		
	Under 16	*16-20*	*21 and over*
1975	8,418,180	2,550,880	14,936,060
1976	8,561,970	2,665,660	15,050,280
1977	8,723,800	2,792,660	15,456,720
1978	8,894,450	2,892,720	15,318,240
1979	8,633,090	2,870,640	15,660,880
1980	8,768,860	3,038,220	16,806,550
1981	8,766,720	2,981,850	17,286,620
1982	8,878,390	2,866,070	18,181,830
1983	8,866,440	2,886,810	18,752,220
1984	8,837,750	2,811,790	19,321,290
1985	8,819,330	2,712,990	19,853,780
1986-87	8,949,590	2,602,270	20,551,250

England—Community Dental Service Number of Courses Completed

	Aged Under 15	*School children Aged 15 and over*	*Others*
1975	1,135,131	135,033	7,034
1976	1,124,267	145,493	7,704
1977	1,101,724	148,246	7,317
1978	1,096,169	153,690	9,222
1979	1,067,366	158,081	12,163
1980	1,090,243	171,743	15,085
1981	1,071,088	172,657	17,677
1982	1,070,586	184,248	21,402
1983	1,060,352	179,789	25,988
1984	1,078,357	182,480	32,173
1985	1,101,592	180,666	35,977
1986-87	1,105,957	179,804	46,266

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the numbers of persons in England and Wales known to be suffering from myalgic encephalomyelitis; what is the current state of research into the causes and treatment of the disease; what financial help is given to the ME Association and its work for sufferers; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I recently announced a grant of £5,000 to the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association. Research of relevance to ME is being conducted but detailed information about this work and data on the number of sufferers are not held centrally.

Passive Smoking

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the increased risk of lung cancer from passive smoking.

Mrs. Currie: The fourth report of the independent scientific committee on smoking and health, published in March this year, concludes that breathing other people's tobacco smoke gives rise to a 10 to 30 per cent. increase in the risk of lung cancer among non-smokers. This is in line with the findings of the International Agency for Research into Cancer, the United States National Research Council and the United States Surgeon General, all of which conclude that passive smoking increases the risk of lung cancer. Copies of the independent scientific committee's report are in the Library.

Benefits Taper

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received any representations concerning the existence of a 100 per cent. taper, whereby hostel residents pursuing training or employment see a reduction in their benefit £1 for £1 if they earn more than £5 a week.

Mr. Portillo: No.

Foetal Brain Cell Implants

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on foetal brain cell implants.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply given on 7 June at columns *557-58*.

Funeral Expenses

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claiming only housing benefit in

(a) Lewisham, *(b)* London and *(c)* Britain have submitted a claim for a grant towards funeral expenses in the last year.

Mr. Portillo: The numbers of people receiving only housing benefit who submitted a claim for a social fund funeral payment from 6 April 1987 to 10 April 1988 are as follows:

	Number
(a) Lewisham[1]	31
(b) London	848
(c) Great Britain	10,402

[1] The Lewisham, Deptford constituency is covered by the Department's local offices at Greenwich Park, Lewisham and Peckham, although their boundaries are not conterminous with those of the constituency.

Departmental Staff (Barnsley)

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1979 the establishment figure and the actual number of persons in post at *(a)* Barnsley Department of Health and Social Security office and *(b)* Barnsley employment office; and what was the total case load count for each year for the same period.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has two local offices in Barnsley—Barnsley East and Barnsley West. The information requested in respect of both these offices is as follows:

	Barnsley West	*Barnsley East*
Complement 1979-80	131	179
Complement 1980-81	127	172
Complement 1981-82	122	166
Complement 1982-83	113	152
Complement 1983-84	95	118
Complement 1984-85	95	122
Complement 1985-86	104	128
Complement 1986-87	109	135
Complement 1987-88	120	161
Complement 1988-89	114	148
Staff in post 1 June 1981	122	167
Staff in post 1 June 1982	113	160
Staff in post 1 June 1983	105	142
Staff in post 1 June 1984	99	126
Staff in post 1 June 1985	102	136
Staff in post 1 June 1986	110	138·5
Staff in post 1 June 1987	116·5	147
Staff in post 1 June 1988	118·5	155·6

Information regarding the numbers of staff in post prior to 1981 is not available.

The latest case load counts, based on a 100 per cent. count of all cases in action, and the corresponding figures for previous years, are as follows:

	Supplementary benefits	*Short term benefits*
Barnsley West		
1979	4,356	
1980	4,288	
1981	5,218	
1982	6,329	
1983	6,421	3,192
1984	7,530	3,555
1985	7,952	3,467
1986	8,231	3,698
1987	8,414	3,593
1988	[1]7,398	3,785
Barnsley East		
1979	5,449	
1980	5,594	
1981	6,725	
1982	8,234	
1983	8,595	3,936
1984	10,093	4,438
1985	10,738	4,158
1986	11,334	4,172
1987	10,980	4,423
1988	[1]9,578	4,837

[1] Income support.

Information regarding short-term benefits case loads prior to 1983 is not available.

Comparable figures are not available for the full range of contributory benefits.

The 1988 case load figures are provisional and subject to amendment.

Direct comparisons between the numbers of staff and the live load are misleading as work loads vary considerably by type and duration of claim and the action that has to be taken. All these factors vary over time as a result of legislative, policy and procedural changes.

The information requested relating to Barnsley employment office is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Children in Care

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons aged 17 years and under were received into care by a local authority in England and Wales under section 7(7) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1987; and how many in each year were from an ethnic minority background.

Mrs. Currie: The number of young persons admitted to care by local authorities in England under section 7(7) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 for the most recent three years for which information is currently available is given in the table. Information for 1987 is not yet available.

Information about the ethnic origin of children and young people in care is not collected centrally.

Information for Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Young persons[1] admitted to care of a local authority under section 7(7)[2] of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969: England

During year ending 31 March	*Number admitted*
1984	1,215
1985	990
1986 (provisional)	778

[1] All persons admitted to care were aged 17 years and under.
[2] Legal status of most recent care episode.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what further research he will be undertaking

about the possible link between aluminium in drinking water and Alzheimer's disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I am aware that it has been suggested that aluminium in drinking water is one of the possible causes of Alzheimer's disease. For information about research on Alzheimer's disease I refer my hon. Friend to the reply by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 29 April at column *342*.

Domestic Violence (Report)

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to publish the final report which he has commissioned from the Policy Studies Institute on the characteristics of hostels and the people who live in them before making any decision on income support payments for the victims of domestic violence living in women's refuges.

Mr. Portillo: The institute's final report is still awaited. Permission to publish will not be unreasonably withheld.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current level of Government funding for the national campaign against drug abuse; and whether he contemplates any changes in its level or targeting.

Mrs. Currie: We plan to spend £2·5 million in the current financial year on a national campaign about the dangers of drug misuse. The campaign's content and targeting will be determined in the light of evaluation findings relating to 1987-88 campaigns, and of information about the current drug scene.

Compliance Cost Assessment

Mr. Nelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish a list of compliance cost assessments prepared by his Department.

Mr. Portillo: The following compliance cost assessments are available:

Extension to DHSS Manufacturer Registration Scheme
Temperature Control (Food)
Industrial Injuries (Reduced Earnings Allowance)
Maternity Allowance (Statutory Maternity Pay)
Ionising Radiation
Housing Benefit Earnings Inquiries
Family Credit Earnings Inquiries
Alignment of Benefit Pay Periods
National Insurance—Amendment to Regulations on Recording the Details of Earnings
National Insurance "Trust Fund" Exemption

They are available on request from the departmental deregulation unit, Room 002, 151 Great Titchfield street, London SW1.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 20 June 1988

PRIME MINISTER

Gibraltar (Shootings)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will now set up an inquiry into the policy considerations and decisions which led to the recent operation involving military personnel in Gibraltar and the shooting of three Irish Republican Army personnel.

The Prime Minister: No. The inquest in Gibraltar is the proper occasion for the matter to be examined. We hope it will be held as soon as possible.

Members' Letters

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Prime Minister what is her practice with regard to answering letters from right hon. and hon. Members directly from her Office or referring them to other Departments.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 22 April 1988 at column *583*.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Prime Minister what information she has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in the Cabinet Office who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

The Prime Minister: The names of the schools attended by civil servants at grade 3 level and above in the Cabinet Office are recorded on personal files in only a few cases.

University of Newcastle (News Media Unit)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister why British Nuclear Fuels plc made it a condition of its offer to fund a news media unit at the University of Newcastle that Mr. Bernard Ingham be associated with the project.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Ingham remains my Chief Press Secretary and is not available to take up any post in Newcastle.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Birmingham Pub Bombings

65. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Attorney-General what was the basis for the decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions to ask the Commissioner of the City of London police for an inquiry into contacts between the two principal Crown witnesses at the recent appeal in relation to the Birmingham pub bombings.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin).

68. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Attorney-General what line of inquiry the Director of Public Prosecutions suggested to the City of London police when asking them to inquire into contacts between the two principal Crown witnesses at the recent appeal hearing of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 17 June 1988, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

69. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Attorney-General what action the Director of Public Prosecutions proposes to take following the completion of the investigations by the City of London police into contacts between the two principal Crown witnesses at the appeal of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 15 June 1988, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Court Proceedings (Tape Recording)

67. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received concerning the introduction of the taping of court proceedings in England and Wales to replace shorthand writers.

The Attorney-General: Representations in writing have been received by the Lord Chancellor's Department from 13 sources.

DPP (Meeting)

70. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what matters were discussed.

72. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what subjects were discussed.

73. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what matters were discussed.

The Attorney-General: I last met the Director of Public Prosecutions on Wednesday 15 June 1988 to discuss matters relating to the Crown Prosecution Service.

King Edward (Remains)

71. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Attorney-General what costs have been incurred to public funds to date in legal proceedings involving the bones of Edward, King of England, Saint and Martyr.

The Attorney-General: Costs expended to date amount to £2,361·99.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Attorney-General what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

The Attorney-General: There is only one such person in my Department. He was educated at a private school.

Crown Prosecution Service (North Report)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General what are the implications for the Crown Prosecution Service of the recommendations in the North report on fatal road accidents.

The Attorney-General: The road traffic law review, chaired by Dr. Peter North, published its report on 12 April this year. The report contains 137 recommendations, several of which propose major restructuring of the current road traffic offences which may be applicable when a fatal accident occurs, including those where drink is involved. The report is currently receiving detailed scrutiny, and whilst I cannot anticipate any future legislation, the Crown Prosecution Service would naturally welcome any move which would assist in bringing to justice on appropriate charges those who commit serious driving offences.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

81. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average percentage of gross national product given in aid by the members of the European Community that are also members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development assistance committee, excluding the United Kingdom, in 1987 or for the latest available year.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1986, the latest year for which figures have been published, the net official development assistance of these countries represented 0·55 per cent. of their combined GNP.

90. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the estimated expenditure on overseas aid in the current financial year.

95. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of expenditure on overseas development.

Mr. Chris Patten: The overseas aid budget, including aid administration, for the current financial year is £1,337 million.

Kampuchea

82. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in the light of Vietnam's 25 May undertaking to withdraw half its troops from Kampuchea by the end of the year, he will reconsider the provision of development assistance to Kampuchea.

Mr. Chris Patten: We see no reason at the present time to change our position on aid to Cambodia.

Africa

83. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support Her Majesty's Government are giving to programmes of structural adjustment in Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1987-88 Britain provided an estimated total of over £90 million of quick-spending balance of payments finance in support of structural adjustment programmes in African countries. We have pledged at least £250 million of similar assistance over the next three years in association with the World Bank's special programme of assistance to low-income, debt-distressed countries in sub-Saharan Africa that are following appropriate programmes of economic reform. We are also giving very substantial support to the IMF's enhanced structural adjustment facility. Our contribution to the interest subsidy account will be greater than that of any other country, and will be sufficient to subsidise the interest on lending up to SDR 1 billion—about £750 million.

SADCC and Front-line States

84. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the value, in 1980 prices, of British bilateral aid to the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference and the front line states in *(a)* 1980, and *(b)* 1986.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1980 prices gross bilateral aid to the member states of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference was £133 million in 1980 and £73·5 million in 1986. The 1980 figure is particularly high because of large post-independence expenditure in Zimbabwe. Finance pledged to the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference is recorded as aid to a particular country once expenditure has taken place.

Afghanistan

85. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to increase British and European aid to Afghanistan after the withdrawal of Soviet troops and advisers.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have already pledged £10 million to support the work of multilateral organisations and British voluntary agencies once properly co-ordinated international relief arrangements have been established. If appropriate, additional resources will be made available later.

When the situation in Afghanistan allows, the European Community could also make an important contribution to international aid efforts. Emergency and food aid, channelled through international organisations, will be priorities.

94. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's assistance to Afghan refugees.

Mr. Chris Patten: Following signature of the Geneva agreements in April, I have announced a doubling of our annual programme of support for Afghan refugees to £10 million in the current financial year. These funds will support the work of British voluntary agencies and multilateral organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross. This assistance will be conditional on properly co-ordinated international arrangements for the resettlement of Afghan refugees being put in place.

Africa (Locusts)

86. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he is providing to counter the threat of locusts in north and west Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have recently agreed to provide £1·3 million of new bilateral aid for a programme to help combat locust infestations in 16 countries of north and west Africa. This support is in addition to some £1·5 million already provided bilaterally and through the European Community.

Nicaragua

87. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is, for each year since 1970, the amount of bilateral aid to Nicaragua.

Mr. Chris Patten: Between 1970 and 1987 British bilateral aid to Nicaragua amounted to £2·49 million. I shall publish in the *Official Report* a breakdown by calendar year.

Following is the information:

	£'000
1970	4
1971	21
1972	66
1973	87
1974	248
1975	398
1976	287
1977	405
1978	186
1979	246
1980	127
1981	91
1982	49
1983	64
1984	9
1985	116
1986	86
1987	—

Vietnam

88. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will reconsider his decision not to respond to the Government of Vietnam's request for emergency food aid as a result of the drought in northern Vietnam.

Mr. Chris Patten: No. The European Community has, however, agreed to provide 20,000 tonnes of cereals.

Ethiopia

89. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the famine relief effort in Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: The international community has responded promptly and generously to the renewed threat of famine in Ethiopia and estimated food aid requirements for 1988 have been largely met by pledges made. For our part, we have committed over £45 million in famine relief assistance since the beginning of 1987, including the cost of some 95,000 tonnes of bilateral food aid and our share of European Community assistance. The relief effort is, however, being seriously hampered by increased military activity in Eritrea and Tigray. As a result the number of people, particularly in Tigray, who can be reached by current relief operations has been substantially reduced. The situation is further aggravated by the Ethiopian Government's continued refusal to permit full resumption of the relief activities of the voluntary agencies and the ICRC.

Sri Lanka

91. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to provide reconstruction aid for Sri Lanka; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: When I visited Sri Lanka this year, I signed an agreement for the provision of £20 million in reconstruction aid to Sri Lanka. A number of projects have already been agreed, and others identified, for expenditure against this aid.

Africa (AIDS)

92. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what special assistance Her Majesty's Government are providing for African countries affected by the spread of AIDS.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have already committed £7·75 million, including £4·5 million this year, to the World Health Organisation's global programme on AIDS which is working with 44 countries in Africa. In addition, we have offered to provide a total of £4·6 million over five years for national AIDS control programmes agreed with the World Health Organisation in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

Departmental Expenditure

93. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will express Overseas Development Administration expenditure as a percentage of gross national product *(a)* in the financial year 1978-79 and *(b)* in the current financial year.

Mr. Chris Patten: Expenditure under the net aid programme in 1978-79 represented 0·41 per cent. of GNP. The comparable figure for the current financial year will not be available until later next year.

Underdeveloped Countries (Technical Aid)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current provisions for technical aid to underdeveloped countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1987 some £320 million was spent on technical assistance.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drink-Driving Convictions

97. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of drink-driving convictions in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is for findings of guilt at all courts for driving and so on after consuming alcohol or taking drugs. It is published for 1976 to 1986 in table 7 of Home Office statistical bulletin 36/87, "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales 1986", copies of which are in the Library. In 1986, there were about 107,000 such findings of guilt. The figures for 1987 will be published later this year.

Passports

Mr. Sackville: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current average period required to process applications for passports in each passport office in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: The current times for straightforward non-urgent applications are shown in the table. Urgent applications are given priority.

Passport office	*Delay (Working days)*
London	59
Glasgow	38
Peterborough	35
Newport	22
Liverpool	14
Belfast[1]	4

[1] The Belfast office is by far the smallest and deals only with Northern Ireland residents.

Child Care

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has in relation to the number of social workers, teachers, medical staff, ancillary staff and other members of the public who have been vetted by police before they are employed in jobs where they work with children; and whether his Department keeps information as to the number of people refused employment and the reasons therefore.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The police do not vet applicants for posts which involve close contact with children; they supply information which they may have about the criminal background of individuals to prospective employers, who then decide whether or not to employ the individual in the light of all the information they may have about him or her.

The latest figures available on the number of checks undertaken under these arrangements were given in a reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member on 29 April at column *283*. A further survey will be undertaken for the year to 31 August 1988 and the results should be available in the autumn.

Concessionary Television Licences

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking the withdrawal of his announcement of 18 May regarding the rise in the cost of concessionary television licences; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Between 19 May and 14 June, 12 members of the public and six hon. Members complained about the concessionary licence fee increase. Replies have explained that the increase is necessary to cover the costs of administering the concessionary scheme and of extending it.

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next intends to meet the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; and what he expects to discuss.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has arranged to meet the Commissioner on Wednesday 22 June. He plans to discuss a number of policing issues, including football hooliganism.

Television

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the progress being made by the broadcasting authorities in improving television reception in areas at present experiencing difficulties.

Mr. Renton: The BBC and IBA do their best to assist viewers who experience difficulty in obtaining good television reception. They have undertaken a joint programme to extend UHF television coverage to all unserved areas with a population of at least 500, and smaller communities where practicable. Twenty-six new relay transmitters were installed in 1987 serving some 20,000 people. Some 99·4 per cent. of the population are now able to receive BBC and IBA services.

Immigration Officers (Holyhead)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many immigration officers are at present employed at the port of Holyhead; and what are the corresponding figures for 1979 and 1984.

Mr. Renton: No immigration officers are at present stationed at the port of Holyhead; none were stationed there in 1979 or in 1984.

Welsh Language Programmes

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the availability of Welsh language television and radio programmes and other programmes made in Wales to viewers outside Wales.

Mr. Renton: I am aware of only one such representation in recent months.

Police Houses (Sales)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to propose any changes in the method of valuation of ex-police houses for the purpose of their sale to serving officers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is for police authorities to arrange for the valuation of surplus police houses which they propose to offer for sale. They are authorised by the general consents issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment in 1981 to sell such houses to serving police officers on the same terms and at the same rates of discount

as those offered by housing authorities to council tenants. It is for individual police authorities to decide whether a discount should be offered and, if so, what the rates of discount should be, subject to the maximum rates of discount set by the general consents.

Metropolitan Police (Racial Equality)

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will hold discussions with representatives of the Metropolitan police concerning the future establishment of appropriate structures to monitor and settle problems of racial equality in the service, the promotion of black officers and appraisal procedures, and training improvements.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since December 1986, the Metropolitan police have been implementing an equal opportunities programme with the help of the Commission for Racial Equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission, and the race relations advisory service of the Department of Employment. Issues of race and sex equality are handled by the equal opportunities unit which has been set up in the force and last year a procedure was introduced to enable officers to seek redress for grievances under the Race Relations Act 1976.

I understand from the Commissioner that recruit selection is undertaken only by those trained in equal opportunities. All probationers, and other serving officers, also receive such training. The force is also developing a computerised system to monitor equality of treatment, and the staff appraisal system has recently been modified taking account of the need to ensure equal opportunities. At present, 7·1 per cent. of the 442 officers from ethnic minority backgrounds hold supervisory ranks.

Given the continuing progress being made by the Metropolitan police in this area, we do not consider that discussions are needed at present.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of the national shortage of court clerks and inadequate space and facilities in many courts, he will make a statement about planned additional funding for the magistrates courts.

Mr. John Patten: We are aware of the concern expressed by justices' clerks and others about difficulties in recruiting and retaining court clerks, especially those qualified as solicitor or barrister. I understand that the joint negotiating committee (JNC) which negotiates pay and conditions for magistrates' courts staff is collecting information on recruitmemt and retention, and will take it into account when considering the pay settlement for 1988. We will consider very carefully whatever proposals the JNC puts forward. Capital funds are available for replacing or improving accommodation and are allocated in order of operational need.

Immigration (Grants to Local Authorities)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money has been spent on section 11 grants under the Local Government Act 1966 in each of the last four years.

Mr. John Patten: The amount of grant paid under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 in respect of each of the last four years was:

	£ million
1984-85	73·6
1985-86	81·2
1986-87	87·8
1987-88	98·8

The figures for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are estimates subject to adjustment when claims from local authorities are finally settled. The grant represents 75 per cent. of the eligible expenditure incurred by local authorities.

Category C Prisons (Escapes)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the numbers of prisoners who have escaped, or attempted to escape, from all category C prisons in the last 20 years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Statistics on escaps are published in annual reports on the work of the prison department, copies of which are available in the Library, and show that the following numbers of prisoners escapd from category C prisons:

Year	*Number*
1969	9
1970	12
1971	20
1972	45
1973	36
1974	26
1975	44
1976	50
1977	48
1978	44
1979	94
1980	62
1981	76
1982	98
1983	91
1984-85	105
1985-86	98
1986-87	68

The 1984-85 figure is for the 15-month period from 1 January 1984-31 March 1985. Subsequent reports relate to the year from 1 April. Between 1 April 1987 and 31 May 1988, a total of 103 prisoners escaped.

The figures need to be viewed in the context of the substantial increases which have occurred during the period in both the number of category C prisons, and the total average population of such establishments.

As to attempted escapes, the information readily available centrally relates to 1986-88 and shows that, during these years, the following numbers of prisoners were reported as having attempted to escape:

Year	*Number*
1986	72
1987	93
1988 (to 31 May)	26

Entry Rules

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what rules govern entry into the United

Kingdom by *(a)* citizens of Eire and *(b)* citizens of Commonwealth countries; and if privileges granted are reciprocal for United Kingdom citizens in Eire.

Mr. Renton: Because the Irish Republic forms part of the common travel area, its citizens are generally free to enter the United Kingdom, whether coming from within or outside that area. Irish citizens, may, however, be subject to deportation, or to exclusion under either the immigration or the prevention of terrorism legislation. Under regulations in place in the Republic of Ireland, complete reciprocity is accorded to British citizens, thus allowing them unrestricted access to the Republic. The entry of Commonwealth citizens to the United Kingdom is controlled by the Immigration Act 1971 and by the immigration rules made under it.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what entry documents are required for *(a)* citizens of Eire entering the United Kingdom and *(b)* Commonwealth countries; and if these rights are reciprocal for United Kingdom citizens entering Eire.

Mr. Renton: Under the provisions of the Immigration Act 1971 a person must produce a valid passport or some other document establishing his identity or citizenship if required to do so by the immigration officer examining him. This applies to all nationalities without distinction. Additionally, any person requiring an entry clearance must be in possession of this at the time of entry. Entry clearance requirements however do not apply to citizens of the Irish Republic.

Persons arriving in and departing from the United Kingdom on a local journey within the common travel area, that is to say, the Channel islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland, are not generally subject to control under the Immigration Act and would not therefore normally be required to submit to examination by an immigration officer, nor required to produce entry documents under the provisions of that Act. Arrangements for the operation of the common travel area are reciprocal.

Requirements placed on persons entering the Republic of Ireland from outside the common travel area are matters for the Irish Government.

Computer Crime

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the progress being made against computer crime; what steps are being taken to combat it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are concerned about computer crime, but it is a complicated matter and my right hon. Friend is awaiting a report from the Law Commission about it before deciding what, if any, action needs to be taken by Government to deal with it. In the meantime, the subject is receiving close attention from the police. I know, for example, that the Metropolitan police give lectures and talks to companies and have contributed to conferences on the dangers, and security aspects, of computer crime.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he proposes to take to ensure that companies who are the victims of computer crime are co-operating fully with the police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All citizens have a general duty to co-operate with the police in the investigation of offences. We have no information to suggest that companies which have become victims of computer crime are not co-operating fully with the police.

Mortgage Fraud

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated total involved in known mortgage fraud; what steps are being taken to identify those responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Criminal statistics do not distinguish between mortgage and other types of fraud and no information is therefore available on numbers of offences or amounts of money involved. It is the responsibility of chief officers of police to take whatever steps they think appropriate to investigate suspected offences and to identify offenders.

Police (Establishment)

Mr. John: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out for each police authority area in England and Wales the current establishment of police officers and the shortfall where applicable in the actual numbers of police officers in service below that establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is as follows:

Force	*Establishment as at 31 March 1988*	*Vacancies*
Avon and Somerset	3,030	17
Bedfordshire	1,020	-21
Cambridgeshire	1,160	—
Cheshire	1,845	8
Cleveland	1,474	8
Cumbria	1,144	3
Derbyshire	1,793	3
Devon and Cornwall	2,802	15
Dorset	1,235	1
Durham	1,357	28
Dyfed Powys	935	18
Essex	2,742	14
Gloucestershire	1,164	11
Greater Manchester	6,943	—
Gwent	986	7
Hampshire	3,105	2
Hertfordshire	1,631	28
Humberside	1,972	19
Kent	2,911	3
Lancashire	3,158	19
Leicestershire	1,733	—
Lincolnshire	1,183	15
Merseyside	4,679	32
Norfolk	1,318	10
Northamptonshire	1,086	—
Northumbria	3,453	—
North Wales	1,316	16
North Yorkshire	1,368	—
Nottinghamshire	2,259	7
South Wales	3,109	—
South Yorkshire	2,931	19
Staffordshire	2,156	21
Suffolk	1,186	—
Surrey	1,639	—
Sussex	2,923	29
Thames Valley	3,486	—
Warwickshire	981	2
West Mercia	1,963	17
West Midlands	6,684	45
West Yorkshire	5,204	20

Force	Establishment as at 31 March 1988	Vacancies
Wiltshire	1,074	—
City of London	798	11
Metropolitan	27,815	127
	122,751	596

Members' Representations

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Stretford of 31 December 1987 and 14 April 1988 concerning the practice of writing directly to constituents on matters raised by a right hon. or hon. Member.

Mr. Renton: I hope to do so shortly.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mr. Hurd: About one half of officers at grade 3 level and above attended private (including the then direct grant) schools: the remainder either attended state schools or the information is not readily available.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of those held on remand in custody awaiting trial have been held *(a)* over three months and *(b)* over six months, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest available information on the length of time since the initial remand in custody of untried prisoners relates to 30 June 1987 and was given in the reply to a question from the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) on 27 May at columns *379-80*.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Home Tutors (Cheshire)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is yet in a position to make a statement about the pay of home tutors in Cheshire.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand from the Cheshire local education authority that it will be reinstating the rate of pay applicable before 1 October 1987 for those home tutors who had a contract with the authority on that date, for the duration of those contracts. I have written to my hon. Friend on this matter.

Education Support Grants

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the operation of education support grants in Norfolk, in particular those which are specifically geared to the needs of rural areas.

Mrs. Rumbold: The total expenditure that has been approved for support by education support grants in Norfolk in the four years to 1988-89 and the amount of expenditure on which grant has been claimed is given in the table.

The authority has taken part in the pilot project to improve the quality or the range of the curriculum provided in primary schools in rural areas and figures are given in the table. This is the only activity that is specifically geared to the needs of rural areas.

Education support grants: Norfolk

£ cash prices

Financial year	Expenditure supported by ESGs on All activities[1]		Curriculum in primary schools in rural areas (included in all activities)	
	Approved	Claimed	Approved	Claimed
1985-86	386,400	368,203	66,600	66,600
1986-87	1,412,850	1,005,444	123,600	123,600
1987-88	1,461,400	—[2]	107,300	—[2]
1988-89	1,833,200	—[2]	134,100	—[2]

[1] As well as curriculum in primary schools in rural areas the other activities are:
Mathematics in Schools
Science in Primary Education
PICKUP
Midday Supervision
IT in NAFE
Education needs of unemployed adults
DP equipment in FE
Misuse of Drugs
GCSE
Education for a multi-ethnic society
Portage.

[2] Figures not yet available.

Rugby League

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer of 14 June to the hon. Member for Wakefield, if he will take steps to encourage the greater availability of rugby league as part of the content of physical education courses at teacher training colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

Education Reform

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the additional estimated transport costs faced by local authorities as a result of the implementation of the Education Reform Bill.

Mrs. Rumbold: We do not consider that there need be any significant additional transport costs associated with the implementation of the Education Reform Bill.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to issue guidance on admissions to county and voluntary schools in the light of the more open enrolment provisions of the Education Reform Bill.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Draft guidance is being issued today. Its purpose is to inform discussion of this topic during the remaining stages of the Bill's passage through Parliament; to guide local education authorities and others in any preparatory work they wish to undertake and to give all concerned an early opportunity to comment. Comments are invited by 16 September 1988.

Inner London Education Authority

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the number of letters his Department has received to date from parents of children attending schools in the Inner London education authority area who *(a)* expressed opposition to the abolition of the authority and *(b)* approved of the abolition.

Mrs. Rumbold: Some 3,350 letters have been received since the announcement of the Government's proposals on 4 February. Correspondents do not always give their circumstances and it is therefore not possible to state how many are parents. Initially, many correspondents expressed concern at the proposals, but as these have become better understood the emphasis has shifted to inquiries about specific areas of education.

Undergraduate Tuition

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current, average, annual, per student full cost of undergraduate tuition, excluding capital costs, for degree courses in veterinary science, medicine, law, physics, modern languages and English, at *(a)* university and *(b)* polytechnic.

Mr. Jackson: Table 9 of "University Statistics 1985-86 —Volume 3, Finance" provides information (excluding some central costs) about university academic provision within each of 37 cost centres. Similar information about polytechnic provision in each of 17 cost centres is contained in "Polytechnic Expenditure, Actual 1986-87". Copies of both volumes are in the Library. The cost centres do not necessarily tally with the individual subjects identified in the question but, in any case, the figures do not permit the separation of first degree course tuition costs from other departmental activity.

Amnesia

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research into amnesia has been and is being supported by his Department; and what plans there are to increase it.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that the Medical Research Council (MRC) is currently supporting 10 research projects on amnesia. In the financial year 1986-87, the last year for which figures are available, the council's expenditure on this research was £254,000. The MRC also supports a variety of other projects which have a bearing on aspects of memory. University departments and medical schools also undertake research in this area supported by UGC block grant funds. The MRC will consider soundly based scientific proposals for further research in amnesia in competition with other applications.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a detailed statement on the up-to-date progress being made on the individual plans to set up the various city technology colleges in the various sites earmarked for this purpose.

Mrs. Rumbold: Sponsorship for six city technology colleges has now been announced. The first, sponsored by Hanson plc in Kingshurst, Birmingham will open in September this year, the second CTC, in Nottingham, sponsored by Mr. H. Djanogly, CBE, will open in September 1989 when I hope that the Teesside CTC sponsored by BAT Industries will also open. Dixons plc, the Sir Philip and Pauline Harris Trust, and jointly, the Mercers' Company and Thamesmead Town have announced their sponsorship of three more CTCs. We are making good progress in discussions with a number of other prospective sponsors and over prospective buildings-sites.

City Technology College (Thamesmead)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has incurred any cost in drawing up a proposal to establish a city technology college in Thamesmead; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. The cost of planning for the proposed Thamesmead CTC is being borne by the prospective sponsors. The cost of local consultation prior to a decision on the publication of related proposals under section 12 of the Education Act 1980 would be met by Bexley local education authority. As part of their normal duties, officials in the Department have given information and advice to the prospective sponsors and to the local education authority.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has discussed with the sponsors of the proposed city technology college in Thamesmead the college's admission policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Officials at the Department have advised the prospective sponsors of the proposed Thamesmead CTC of the general policy for admission to city technology colleges and ways in which it might be applied in the particular circumstances in Thamesmead.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish the draft financial memoranda covering relationships between his Department and the PCFC and between his Department and the UFC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: These documents will set out formal financial requirements on matters such as transfer of funds and accounting and audit. They will be drafted in discussion with the interested parties and made publicly available in due course.

Medical and Scientific Research

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the comparative expenditure in medical and in scientific research for each year since 1974 in Belgium, France, Holland, Italy, Denmark and the Federal Republic of Germany in pounds sterling of 1988.

Mr. Jackson: Figures showing international comparisons of expenditure on research are published in the 1987 annual review of Government-funded R and D, which is in the Library. For 1985, the latest year for which figures are available, the details are as follows:

£ million 1985 prices

	Belgium	France	Holland	Italy	Denmark	Federal Republic of Germany	United Kingdom
Civil Research	372	4,018	883	1,948	n.a.	4,900	2,203
of which							
Medical Research	26	232	22	99	n.a.	169	167

Details of expenditure for each year back to 1974 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Wray. To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is, for each year since 1974 and in 1988 moneys, the expenditure on medical or scientific research in (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales, (iii) Northern Ireland, (iv) England and (v) the whole of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not available.

Non-advanced Further Education

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the public spending per head for senior school pupils and those in non-advanced further education in pound sterling for Germany, France, the United States of America and Italy.

Mrs. Rumbold: The readily available information is shown in the table. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) explained in his reply of 10 June to the hon. Member, for international comparisons, non-advanced further education is included with secondary education at the second level. Figures for the United Kingdom have been included for comparison.

Recurrent public expenditure per pupil/student at the second level at 1984 values[1]

	Year of data (beginning in)	£ purchasing power parity[2] (1984 values)[3]
Germany, Federal Republic of[4]	1984	1,410 (1,340)
France[5]	1982	1,610 (1,520)
United States of America[6]	1983	1520[7]
United Kingdom[4]	1984	1,400 (1,280)

Main source: UNESCO Statistical Yearbook.
[1] Where necessary, data have been adjusted to calendar years.
[2] Local currencies have been adjusted using purchasing power parities, which allow for differences in the cost of living as well as exchange rates. Basic data prior to 1984 have been adjusted by Consumer Price indices.
[3] Bracket figures exclude unallocated sums within budgets.
[4] Public sector education only.
[5] Public expenditure including subsidies to private education and pupils in public and private education.
[6] Public elementary and secondary schools.
[7] Based on a combined 1st and 2nd level expenditure figures. All expenditure is allocated.

Universities (Government Expenditure)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give Government expenditure, excluding home student fee income, in total and per head of university population for each year since 1978-79 at constant prices, including planned expenditure per head for 1988-89 to 1990-91; and if he will give the number of new undergraduate entrants for 1978-79.

Mr. Jackson: In the table, Government expenditure has been taken as the University Grants Committee recurrent grant to universities. Otherwise, the per capita figures are on the same basis as those contained in the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 13 June at columns *8-9*. The full-time home undergraduate intake for the academic year for 1978-79 was 72,994.

Government expenditure (constant 1986-87 prices)

	£ million	Per student £
1978-79	1,120·3	4,352·4
1979-80	1,156·4	4,386·9
1980-81	1,267·4	4,671·6
1981-82	1,211·1	4,380·1
1982-83	1,401·2	5,095·3
1983-84	1,396·5	5,147·4
1984-85	1,371·4	5,096·2
1985-86	1,324·5	4,914·7
1986-87	1,320·1	4,855·1
[1]1987-88	1,394·4	5,066·9
[1]1988-89	1,441·7	5,145·3
[1]1989-90	1,441·2	5,058·6
[1]1990-91	1,424·2	4,941·7

[1] Based on estimated figures.

NATIONAL FINANCE

CHIEF Computer Project

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will place in the Library a copy of the business case on which his decision on the CHIEF computer project was made.

Mr. Lilley: No. The business case for CHIEF contains commercial information that was supplied in confidence. This confidence would be breached if the report became a public document during the course of the contractual negotiations which are still taking place.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated cost over the next 10 years of granting the CHIEF project to British Telecom, rather that its being continued in-house.

Mr. Lilley: Contractual negotiations for the development and operation of CHIEF are currently taking place with British Telecom and will not be concluded until towards the end of the year and figures will not be finalised until then. The release of information about the costs of the options for CHIEF could compromise these negotiations.

Customs and Excise Computers Project

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to privatise the Customs and Excise computers project.

Mr. Lilley: I assume that this question refers to the CHIEF project which is currently being negotiated

between Customs and British Telecom. CHIEF will replace the current DEPS system which British Telecom already operate under contract with Customs. There is therefore no privatisation involved.

Civil Service Pensions

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average weekly Civil Service pension; and what percentage of Civil Service pensioners are on or below this average.

Mr. Brooke: The average pension in payment to retired civil servants is £54 a week; the average in payment to dependants is £21 a week. Some two thirds of retired civil servants and of dependants are on or below their respective averages.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements he proposes for customs clearance on high-speed trains to and from the north of England using the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Section 12 of the Channel Tunnel Act provides for customs and immigration checks to be undertaken on board trains going beyond London via Olympia, subject to adequate facilities being provided. Discussions are at present taking place between Customs and British Rail about the facilities that would be required on these trains and the back-up accommodation needed at Olympia.

Government-owned Companies

Mr. Fry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the trading concerns and companies which are still either fully or partly owned by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Major: Details of Her Majesty's Government's holdings of shares and other securities are shown annually in the "Consolidated Fund and National Loans Fund Accounts, Supplementary Statements", a copy of which is held in the Library.

Alcohol and Tobacco

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce a special and additional tax on alcohol and tobacco, the proceeds of which are to be spent exclusively on the National Health Service.

Mr. Lilley: It is not the Government's policy to introduce taxes whose revenues are hypothecated to particular programmes.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mr. Brooke: Information on the type of school attended is not held on personnel records or in any other form.

Own Resources

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the early payment of non-value added tax own resources to the European Communities in June.

Mr. Brooke: As I informed my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Ian Twinn) on 8 June at columns *602-3*, the European Commission estimates that its spending obligations during June will exceed the available resources available for that month, thereby leading to cash flow difficulties. In order to help ease these difficulties, and in accordance with article 10(2) of Council regulation 2891/77, the Commission has requested member states to advance into this month their payments of own resources other than VAT which would otherwise have been made in July. The Government are satisfied that the request complies with article 10(2). The gross amount of the advance is £147 million. However, the actual payment to be on 20 June in respect of the advance will be only some £36 million as a result of two adjustments to the gross figures:

(i) As I informed my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on 29 March at column *397*, in accordance with the conclusions of the Brussels European Council of 11-12 February 1988, member states are entitled to deduct at source 10 per cent. of non-VAT own resources to cover collection costs. This replaces the previous arrangements whereby 10 per cent. of the amounts in question was refunded to member states.

(ii) The outstanding amount of the Commission's borrowing up to 20 June under article 12(2) of Council regulation 2891/77 will be recovered.

The article 10(2) facility does not affect the total amount which the Community is authorised to spend during the year. The payment of levies and duties on 20 July will be reduced by the amount of the advance. The Commission's request does not, therefore, involve any net addition to public expenditure.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Lawson: The Ecofin Council met in Luxembourg on 13 June. I represented the United Kingdom. The Council approved the interinstitutional agreement between the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on the implementation of the conclusions of the Brussels European Council on budget discipline.

The Council reached agreement on a directive providing for complete liberalisation of capital movements in the Community and a regulation combining the two existing mechanisms for medium-term balance of payments support. The complete abolition of exchange controls by those countries that still retain them will represent an important move towards a freer and less-regulated Europe, and an essential step towards the completion of the single market.

The Council also agreed that there should be further discussion on tax exemptions for temporary importations of means of transport.

Land and Buildings

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement explaining the variation in the figures for general Government gross domestic fixed capital formation, purchases of land and existing buildings net of sales in 1987-88 as *(a)* forecast in the 1987 public expenditure White Paper, Cm. 56, *(b)* estimated in the 1988 public expenditure White Paper, Cm. 288, *(c)* provided in the *Official Report*, of 28 March 1988, column *321*, and *(d)* most recently estimated, following publication of figures for sales by the new town commission.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 14 June 1988]*: The table gives planned expenditure and estimated outturn figures for purchases, net of sales, of land and existing buildings by Department for 1987-88.

No detailed update to estimated outturns for 1987-88 has been made since these figures were produced for the 1988 public expenditure White Paper. The overall difference between planned expenditure and estimated outturn is mainly the result of substantially larger than expected sales.

The table shows purchases, net of sales, of land and existing buildings included in the planning total. Between Cm. 56 and Cm. 288 the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Development Board for Rural Wales (new town activities) were given external finance treatment and their capital expenditure no longer features in the planning total. The presentation of the figures is consistent with the coverage used in the 1987 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 56-II, Table 2.9) and in the table provided in the *Official Report* of 28 March 1988 at column *321*. It differs, however, from the presentation of purchases, net of sales, of land and existing buildings shown in table 2.11 of volume I of the 1988 public expenditure White Paper, which excluded public corporations not given external finance treatment.

Purchases, net of sales, of land and existing buildings, by department, 1987-88

£ million

	Plans (Cm. 56)	*Estimated outturn (Cm. 288)*	*Difference*
Defence	−31	−63	−31
Foreign and Commonwealth Office[1]	35	36	+1
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food[2]	−10	−28	−18
Employment	2	—	−2
Transport	75	36	−39
DOE—Housing	−1,236	−1,850	−614
DOE—Other environmental services	−463	−830	−367
Home Office and legal departments[3]	−15	−27	−13
Education and science	−51	−98	−47
DHSS—health and personal social services	−138	−199	−61
Scotland	−135	−261	−106
Wales	−74	−93	−19
Northern Ireland	−8	−4	+4
Other departments[4]	−36	−33	+3
TOTAL	−2,105	−3,413	−1,308

[1] Including Overseas Development Administration.
[2] Including Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce and Forestry Commission.
[3] This group comprises the Home Office, Lord Chancellor's Department, Northern Ireland Court Service, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Serious Fraud Office and the Crown Office, Procurator Fiscal Service and Lord Advocate's Department.
[4] Including Property Services Agency and Civil Superannuation.

VAT

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he plans to impose a 14 to 20 per cent. tax on talking books for blind and disabled people, and on aids and equipment for disabled people, in accordance with proposals from the Commission of the European Communities.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 10 June 1988]*: I have made it clear on a number of occasions that Her Majesty's Government do not accept the Commission's proposals for the approximation of indirect taxation.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the destination of the 377,000 individuals who left the unemployment register between May 1987 and March 1988 but did not apparently enter work.

Mr. Cope: In the 10 months May 1988 to March 1988 the total outflow from the United Kingdom claimant count was over 4·1 million. Information on the destinations of those leaving the count is not available.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of persons out of work and claiming benefit for each *(a)* assisted area and *(b)* intermediate area on 8 April.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the library. The table shows the total number of unemployed claimants for each development area and intermediate area on 8 April 1988.

Unemployed claimants—April 1988

Development Areas	*Unemployed Claimants*
South West	
Falmouth	1,636
Helston	1,189
Newquay	1,817
Penzance and St. Ives	2,913
Redruth and Camborne	3,362
East Midlands	
Corby	2,605
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Rotherham and Mexborough	19,925
Scunthorpe	7,089
Whitby	1,138
North West	
Liverpool	86,887
Widnes and Runcorn	8,931
Wigan and St. Helens	28,079
Wirral and Chester	30,936
North	
Workington	3,593
Bishop Auckland	6,795

Development Areas	*Unemployed Claimants*
Hartlepool	8,185
Middlesbrough	23,944
Newcastle upon Tyne	53,464
South Tyneside	12,503
Stockton on Tees	12,086
Sunderland	31,471
Wales	
Aberdare	3,645
Blanau Gwent and Abergavenny	5,422
Cardigan	1,428
Holyhead	3,338
Lampeter and Aberaeron	891
Merthyr and Rhymney	8,632
Neath and Port Talbot	5,623
Pontypridd and Rhondda	9,121
Shotton, Flint and Rhyl	9,156
South Pembrokeshire	2,556
Wrexham	5,833
Scotland	
Arbroath	1,535
Bathgate	7,671
Cumnock and Sanquhar	4,031
Dumbarton	5,010
Dundee	13, 027
Glasgow	97,865
Greenock	9,116
Irvine	9,980
Kilmarnock	4,723
Lanarkshire	27,400

Unemployed claimants—April 1988

Intermediate Areas	*Unemployed Claimant*
Region	
South West	
Bodmin and Liskeard	2,764
Bude	734
Cinderford and Ross on Wye	2,543
Plymouth	16,023
West Midlands	
Birmingham	92,855
Coventry and Hinkley	27,097
Dudley and Sandwell	33,370
Kidderminster	3,786
Telford and Bridgenorth	8,716
Walsall	19,241
Wolverhampton	19,352
East Midlands	
Gainsborough	1,671
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Barnsley	13,835
Bradford	23,665
Doncaster	17,489
Grimsby	10,562
Hull	24,225
Sheffield	38,899
North West	
Accrington and Rossendale	4,879
Blackburn	7,343
Bolton and Bury	21,850
Manchester	85,606
Oldham	9,269
Rochdale	7,872
North	
Darlington	5,954
Durham	7,643
Morpeth and Ashington	7,637

Intermediate Areas	*Unemployed Claimant*
Wales	
Bangor and Caenarfon	4,129
Bridgend	6,906
Cardiff	22,442
Fishguard	538
Haverfordwest	2,998
Llanelli	4,816
Newport	10,000
Pontypool and Cwmbran	4,884
Porthmadoc and Ffestiniog	736
Pwhelli	890
Swansea	13,751
Scotland	
Alloa	2,971
Ayr	5,780
Badenoch	463
Campeltown	707
Dunfermline	7,225
Dunoon and Bute	1,268
Falkirk	8,478
Forres	652
Girvan	734
Invergordon and Dingwall	3,074
Kirkcaldy	10,632
Lochaber	1,210
Newton Stewart	613
Skye and Wester Ross	952
Stewartry	818
Stranraer	1,230
Sutherland	772
Western Isles	2,050
Wirk	880

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report* each travel-to-work area, not being either an assisted or intermediate area, in which male unemployment on 8 April was 10 per cent. or higher.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of male unemployed claimants, expressed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed for each of the non-assisted travel-to-work areas in Great Britain, on 14 April 1988, in which the male unemployment rate was 10 per cent. or higher. The figures are not seasonally adjusted.

Not assisted areas
Unemployed claimants—April 1988

Travel to work area	*Rate*
Skegness	22·6
Torbay	19·2
Thanet	19·2
Mansfield	19·1
Alnwick and Amble	18·8
Castleford and Pontefract	18·1
Clacton	17·9
Blackpool	17·8
Worksop	17·8
Conwy and Colwyn	16·9
Buckie	16·5
Bideford	16·3
Louth and Mablethorpe	16·2
Chesterfield	16·0
Wakefield and Dewsbury	16·0
Stirling	15·8
Crieff	15·4
Keith	15·4
Inverness	15·3
Fraserburgh	15·3
Peterhead	15·1
Islay/Mid Argyll	15·0
Lancaster and Morecambe	14·9

Travel to work area	Rate
Berwickshire	14·8
Dolgellau and Barmouth	14·8
Minehead	14·6
Monmouth	14·5
Brechin and Montrose	14·4
Orkney Islands	14·3
Folkestone	14·3
Great Yarmouth	14·2
Bridlington and Driffield	14·2
Machynlleth	14·0
Edinburgh	13·8
Burnley	13·8
Nottingham	13·8
Alferton and Ashfield	13·6
Peebles	13·6
Isle of Wight	13·4
Goole and Selby	13·4
Annan	13·3
Banff	13·3
Weston-super-Mare	13·2
Elgin	13·2
Wisbech	13·1
Blairgowrie and Pitlochry	13·1
Barnstaple and Ilfracombe	13·1
Lincoln	12·9
Harwich	12·9
Scarborough and Filey	12·8
Horncastle and Market Rasen	12·6
Oban	12·5
Newark	12·5
St. Austell	12·2
Dartmouth and Kingsbridge	12·1
Perth	12·1
Cromer and North Walsham	11·9
Berwick on Tweed	11·9
Forfar	11·9
Thurso	11·9
Retford	11·9
Lockberie	11·8
Warrington	11·8
Pendle	11·7
Truro	11·7
North West Fife	11·6
Northwich	11·6
Leeds	11·5
Aberystwyth	11·5
Hawick	11·5
Denbeigh	11·5
Derby	11·4
Llandeilo	11·4
Thirsk	11·4
Carmarthen	11·3
Boston	11·3
Hastings	11·1
Burton on Trent	11·1
Preston	11·0
Keighley	10·9
Dumfries	10·9
Calderdale	10·9
Lowestoft	10·8
Huddersfield	10·8
York	10·7
Bournemouth	10·7
Kelso and Jedburgh	10·7
Dover and Deal	10·7
Sittingbourne and Sheerness	10·6
Huntly	10·6
Newton Abbot	10·6
Portsmouth	10·6
Whitchurch and Market Drayton	10·4
London	10·4
Southend	10·3
South Molton	10·3
Malvern and Ledbury	10·2
Llandrindod Wells	10·2
Fakenham	10·2
Launceston	10·0
Canterbury	10·0

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what was the percentage level of unemployment at the latest available date in the Liverpool, Riverside constituency;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the percentage figures for unemployment for the top 10 constituencies in England and Wales and the percentage of the bottom 10 constituencies.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available. The Department does not calculate unemployment rates for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has for each of the member states of the EEC concerning *(a)* the average weekly hours worked, *(b)* the average holiday entitlement and *(c)* the normal retirement age in the most recent years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: The table sets out the latest available information published by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) covering average weekly hours worked in manufacturing industry. Information on average holiday entitlement and age of retirement is not readily available.

Average weekly hours worked in manufacturing

Country	Hours	Year
Belgium[5]	33·0	1986
Denmark[1]	33·0	1986
France	38·6	1986
Greece[3]	39·1	1986
Ireland	41·2	1986
Italy	[6]7·77	1984
Luxembourg	40·3	1986
Netherlands[3]	40·3	1985
Portugal[1]	38·1	1985
Spain[4]	36·9	1986
West Germany[3]	40·4	1986
United Kingdom[2]	41·6	1986

Source: ILO Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1987.

[1] Provisional.

[2] United Kingdom's figures are for full time workers on adult rates of pay; excludes quarrying.

[3] Hours paid for rather than hours actually worked.

[4] Spain's figures are for employed persons (including armed forces) aged 16 years or over.

[5] Belgium's figures exclude primary iron and steel industries.

[6] Per day.

Restart

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of individuals attending restart interviews since 1986 have moved straight into employment; if he will provide a breakdown of the destinations of the remainder; and what information he has as to how many have been switched from unemployment-related benefit to some other form of benefit.

Mr. Cope: The table shows the proportion of people interviewed under the restart scheme who have been referred to various opportunities, including jobs. We do not know how many of these move straight into employment, nor do we know how many people have moved from unemployment related benefits to some other form of benefit.

Between July 1986 and 29 April 1988, a total of 3,725,563 restart interviews took place. These resulted in:

	As percentage of those interviewed
Submitted to:	
Jobs	8·8
Community programme	8·0
Voluntary projects programme-voluntary work	2·2
Jobclub	8·7
New job training scheme	6·8
Other training	8·2
Employment rehabilitation centre	0·2
Restart course	7·6
Enterprise allowance scheme	3·9
Referred to:	
Disablement resettlement officer	3·4
Claimant adviser	4·2
Other referrals (inc. PER)	18·2

Some people may be referred to more than one opportunity. The remaining represent people who have either declined an offer or for whom an offer was not appropriate.

New Jobs

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the net new jobs created in the United Kingdom since 1983 have been full-time and how many part-time; and what evidence there is on how many of the new part-time jobs have been taken by people already in employment.

Mr. Cope: As the employed labour force estimates for Northern Ireland do not distinguish between full-time and part-time jobs, the figures are for Great Britain only. Between December 1983 and December 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there was a net increase of 603,000 full-time and 760,000 part-time jobs in the employed labour force—the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's forces. It is estimated from the labour force survey that between spring 1984 and spring 1987, the number of people with two or more jobs increased by 133,000.

Employment Growth

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide figures to show how net employment growth in the United Kingdom since 1979 compares with that of other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries when measured on a common basis in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Cope: Comparative data for employment in terms of full-time equivalents are not available. Figures for net change in total civilian employment in the major OECD countries are as follows.

Net change in civilian employment between 1979 and 1987

	Thousands	Per cent.
Canada	+1,559	+15·0
United States	+13,616	+13·8
Japan	+4,320	+7·9
Italy	+590	+2·9
Germany	−249	−1·0
France	−340	−1·6
United Kingdom	−410	−1·6

Source: United Kingdom—Department of Employment.
Other countries—OECD.

Benefit Fraud Investigations

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average duration of unemployment of those denied benefit after fraud investigations in the year to April; what are the net savings to the taxpayer; and how these are calculated.

Mr. Cope: Records are not kept separately of the number of unemployed people whose claim to benefit is disallowed by the independent adjudicating authorities in fraud cases. Where a person voluntarily withdraws a claim to unemployment benefit following a fraud investigation it is assumed, on the basis of DHSS research, that the person refrains from claiming benefit on average for a period of 22 weeks. Net savings to the taxpayer for the year up to 31 March 1988 amount to £54·6 million and are calculated by multiplying by 22 the total amount of weekly benefit in payment at the time that a claim is withdrawn and deducting the costs of the fraud operation.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the numbers flowing through unemployment in the year to April is represented by those denied benefit after fraud investigations.

Mr. Cope: Records are not kept separately of the number of unemployed people whose claim to beneift is disallowed by the independent adjudication authorities in fraud cases. In the year ending 31 March 1988, a total of 80,088 people voluntarily withdrew their claims to unemployment benefit following a fraud investigation. This figure represents 1·83 per cent. of the total number of people who withdrew their claims in that year.

Taxi Drivers

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what access his Department has, and by what means, to details of the names and addresses of licensed taxi drivers in *(a)* Glasgow, *(b)* Birmingham and *(c)* elsewhere.

Mr. Lee: My Department's investigators requested and obtained from the local authorities in Glasgow and in Birmingham lists of the names of licensed taxi and private hire car drivers. They would adopt the same method in other parts of the country.

Job Club Scheme

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage of unemployed who, having used the Government's sponsored job club scheme, have successfully gained a job during the last 12 months *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the (i) Doncaster area and (ii) Mexborough area; and if he will make a statement on the general working of the scheme.

Mr. Lee: From April 1987 to March 1988 a total of 105,677 people passed through job clubs. Of these 57,080 (54 per cent.) went into jobs. During the same period, 680 people passed through job clubs in the Doncaster area of which 295 (43 per cent.) went into jobs. A total of 226 people passed through job clubs in the Mexborough area and, of these, 122 (54 per cent.) went into jobs.

Restart

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for each month from March 1987 the number of restart interviews at each jobcentre within the London borough of Camden.

Mr. Lee: Restart interviews are carried out at two offices within the London borough of Camden—Swiss Cottage jobcentre and Camden employment office. The table gives the available figures:

	Camden employment office	*Swiss Cottage jobcentre*	*Total*
1987			
April	461	—	461
May	579	—	579
June	708	—	708
July	612	459	1,071
August	395	724	1,119
September	407	671	1,078
October	297	805	1,102
November	215	681	896
December	211	519	730
1988			
January	264	684	948
February	246	613	859
March	244	698	942
April	301	794	1,095

Access to Employment

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what comparable access to employment in the United Kingdom *(a)* citizens of Eire and *(b)* citizens of Commonwealth countries enjoy; and if such access enjoyed is reciprocal for United Kingdom citizens seeking employment in Eire.

Mr. Lee: European Community law provides for free reciprocal access to employment between the United Kingdom and Eire. Commonwealth citizens require a work permit or other permission to work in the United Kingdom, unless they have the right of abode or are settled in the United Kingdom.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mr. Lee: This information is not held centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Printing Industry

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the barriers to be removed from the printing industry by the completion of the EEC internal market by 1992.

Mr. Maude: I am not aware of barriers peculiar to the printing industry which need to be removed by 1992. If the hon. Member is aware of obstacles particularly affecting the printing industry, I should be glad to receive details.

Lloyd's

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress which has been made by Lloyd's in the implementation of the recommendations of the committee of inquiry into regulatory matters at Lloyd's.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further progress has been made by Lloyd's in the implementation of the recommendations of the committee of inquiry into regulatory matters at Lloyd's.

Mr. Maude: The chairman of the council of Lloyd's has recently submitted a memorandum which records the progress made to date and Lloyd's plans for further implementation. This is the third such report to have been submitted by Lloyd's; the last having been placed in the Library on 18 November 1987 as I announced in the *Official Report* at columns *555-56*. I have today placed a copy of the latest memorandum in the Library. It shows that the council of Lloyd's has implemented 38 of the 70 recommendations in the committee's report which was published in January 1987. A steady programme of consultation on the remaining recommendations, including that on deficit clauses, continues. Implementation of virtually all the committee's recommendations should be completed by the middle of 1989.

I expect Lloyd's to maintain momentum in accordance with that agreed timetable for full and complete implementation. I shall continue to follow closely their progress and to keep the House informed.

Fur Marking Order

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects that the proposed Fur Marking Order will be laid before the House.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) when he intends to introduce a labelling order for leather goods manufactured from fur-bearing animals which he has identified as being commonly caught in leghold traps;

(2) whether he will list the scientific evidence on which he bases his identification of certain animals as commonly being trapped in leghold traps;

(3) if he will make it his policy not to lay the forthcoming order on fur labelling before Parliament in advance of a decision by the House on the principle of the matters to be covered by the order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have been giving careful consideration to the representations which were made during the consultation process. Legal difficulties have been raised, and I have regretfully come to the conclusion that it would not be practicable to proceed in the way originally envisaged. I have therefore decided not to proceed with the proposed order and to defer further action on the matter.

Professional Liability

Mr. Key: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the names and occupations of the members of the three study teams he has set up to establish

the implications of liability problems faced by selected professions, as announced in his reply to the hon. Member for Salisbury on 28 October 1987, *Official Report*, column 298; and if he will make a statement .

Mr. Maude: As announced on 11 May by my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—*Official Report, House of Lords*, columns 1208-9—we have appointed Andrew Likierman, professor of accounting and financial control at London business school, to be overall chairman of the fact-finding studies of the liability problems of selected professions. The names and current or former occupations of the members of the three study teams are as follows:

Name	*Occupation*
Auditors:	
William Morrison (Chairman)	chartered accountant
Robin Jackson	Lloyd's underwriter
Anthony Mallinson	solicitor
Geoffrey Williams	merchant banker
Architects/consulting engineers/construction surveyors:	
Donald Bishop (Chairman)	academic, chartered engineer
Bernard Anderson	regional health authority estate manager
Peter Down	services engineer
Donald Keating	Queen's Counsel
Anthony Kidd	insurance underwriter
Clifford Lansley	architect
James Myatt	building contractor
Roger Squire	director, property company
Chris Vickers	chartered surveyor
K. Wesley Whimster	consulting engineer
Other surveyors:	
Ian Oddy (Chairman)	chartered surveyor
John Chapman	chartered surveyor
Brian Grainger	chartered surveyor
Edward Hartill	the City Surveyor
Kim Lewison	barrister
Ray Moorman	managing director, property company
Jeremy Mortimer	insurance broker

Scotch Whisky (Japan)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress is being made in negotiations with the Japanese Government to ensure the early removal of discriminatory import taxation on Scotch whisky as agreed under the general agreement on tariffs and trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Japanese authorities have now announced their intention to introduce, from April 1989, a single rate of tax for all whiskies, at a level 45 per cent. below that currently applying to Scotch. This news is most welcome. Nevertheless, since some discrimination in the tax rates applying to other competing spirits will remain, the impact of the proposes changes would need to be kept closely under review, and the possibility of further recourse to the general agreement on tariffs and trade left open.

Harvard Securities

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many items of correspondence he has received complaining about the activities of Harvard Securities in each quarter of 1985, 1986, 1987 and the current year respectively.

Mr. Maude: The number of complaints received in respect of Harvard Securities plc between January 1985 and April 1988 are as follows:

Quarter	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
January-March	16	3	37	34
April-June	16	5	26	[1]10
July-September	10	14	42	—
October-December	9	84	28	—

[1] To 29 April 1988.

Following the repeal of the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 on 29 April 1988, complaints have been dealt with by the Securities and Investments Board. Three complaints relating to Harvard have been passed to the SIB since that date.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the monitoring returns made by Barlow Clowes to his Department in October 1987 were accompanied by an accountant's report from *(a)* the former Barlow Clowes auditors Spicer and Pegler, *(b)* the current Barlow Clowes auditors Touche Ross or *(c)* from any other firm of accountants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: While the facts of my Department's handling of the Barlow Clowes case are under investigation, I do not believe it would be appropriate to answer specific questions relating to the case.

Financial Services Act

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many firms are presently operating with interim authorisation under the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Maude: I understand from the Securities and Investments Board that on Wednesday 15 June, the most recent date for which figures can be supplied, there were 4,184 persons holding interim authorisation within the terms of paragraph 1 of schedule 15 to the Financial Services Act.

Securities Licences (Investigations)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many firms have been subject to more than the usual investigation prior to being granted a securities licence by his Department in the years 1984 to April 1988.

Mr. Maude: The extent of investigation varied considerably from case to case, depending upon the circumstances, and it is not therefore possible to provide a meaningful answer.

Estate Agents Act 1979

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what sections of the Estate Agents Act 1979 are currently not in operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: There are no regulations in force under sections 16, 17, 19 or 22 of the Estate Agents Act 1979. We have considered the need for such regulations but have no plans to implement these sections for the time being.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested is not currently held, and to obtain it would involve disproportionate cost.

Deregulation (Small Businesses)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from which organisations representing small businesses he has received representations in connection with his Department's forthcoming White Paper on deregulation.

Mr. Maude: No representations from organisations representing small businesses have been received dealing specifically with the forthcoming White Paper on deregulation. The enterprise and deregulation unit, however, has frequent contact with those organisations about issues involving all aspects of deregulation.

Handsworth Task Force

Mr. Bevan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the projects approved so far by the Government's Handsworth task force.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Following is the list:

Approved projects	*Task force*	*Total Government spending*
Black Star Car Company—motor vehicle repair project run as a community business	28,535	94,535
Broughton road housing refurbishment local labour initiative	575,000	1,350,000
CANDEL Potohari Hinko: provision of a community base to develop employment and training opportunities, and provide a drugs and AIDS awareness programme	68,000	240,000
Copthorne Hotal customised pre-recruitment training programme	6,500	36,500
CP Management Training for ethnic minorities, and follow-up	85,800	126,800
Grove Lane Baths—Community and youth enterprise centre	272,000	1,266,250
Handsworth employment scheme catering training unit	53,000	104,000
Handsworth opportunities programme for employment (HOPE): Sikh managed CP scheme to refurbish the groups training base	36,500	216,618
Handsworth churches forum YTS training centre and neighbourhood care project	115,075	266,926
Handsworth single homeless housing association development worker	15,000	15,000
Hotel and catering pre-recruitment training compact with 12 major Birmingham hotels	92,500	142,500
Inner city contracts—non profit making building company, providing jobs for local people	58,325	58,325
Inner City Glass Decorating: a craft workshop for predominantly disabled Task Force area residents which will develop into a community business	14,318	52,118
Local recruitment in the finance sector—feasibility study	3,967	3,967
United Youth Association: construction skills training	105,025	148,189
Villa Cross Employment Centre (formerly Villa Cross Pub)	302,875	967,875
Asian Business Institute	17,000	142,000
Birmingham Interpretation and Translation Service (BITS): grant to turn existing voluntary organisation into a self financing business	32,269	32,269
Black Business in Birmingham: venture capital fund to assist development of local small black business	88,800	88,800
Business Action Team offering free business consultancy to small local business and developing an executive recruitment service	113,605	113,605
Federation of Black Housing Associations seminar on construction contracts	4,670	4,670
Establishment of Handsworth Builders' Association, to advise and train local small builders	105,000	105,000
Handsworth Task Force Development Fund: grants and loans in co-operation with National Westminster bank and the City Council	200,000	200,000
Redevelopment of the Lozells Road Shops (including feasibility work)	494,198	578,198
Micro Business Support Service to those receiving Task Force Development Fund assistance	34,907	34,907
Rastafarian Enterprise Initiative, expansion of existing community business	23,500	23,500
Winson Green/Rotton Park Employment Project	25,000	107,500
Attock Welfare Employment and Training—CP pilot initiative	10,000	25,000
Birmingham Young Volunteers: support and advice to young people at risk.	8,000	22,000
Broadway Lower School technology laboratory—computer hardware and refurbishment costs.	20,000	59,000
City and Handsworth Alternative Scheme (CHAS): employment and training advice for ex-offenders.	38,604	49,854
Effective leadership in inner city schools: management development training for local teachers.	780	780
Fire service pre-recruitment training programme	7,500	17,700
Guru Ravidass Cultural Association: skills workshop conversion.	18,000	72,000
Handsworth Employment Scheme feasibility work and subsequent capital equipment funding for bakery and YTS workshop on the Camp Lane site.	150,610	194,564
Handsworth Under Fives Forum (HUFF) Training for nursery staff.	27,800	27,800

Approved projects	Task force	Total Government spending
Industrial Society, providing employment/enterprise awareness training in schools.	16,000	16,000
Information Technology Network—data link between Holte School, Handsworth Technical College and Austin Rover IT centre	49,956	49,956
Inner City Community Sports Leadership training-pilot	5,400	7,000
Lozells Electronic Workshop: training and low cost purchasing/servicing facility	21,864	103,244
MACRO Films video/film YTS training workshop	69,045	213,260
Opportunities Industrialisation Centre (OIC): training and employment advice to alienated local people	97,005	154,005
Outward bound self-development scheme	5,300	5,300
Positive Action for training in Housing Management (PATH) scheme for people from ethnic minorities	72,000	130,000
Handsworth Technical College personal services workshop (hairdressing, care of the elderly etc.)	58,900	90,400
Positive Image—childcare training centre	76,038	136,541
Holte School/Industry Centre in conjunction with business and the Local Education Authority	69,760	69,760
Schools Outreach pilot preventive care project	32,000	32,000
YTS project placement officer, to develop high quality employer led placements for local voluntary sector YTS providers	18,672	35,135
Villa Park Self Build—assistance with construction skills training for a group of Bangladeshis wishing to build their own houses	59,200	59,200
Afro-Caribbean Resource Centre—day care for elderly and creche facility	29,000	94,300
Handsworth Youth Crime Prevention Scheme—property marking using CP	1,648	56,121
Handsworth Day Care Centre Latchkey Scheme	5,000	29,611
Ladworth Community Safety project—small grants scheme for local groups	15,000	65,000
Lozells Shops security measures	28,500	28,500
Police Foundation—mobile crime prevention workshop	25,000	37,000
Progress 2000—CP refurbishment scheme to improve nursery protection	44,000	75,392
Think Green—training in horticultural skills for local people and development of a garden centre as a co-operative	54,700	86,830
Homework Centres—bridge funding to assist underachieving pupils in the Task Force area	25,500	25,500
Birmingham Area Improvement Team—security and environmental work to a residential area, involving 64 properties, to improve community safety	149,570	199,570
Handsworth Wood Boys School—equipment for the craft and design technology department	2,500	2,500
Handsworth Skills Partnerships—feasibility work	7,500	7,500
Prince of Wales Community Venture—capital (training) equipment	8,400	8,400
Villa Cross Bingo Hall—conversion into managed workspace for local businesses	300,000	450,000
Handsworth Employment Scheme—second capital equipment phase, also developing security services and contract cleaning businesses	185,931	185,931
Marcus Garvey Supplementary School—audio-visual and other equipment	9,000	9,000

Inner City Task Forces

Mr. Bevan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he is making any changes to the inner city task forces.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes. There are now 16 Government task forces operating in small inner city areas. The task force in Handsworth in Birmingham set up two years ago has made remarkable progress in stimulating enterprise and creating jobs for local people. The time has now come to transfer the benefits of the task force approach to another deprived part of Birmingham. I am therefore setting up a new Government task force to focus on the Saltley, Nechells and Washwood Heath areas of east Birmingham. The new task force will work closely with the private sector-led Birmingham heartlands urban development agency which is already tackling the economic regeneration of east Birmingham.

The new emphasis on east Birmingham does not mean that Handsworth will be forgotten. There is much work still to be done and projects to implement. The task force has brought a new impetus and freshness to tackling the area's problems and has proved that Handsworth is a place with a future worth investing in. The task force has contributed £4 million to 60 projects whose total cost has been £10 million. We estimate that it will have created over 2,000 jobs and training opportunities for local people and the ongoing effect of the projects will create many more.

I have always made it clear that task forces were short-term pump-priming and experimental teams working in deprived areas. I envisage the Handsworth team remaining for another nine months or so, but the demands on it are such that it will not be able to accept any new projects from today. Over the next few months the task force will be consulting with other public and private sector bodies, including the Government city action team, Birmingham city council and the CBI, to determine the best means to continue its work and maintain its record of success.

Through our action for cities programme, the Government will continue to focus a wide range of special assistance on Handsworth. We will also continue to learn from experiences in Handsworth and other task forces, and apply the lessons to the Government's continuing support for inner cities. Our new high priority in Birmingham will be the work of the east Birmingham task force.

ENERGY

Council of Energy Ministers

Mr. Sackville: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the meeting of the European Communities Council of Energy Ministers on 9 June.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Council was unable to agree conclusions on the three major items on the agenda. Those were the Commission's paper of obstacles to the completion of the internal market in energy, the Commission's review of progress made by member states against the 1995 energy objectives, and a draft recommendation on co-operation between public electricity supply companies and auto-producers using new and renewable and certain other sources of electricity. Objections were made to a reference in the first case to consumer choice, in the second to an opening up of the electricity market and in the third to the possibility of common carriage. The two latter items were remitted to permanent representatives for further work; on the first of these items the presidency, on its own responsibility, adopted conclusions which did not fully reflect the majority viewpoint.

The Council did however adopt a recommendation on measures to encourage the exploitation of renewable energy sources in the Community. A common position on this recommendation had been agreed last November; it has since been considered by the European Parliament.

The Council also agreed conclusions on a report by the Commission on implementation by member states of two 1983 recommendations encouraging the use of solid fuels in industry, public buildings and district heating schemes. The Commission will prepare a further report on the possibilities for increasing the use of these fuels.

Potassium Iodate

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will identify the extent of potassium iodate stocks held in Wales, their locations and the arrangement for their distribution in the event of an emergency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The operators' detailed site emergency plans include arrangements for the storage and distribution of stable iodine tablets to protect those who may be at risk in the unlikely event of an accident having significant off-site radiological effects. These plans are available in local libraries in the vicinity of the site, and in the Library of the House.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mr. Parkinson: About half of the civil servants at grade 3 and above in my Department were educated in private schools and half in state schools.

Renewable Energy Sources

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to publish the report on the development of renewable energy sources referred to in the debate on energy renewable sources, on 30 October, *Official Report*, columns 564-623.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am today publishing Energy Paper No. 55 "Renewable Energy in the UK: The Way Forward". The report is on sale by Her Majesty's Stationery Office and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The report outlines our view on a development strategy for renewable energy to the year 2000. By that time we hope that technologies will have been successfully developed to the point of commercial application and responsibility for exploitation taken over by industry. The report gives our view on the development path for each technology together with our estimation of the costs to be shared between Government and industry. We hope that the report will provide the basis for discussion with industry and the necessary increasing levels of collaboration.

Our aim is to stimulate the development of renewable energy sources to the fullest practicable extent where they have prospects of being economically attractive and environmentally acceptable. This aim will be pursued by two main means:

A collaborative research, development and demonstration programme with industry leading to commercial application for the more promising technologies;

The establishment of an institutional framework which will ensure that renewables can compete in the market on equal terms with other energy sources.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how he proposes to inform those involved of the benefit consequences for them of the social security rule concession in his announced speech to the House on 27 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) on 14 June 1988 at column *152*. In addition a national press publicity campaign was carried out during week commencing 23 May.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people receive housing benefits in each of the last three financial years; and what is the estimated number of recipients for 1988-89.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is shown in the table. The figures represent the estimated average numbers of households receiving rate rebates. Most households receiving assistance with rent will also be in receipt of a rate rebate.

Thousands

	Rent rebate	*Rent allowance*	*Rate rebate*
1985-86	3,710	1,150	7,020
1986-87	3,720	1,180	7,050
1987-88	3,760	1,250	7,030
1988-89	3,430	1,055	5,845

Source: Public Expenditure White Paper 1988, table 15.6. 1988-89 updated to take account of changes to capital rule, income tax changes and latest information on rent and rates.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of households *(a)* by tenure and *(b)* by household type who were expected to cease to qualify for any housing benefit as a result of the changes to the scheme implemented in April; and what is his estimate of the effect on these figures of his announcement of 27 April, including in both cases the effect of the new capital rule.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer June 1988]:* An estimate of the numbers losing all entitlement to housing benefit is contained in the tables. This is on the basis of the changes implemented in April. About 100,000 of these will be brought back into housing benefit by the capital changes introduced on 30 May. A breakdown of this 100,000 by household or tenure type would be unreliable because of data limitations. It is likely that the vast majority will be pensioners. The transitional payments scheme has no effect on the actual housing benefit caseload.

	Lose entitlement to housing benefit on April 1/4 (thousands)
Table 1	
Pensioners 80+	70
Pensioners 60 to 79	540
Sick/disabled	10
Lone parents	70
Couples with children	180
Others	120
TOTAL	990
Table 2	
Local authority tenants	300
Private tenants	140
Others	560
TOTAL	990

Notes:
1. Figures refer to tax units rather than households.
2. Figures may not add owing to rounding.

Prisoners (Home Leave)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average sum paid by way of living expenses entitlements for prisoners on home leave, payable to their partner or relatives by paragraph 6304 of the social fund manual; in how many cases the notional entitlement is below the £30 threshold; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available. However I am pleased to say that Secretary of State's direction 28, which prevents the award of community care grants for amounts below £30, has been amended today. The revised direction provides an exception to enable community care grants to be awarded under paragraph 6304 of the social fund manual in such cases where living expenses are calculated at less than £30.

Employment Training (Benefits)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, and in what ways, any of the additional payments that might be paid to adult trainees under the proposed employment training scheme, over and above their basic training allowance, including end of scheme bonus, earnings outside the programe and any additional top up in addition to their £10 premium, will affect their entitlement to *(a)* income support, *(b)* transitional protection payments, *(c)* housing benefit and *(d)* other passported benefits, including free prescriptions.

Mr. Portillo: Participants in employment training will be paid a training allowance, which will include a training "premium". If they are on income support when training starts, that benefit will continue but at a reduced level. This will safeguard automatic passported entitlement to other benefits, such as housing benefit and free prescriptions.

The training premium will not count as income in calculating a trainee's entitlement to any of the means-tested benefits.

The Government have announced an end-of-training bonus scheme, and intend that payments under that scheme will, likewise, not count as income in calculating entitlement to benefits. Any earnings received from work outside the training programme will be treated in the normal way with the appropriate disregard. Any voluntary top-up to the premium made at regular intervals will attract a £5 disregard.

We have ensured that training allowances do not erode transitional protection for income support purposes.

District Medical Staff Committees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the relationship between a district medical staff committee and a district health authority.

Mrs. Currie: It is the responsibility of each DHA to establish professional advisory machinery in a form that best meets the professional advice needs of that district. This may well include a district medical staff committee whose role is to provide advice on professional medical issues to the DHA. Whether that advice is implemented or not is a matter for the DHA.

Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning maternity services at Queen Mary's hospital, Sidcup.

Mrs. Currie: Four letters were received, all in 1987, including three from right hon. and hon. Members about the effect on maternity services at Queen Mary's hospital of changes in service in Dartford and Gravesham health authority, and one from a consultant about staffing aspects of the service at Queen Mary's hospital.

Maternity Services

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning maternity services at West Hill hospital, Dartford.

Mrs. Currie: A considerable number of representations were received from right hon. and hon. Members and members of the public about Dartford and Gravesham health authority's proposals to rationalise some of its acute hospital services, which included transferring maternity services from West Hill hospital to Gravesend and North Kent hospital. I visited the health district on 1 September 1987. No representations concerning maternity services at West Hill hospital have been received subsequent to Ministers' decision on 15 September 1987 to approve the transfer.

Home Defence Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 25 April to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), *Official Report*, column *30*, whether the details of the limited participation by the National Health Service in any or all of the military home defence exercises Eastern Shield, Capital Guard, Drake' Drum, Autumn Tiger, Northern Crusade, Western Encounter, Triple Crown, and Strong Link have been finalised; how much such participation is now estimated to cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs Currie: The Ministry of Defence has requested limited participation by certain National Health Service authorities in some of these exercises. The extent of any participation which would be on a voluntary basis—has not been decided, and the cost cannot yet be estimated.

Income Support

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether claims in writing for income support forwarded by organisations providing emergency accommodation will be treated as valid claims in the terms of regulation 4(1) of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) on 14 June, at column *172*.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce an independent right of review for disabled persons who are refused assistance by the Independent Living Fund.

Mr. Scott: The Independent Living Fund is an independent discretionary trust and it is for the trustees to decide how they will deal with cases which give rise to dissatisfaction. I know, however, that it is their intention to look at such cases very carefully.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans his Department has to enable the Independent Living Fund to assist with disabled persons' claims after the £5 million provided by the Government has run out.

Mr. Scott: I am confident that the sum of up to £5 million for the current year will be more than enough. We shall review the level of funding for future years in the light of experience.

Brain Injury (Rehabilitation Services)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will commission an assessment of the probability of long-term improvement occurring from the provision of specialised rehabilitation services immediately or soon after brain injury occurs; and if he will examine the cost effectiveness for the National Health Service and the social services departments combined of such provision.

Mrs. Currie: We are aware of the issues raised by the right hon. Member. Officials are currently considering the way forward.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many brain injury rehabilitation units there are in *(a)* the National Health Service and *(b)* the private sector.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Amnesia

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the most common causes of severe amnesia;

(2) what estimates he has of the number of people suffering from serious amnesia who live at home with their families; and what evidence there is on the adequacy of the support provided by social services departments;

(3) what estimates have been made of the number of patients suffering severe amnesia who are long-stay patients in hospitals which are not able to give specialised treatment to them.

Mrs. Currie: Severe amnesia can be a symptom of a range of medical conditions. Statistics on amnesia are not collected centrally.

The National Health Service is organised to treat medical conditions rather than specific symptoms and there is therefore no special provision for patients with severe amnesia. Patients may be treated in a number of settings such as neurological, mental illness or geriatric units. Local authority social services departments usually provide services on a client group basis.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what research into amnesia has been and is being supported by his Department; and what plans there are to increase it.

Mrs. Currie: The Department does not directly commission research specifically into amnesia. The main Government agency for the promotion of medical and related biological research is the Medical Research Council (MRC) which receives its grant in aid from the Department of Education and Science.

Brain-Injury and Amnesia

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what National Health Service provision there is for specialised treatment for *(a)* serious brain injury and *(b)* serious amnesia; what plans he has to increase such provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The National Health Service offers a range of facilities for treatment of people with brain injury, including accident and emergency departments, neurosurgery, and rehabilitation facilities. Treatment for amnesia sufferers is related to the medical condition with which the symptom is associated. It is for individual health authorities to determine the level of provision.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimates he has of the number of people suffering *(a)* serious brain injury and *(b)* serious amnesia; and how many new sufferers there are annually.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally. I am aware that the Medical Disability Society has recently published a report which contains estimates of the number of people suffering from brain injury.

Brain Injury Service

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what response he has given to the proposal of the Royal College of Physicians that each district health authority should have a named consultant to provide and oversee a complete brain injury service.

Mrs. Currie: We are aware of this recommendation and officials are considering the best way to take the matter forward, in the light of the recent report of the Medical Disability Society's working party on the management of traumatic brain injury.

Hospitals (Leasing)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 23 May, *Official Report*, column *93*, whether health authorities may lease hospitals on a permanent basis to the private sector.

Mrs. Currie: At present, when a health authority does not envisage any further use for a National Health Service property it is required to dispose of the freehold. Exceptionally, a long-term lease may be granted, but only where there are strong reasons in the public interest for doing so.

Lithotripsy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) where in England hospitals are equipped to treat kidney stones by using the lithotripsy process;

(2) what is the cost of equipping and staffing a hospital with the lithotripsy method of treating kidney stone patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 29 April 1988 at columns *341-42*.

Kidney Stone Patients

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will release funds to enable *(a)* Chester district health authority and *(b)* Mersey health authority to purchase equipment and to appoint staff to enable them to treat kidney stone sufferers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: This is a matter for the health authorities concerned. They must determine their own priorities and use the resources they have available in a way which best serves the needs of the local population.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients with kidney stone problems are treated annually in the Chester district and Mersey health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Such information which is available centrally relates to the estimated number of patients treated with the main diagnosis of calculus of kidney and ureter, and is set out in the table:

Estimated Number of Discharges of In-patients, by Regional Health Authority, NHS Non-psychiatric Hospital, England, 1985

Diagnosis	ICD Code[1]	England	Mersey	Chester
Calculus of Kidney	592·0	4,480	130	[2]
Calculus of Ureter	592·1	5,580	230	[2]
Urinary Calculus, unspecified	592·9	260	[2]	[2]

[1] International Classification of Diseases—9th revision.
[2] The number in the sample is too small to make reliable estimates.

The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of the Mersey regional health authority and the Chester district health authority to see what information is available locally.

Maternity Units (Closure)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many maternity units have been closed since 1979, or are planned to close, in each health authority area in England.

Mrs. Currie: The table shows the numbers of maternity units by regional health authority approved for closure between 1979 and 1986. It is important to note that closures may be offset or balanced by openings or reprovision elsewhere.

	Number
Northern	3
Yorkshire	9
Trent	10
East Anglian	6
North West Thames	4
North East Thames	7
South East Thames	2
South West Thames	3
Wessex	3
Oxford	1
South Western	5
West Midlands	4
Mersey	3
North Western	3

Figures of closures for 1987 should be available shortly. I regret that information regarding planned closures is not available centrally.

Pensions (Eire Citizens)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Social Services what entitlement to pension by virtue of age, injury or disability is granted in the United Kingdom to citizens of Eire; and if these rights are reciprocal.

Mr. Scott: The United Kingdom social security scheme does not discriminate on the grounds of nationality. Citizens of the Republic of Ireland in the United Kingdom are entitled to all social security benefits payable on account of age, injury or disability providing they satisfy the relevant conditions. Similarly, a United Kingdom citizen in the Republic of Ireland who satisfies the conditions for Irish benefits will be entitled to them.

Single Payments (Birmingham)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for single payments were outstanding at the social security offices at Kingsbury road and St. Margaret's road in Birmingham on 30 April and 31 May.

Mr. Portillo: The numbers of cases awaiting action on claims for single payments of supplementary benefit on 29 April are shown in the table. The figures are provisional and subject to amendment.

	29 April 1988	*31 May 1988*
Erdington local office (Kingsbury road)	412	42
Washwood heath local office (St. Margaret's road)	1,017	263

Unemployed Persons (Removal Expenses)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the specific provisions in the new social security system for help with removal expenses of unemployed people who need to change their places of residence in order to take up new jobs.

Mr. Portillo: None. Such provision would be inappropriate to the social security system.

Water Supplies (Aluminium)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask The Secretary of State for Social Services what studies have been conducted by his Department, water authorities or other bodies into a possible link between high aluminium levels in water supplies and senility; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has not commissioned any research into a possible link between high aluminium levels in water supplies and senility. I understand that the Medical Research Council, which is the main agency through which the Government support medical research in the United Kingdom and which receives a grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science, has supported two studies on this subject in its own units. The results of one of these studies have still to be published. I am also aware that other research on this subject has been carried out at the University of Surrey, but details are not held centrally.

Dental Reference Service

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many references have been dealt with by officers of the dental reference services, showing how many were in respect of *(a)* treatment and *(b)* estimates for dental treatment.

Mrs. Currie: In the year 1987-88 dental officers in England examined patients in the following numbers of cases:

	Number
Proposed treatment	13,724
Completed treatment	14,419
TOTAL	28,143

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take in the light of the Benner report on the review of the dental reference service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The report has been sent to interested parties and their comments invited by 31 July. No decision as to whether or not its recommendations should be implemented will be taken before then.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mr. Moore: I regret that a reply cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Hospitals (Staff Shortages)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will urgently introduce measures to help teaching hospitals with staff shortages which cause damaging interruption of clinical research due to the need to attend to the care of patients.

Mr. Newton: The allocation of resources to teaching hospitals is a matter for health authorities subject to the guidance issued to them. The Department, in guidance to health authorities last year, reminded them of their responsibility to support clinical teaching and research.

NHS Workers (Career Structure)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce new arrangements for the career structure of National Health Service workers aimed at the promotion of medical or scientific research.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so. The present medical career structure is flexible enough to accommodate doctors who wish to make a career in academic medicine or to combine scientific research with an NHS commitment.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the value of unemployment benefit for a single person, a married couple and a married couple with two children under 11 years as a proportion of average net earnings for all males and all manually employed males for each year between November 1978 and the latest date available.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is given in the table.

Unemployment benefit as a percentage of average weekly net[1] earnings

	All males			*All manually employed males*		
Date	*Single person*	*Married couple*	*Married couple plus 2 children*	*Single person*	*Married couple*	*Married couple plus 2 children*
	per cent.	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*
November 1978	24·1	37·0	41·7	26·1	40·0	44·9
November 1979	23·2	35·8	39·9	25·3	38·9	43·3

Date	All males			All manually employed males		
	Single person	Married couple	Married couple plus 2 children	Single person	Married couple	Married couple plus 2 children
	per cent.	per cent.	per cent.	per cent.	per cent.	per cent.
November 1980	22·1	34·2	36·7	24·9	38·2	41·1
November 1981	22·3	34·5	36·1	25·4	39·1	40·9
November 1982	23·3	36·0	36·5	26·7	40·9	41·5
November 1983	23·4	36·1	36·3	26·9	41·2	41·5
November 1984	22·6	34·7	34·7	26·1	39·8	39·8
November 1985	22·7	34·8	34·8	26·3	40·1	40·1
July 1986	21·5	33·0	33·0	25·2	38·4	38·4
April 1987	20·2	31·2	31·2	24·0	36·7	36·7

[1] Net average earnings are the estimates of average gross weekly earnings less tax and national insurance contribution at the contracted out rate.

Retirement Pension

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the value of the retirement pension for a single person and a married couple as a proportion of average net earnings for all males and all manually employed males for each year between November 1978 and the latest date available.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table.

Retirement pension as a percentage of net average weekly earnings at uprating date

Date	Male manual workers		All male workers	
	Single	Couple	Single	Couple
November 1978	32·3	48·9	29·8	45·3
November 1979	31·8	48·4	29·2	44·6
November 1980	32·8	49·7	29·1	44·4
November 1981	33·4	50·9	29·3	44·9
November 1982	35·0	53·1	30·6	46·7
November 1983	33·9	51·3	29·5	44·9
November 1984	32·9	49·6	28·4	43·2
November 1985	33·1	49·9	28·5	43·3
July 1986	31·6	47·8	27·0	41·1
April 1987	30·1	45·7	25·3	38·8

Social Security

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how the changes in the social security schemes announced to the House on 27 April will affect (i) war widows, (ii) industrial injuries benefit and (iii) special hardship allowance as respects income assessment for housing benefit; and if they will be protected by the minimum loss of £2·50 per week.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 17 May 1988]:* The changes announced on 27 April did not alter the method of calculating housing benefit but people in these groups may receive transitional payments if they incurred losses in housing benefit in excess of £2·50 per week as a result of the changes in the structure of the scheme from 1 April. However, local authorities continue to have discretion in the new housing benefit scheme to disregard up to the whole amount of a war pension. Therefore, we will not compensate for losses arising from any reduction in the disregard through changes in local authorities' own discretionary schemes for war pensions.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Commodity Prices

96. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Governments of producer countries concerning improvements in commodity prices.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend and other Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers meet their opposite numbers in the Governments of commodity-producing countries at regular intervals. On these occasions the developmental problems facing producer countries, including the prices their commodities command, are often discussed.

Spain (British Tourists)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to how many British tourists have been killed on Spanish beaches over the last seven years by drowning.

Mr. Eggar: Over the past five years our consulates in Spain have been informed of 83 British nationals who died by drowning. Of these, a number drowned in swimming pools.

Not all such deaths are reported to us. Further statistics are not readily available, and could be provided only at disproportionate costs.

"Platform on European Security Interests"

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he took to publicise the Western European Union statement entitled, "Platform on European Security Interests", arising from the meeting of the Foreign and Defence Ministers meeting at the Hague on 27 October 1987; and if he will make a statement as to what extent it represents the policy of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Mellor: The Western European Union "Platform on European Security Interests" was placed in the Library of the House following its adoption and has received considerable media publicity. It has been quoted regularly in ministerial and other speeches and has been further publicised in a Western European Union brochure about that organisation's activities. We endorse the platform.

Israel

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a

further statement of Her Majesty's Government's latest assessment of relations with Israel and on its policy towards the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Israeli Government about recent Mossad activities in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Following the trial and conviction of Ismail Sowan, the Israeli ambassador was informed on 17 June that a member of his diplomatic staff must leave the country by the end of this month. Additionally, the Home Secretary is requiring the departure from Britain by the end of the month of a staff member currently serving in the PLO office in London.

We will not tolerate the export to Britain of middle eastern feuds and violence.

Cyprus

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 10 June, *Official Report*, column 696, what is the United Kingdom's representation in *(a)* Greek southern Cyprus and *(b)* Turkish northern Cyprus; and why he has no figures for non-Cypriots resident in southern Cyprus.

Mrs. Chalker: There are 30 United Kingdom-based members of staff and 37 locally engaged staff in the British high commission in Nicosia. The high commission represents Her Majesty's Government's interests throughout Cyprus.

Information about the number of non-Cypriots resident in the south was not available when I answered the hon. Gentleman's earlier question, but further inquiries were then made. I understand that there are about 15,000 non-Cypriots resident in the area controlled by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Diplomatic Staff (Languages)

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list for each post overseas the number of diplomatic staff, the number and percentage whose skill in those local language is functional or better, and the number and percentage whose skill is extensive.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is not readily available in the form requested. However, of the total 3,257 mainstream Diplomatic Service officers, 2,978 have one or more language qualifications. Many have qualifications in more than one language. The total number of qualifications at functional level or better is 4,172. Of these 967 are at higher levels.

Spain (British Holidaymakers)

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held with the Spanish authorities regarding the behaviour of young British males in holiday centres; what action is proposed to combat their activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I visited Spain from 12 to 14 June 1988. I had frank and useful talks on tourist security and behaviour of British visitors with local and regional authorities in Alicante and Valencia, and in Madrid. Some 3,000 extra policemen are being sent to the main coastal resorts, Seville and Grenada for the peak summer period, and a publicity campaign to give practical advice to tourists about security will be launched by the Spanish authorities shortly. We are exploring a number of further practical measures including restrictions on alcohol sales.

We shall be continuing our public education campaign both here and in Spain to reduce as far as possible the small minority who tarnish Britain's image abroad. The Association of British Travel Agents and the major British tour operators also recognise the need to advise their clients on the spot about behaviour and security and we shall be pursuing further initiatives with them. In addition, in conjunction with other interested bodies, we shall be looking at the possibility of curbing excessive consumption of alcohol at airports prior to departure.

Sharpeville Six

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government has made to South Africa concerning the Sharpeville Six; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Foreign Ministers of the Twelve issued the following statement in Luxembourg on 14 June:

"The Foreign Ministers today discussed the situation in South Africa following the decision by the Supreme Court of Pretoria not to reopen proceedings in the case of the Sharpeville Six.

The Ministers expressed their deep distress and concern about the fate of the Sharpeville Six.

They urged that all legal options available in South Africa should be used to prevent the death penalty from being carried out. In this connection they drew attention to earlier representations by the European Community."

The German ambassador in Pretoria will be making representations to the South African Government on behalf of the Twelve.

Soviet Union (Republics)

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account Her Majesty's Government takes in its policy towards recognition of the legal status of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as republics of the Soviet Union, of the manner in which they acquired that status; and what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the resumption by these states of their independence by peaceful means.

Mr. Eggar: We have not recognised de jure the incorporation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the Soviet Union, because of the unacceptable way in which it was carried out. It follows that we would respect the right of these former independent states to determine their own future status in a peaceful manner, as is indeed provided for in the Soviet constitution.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pollution

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what evidence he has on the extent

to which the proposed set-aside scheme will cause a reduction in pollution caused by agricultural activities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what evidence he has on the extent to which the diversification scheme will reduce pollution caused by agricultural activities; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he has evidence on the extent to which the introduction of environmentally sensitive areas has resulted in a reduction in pollution caused by agricultural practices in those areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: In my report to Parliament later this year on the first year's operation of the environmentally sensitive areas, I will be considering among many other things, the evidence available on their impact on pollution. We shall also be monitoring the impact of the set-aside scheme which we announced on the 14 June. The main aim of the farm diversification grant scheme is to provide additional non-agricultural sources of income for farmers and it is not therefore likely greatly to affect pollution from agricultural activities but I shall obviously keep this question in mind.

Nitrates

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he intends to take to reduce the levels of nitrates as a result of the Hatton catchment nitrate study.

Mr. Gummer: The Government are currently looking at a mumber of options for further action to reduce nitrate pollution—including those identified in the Hatton study. A publicity campaign was launched earlier this year with the support of interested organisations aimed at encouraging farmers to adopt practices which minimise the risk of nitrate loss. The agricultural development and advisory service also takes every opportunity to put the message across in the course of its regular contact with the farming community.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting on 13 to 15 June in Luxembourg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Minister for State and I attended this Council of Agricultural Ministers of the European Community, which began on Monday afternoon, 13 June, and finished last Friday morning.

The Council agreed to two directives harmonising charges for meat inspection and bringing the standards for export-approved and non-export slaughterhouses closer into line. Other member states were strongly opposed, partly on the ground that it would have been administratively cumbersome, to our preference that the harmonised inspection charges should be based on the principle that the charges should equal the actual costs of inspection in all cases. We did however in the end secure agreement to an increase from 50 to 55 per cent. in the reduction which is permitted from the standard charges where the actual costs of inspection are low. The result of this is to minimise the effect of the new arrangements on United Kingdom slaughterhouses. The arrangements will come into effect on 1 January 1991. The harmonised charges and the 55 per cent. reduction factor will be reviewed by the Council in 1992. The Council also agreed a directive laying down animal health requirements for trade in cattle semen, and a directive dealing with safeguards against the spread of enzootic bovine leucosis.

There was also a short introductory discussion on the Commission's revised proposals for income aids.

The major part of the Council was taken up with further negotiations on prices and other support arrangemens for agricultural commodities for 1988-89. I very much regret that, just as it seemed that agreement was in reach after prolonged and difficult discussions the negotiations broke down when the Greek Minister invoked the Luxembourg compromise, signalling that the matter was so important for him that he wished discussion to continue until there could be unanimous agreement. The 11 other member states including ourselves were prepared to accept the compromise package proposed by the presidency and Commission at that stage. Negotiations will have to be concluded at a date still to be determined.

Set-aside Scheme

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the interaction between the set-aside scheme announced on 14 June and the arrangements for environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. MacGregor: The schemes have separate objectives. Moreover, while set-aside applies throughout the United Kingdom, environmentally sensitive areas are limited to particular localities.

Those farming within ESAs will be able to join the set-aside scheme provided they meet the conditions, but to avoid double payment on particular parcels of land, farmers will not be eligible for set-aside for any land to which an ESA agreement applies. A farmer in an ESA will have to consult the ESA project officer about the management of any land to be set-aside before he makes an application under the scheme.

Mr. John: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food upon what estimated take-up by farmers he based his agriculture set-aside proposals announced on 14 June.

Mr. MacGregor: As this is an entirely new scheme, and it is voluntary, it is not possible to make a scientific assessment of take-up in advance.

Mr. Tony Lester-Card (Statement)

Mr. John: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to take against Mr. Tony Lester-Card, a civil servant in his Department, whose public statement reported in *Farmers' Weekly* of 8 June on the inefficacy of voluntary agricultural set-aside schemes was repudiated by him on 14 June, *Official Report*, column 178.

Mr. MacGregor: As I explained to the House on 14 June, the official mentioned was not speaking for the Government.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to the

proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The personnel records for officials at grade 3 and above in my Department include information on schools attended. However, this information has not been analysed in the terms of the question asked.

Newcastle Disease

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to whether vaccines in use in the United Kingdom to protect poultry from Newcastle disease will protect against strains found in north America.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no reason to suppose that the Newcastle disease vaccines licensed in the United Kingdom, when used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions, are not effective against strains of the virus found in north America.

Cereals (Testing)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the estimated costs for *(a)* Cambridge and *(b)* Edinburgh which make up the joint total of £233,000 for cereals test operations given in paragraph 253 of the report of the review on plant testing and seed certification.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* The estimated costs for 1987-88 were £152,000 for Cambridge and £81,000 for Edinburgh. The estimate for Cambridge includes costs for centralised activities not undertaken at Edinburgh.

Sugar

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the current annual production and consumption of sugar in the European Economic Community.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* For 1987-88, the Commission estimates European Community sugar production at 13·198 million tonnes, including 12·384 million tonnes of quota production, and sugar consumption at 10·750 million tonnes.

Budgie Seed

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the European Economic Community Commission's proposal to increase the levy on budgie seed will be considered by the Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) today.

SCOTLAND

Homicides

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been convicted in Scotland of homicide since the abolition of the death penalty for murder.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: From 1966 until 1987, a total of 749 people were convicted of murder. Comparable figures for culpable homicide are only available from 1969. From 1969 until 1987, a total of 647 people were convicted of culpable homicide.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons convicted of homicide in Scotland and released on licence or termination of sentence have been convicted of homicide again since the abolition of the death penalty.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since 1965, three people released on licence from a previous murder conviction have been convicted of murder. Comparable information about homicides other than murder is not readily available and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Speed Limits

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his criteria in determining whether to grant a request from a regional roads authority to change an existing speed limit; how many such requests he has received from Highland region over the past five years and of these *(a)* how many have been approved and *(b)* how many have been turned down; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The criteria for determining appropriate speed limits apply throughout Great Britain. They are set out in Scottish Development Department circular No. 18/80 and were issued after full consultation with various representative bodies, including the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland).

Thirty applications have been received from Highland regional council in the last five years. Nine applications have been approved, 18 have been turned down and three are currently under consideration. My right hon. and learned Friend refuses consent for a speed limit only if he is satisfied that the relevant criteria are not met.

Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Lord Advocate will instruct the procurators fiscal for the Borders and Grampian regions to institute proceedings against the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust for breaches of charity law as it applies in Scotland on the grounds *(a)* that charitable status applies only to organisations dealing with endangered animal species and *(b)* that expenditure on extinguishing netting rights unlawfully discriminates in favour of proprietors of rod fishing rights and against the interests of netsmen.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No reports alleging breaches of the criminal law have been received by my

noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate or by any of the procurators fiscal in Grampian, Highlands and Islands region or Lothian and Borders region against the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust. Accordingly the Lord Advocate has had no occasion to instruct procurators fiscal in this matter.

Health Boards (Grievances)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, as part of its review of procedures relating to individual employee's grievances with local health boards, he will direct the General Whitley council to consider any changes intended to expedite settlement of such grievances.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: While my right hon. and learned Friend approves General Whitley council agreements in Scotland, he has no power to direct the deliberations of that council.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, as part of its review of procedures relating to individual employee's grievances with local health boards, he will direct the General Whitley council to seek to obtain statistics on the average time for settlement of disputes between local health boards and the British Medical Association and on the total cost to the Health Service in locum salaries, ex-gratia settlements and administrative costs of such disputes.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I believe that the hon. Member's concern may arise from a constituency case about which we are in correspondence, and I shall write to him.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will describe the remit of the current review being undertaken by the General Whitley council on procedures relating to individual employees' grievances with health boards; and what options are under consideration.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no formal remit for the current review of General Whitley council grievance procedures. Informal exploratory discussions between management and staff sides are taking place which may lead to formal negotiations on a new agreement. It remains to be seen what options emerge during discussion and negotiation.

Remand

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest figure for the average time spent on remand for men and women.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The estimated average periods spent in custody on remand in 1987 were as follows.

	Days
Men	20·1
Women	17·6

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* women and *(b)* men were put in prison while waiting for trial and subsequently freed over each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not available.

Cornton Vale Prison

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to ensure that Cornton Vale prison benefits from having *(a)* a state registered nurse and *(b)* a drama therapist.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am satisfied that the present complement of seven nursing staff at Cornton Vale, who are all state-enrolled nurses, is adequate for the present requirements of the establishment. There are no plans to employ a drama therapist.

Elsie Inglis Maternity Hospital

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central, of 10 June, *Official Report*, column *723*, he will place a list of all those who made representations to him in connection with the closure of Elsie Inglis maternity hospital, and a copy of all such representations, in the Library.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information could be made available only at disproportionate cost.

Health Boards (Ancillary Services)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he has made for health boards ancillary services tenders to be considered by English health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Legal Aid

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average time taken by the Scottish Legal Aid Board in dealing with applications for legal aid; and what were the figures in each of the four previous years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations the Lord Advocate has received about the working of the legal aid system in Scotland; and if he plans to speed up the time taken in dealing with legal aid applications.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since the Scottish Legal Aid Board assumed its duties on 1 April 1987, the Lord Advocate has received nine such representations from right hon. and hon. Members, bodies representing the legal profession and the general public. They covered delays in the determination of applications for legal aid, refusals of legal aid and other matters. Legal aid is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend, who announced on 15 December 1987 our intention to make regulations to assist in improving procedures. These will be laid shortly. The Scottish Legal Aid Board is also considering an expedited civil application procedure.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mr. Rifkind: Two of the Department's staff at grade 3 and above attended independent schools, 11 attended schools which were grant-aided by central Government and 19 attended schools which were managed by an education authority.

Education (Opting Out)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of the leak inquiry into the unauthorised disclosure of memoranda between his Department and the Prime Minister's office on opting out of the education system.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to him on 16 May 1988 at column *350*.

DEFENCE

US Bases

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the location by parliamentary constituency of all United States bases and military facilities in the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will list those Royal Air Force bases that are allocated for use as operating bases by United States forces, signifying which have been equipped with minimum essential facilities;

(3) if he will list the location by parliamentary constituency, of all military and civilian facilities in the United Kingdom that are allocated for use by United States forces in wartime.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The following bases and facilities have been made available for use by United States forces in the United Kingdom:

Base and Designation	*Constituency*
Main Operating Bases	
RAF Alconbury	Huntingdon
RAF Bentwaters	Suffolk, Coastal
RAF Fairford	Cirencester and Tewkesbury
RAF Lakenheath	Bury St. Edmunds
RAF Mildenhall	Bury St. Edmunds
RAF Upper Heyford	Banbury
RAF Woodbridge	Suffolk, Coastal
Cruise Missile Bases	
RAF Greenham Common	Newbury
RAF Molesworth	Huntingdon
Standby Deployment Bases	
RAF Sculthorpe	Norfolk, North
RAF Wethersfield	Braintree
Storage/Support Facilities	
RAF Bicester	Banbury
RAF Brawdy	Pembroke
RAF Burtonwood	Warrington, North
RAF Caerwent	Monmouth
RAF Chelveston	Bedfordshire, North
RAF Chilwell	Broxtowe
Eastcote	Ruislip Northwood
Felixstowe	Suffolk, Coastal
RAF Feltwell	Norfolk, South-West
Framlingham	Suffolk, Coastal
High Wycombe Air Station (Daws Hill)	Wycombe
Holy Loch	Argyll and Bute
RAF Hullavington	Wiltshire, North
RAF Hythe	Romsey and Waterside
RAF Kemble	Cirencester and Tewkesbury
London USN Europe HQ	City of London and Westminster, South
RAF Machrihanish	Argyll and Bute
Marchwood	Romsey and Waterside
Oakington	Cambridgeshire, South-East
Ridgewell	Saffron Walden
RAF Ruislip	Ruislip Northwood
RAF Spadeadam	Penrith and The Border
RAF St. Mawgan	Cornwall, North
RAF Upwood	Huntingdon
RAF Welford	Newbury
RAF Watton	Norfolk, South-West
Contingency Wartime Hospitals:	
RAF Chessington	Surbiton
RAF Arbroath	Angus, East
RAF Kirknewton	Livingston
RAF Lanark	Clydesdale
RAF Little Rissington	Cirencester and Tewkesbury
RAF Locking	Weston-super-Mare
RAF Nocton Hall	Grantham
Communications Facilities:	
Aberdeen	Kincardine and Deeside
RAF Barford St. john	Banbury
RAF Barkway	Hertfordshire, North
Botley Hill	Surrey, East
Bovingdon	Hertfordshire, South-West
RAF Chicksands	Mid-Bedfordshire
Coldblow	Mid-Kent
Christmas Common	Henley
RAF Croughton	Daventry
Daventry	Daventry
Dunkirk	Canterbury
RAF Edzell	Kincardine and Deeside
Great Bromley	Colchester, North
RAF Inverbervie	Kincardine and Deeside
RAF Kinnabeer	Angus, East
Latheron	Caithness and Sutherland
Martlesham	Suffolk, Coastal
Mormond Hill	Banff and Buchan
Fort Murkle	Caithness and Sutherland
RAF Swingate	Dover
RAF Thurso	Caithness and Sutherland
RAF Uxbridge	Uxbridge
NATO Armaments Depots:	
Broughton Moor	Workington
Glen Douglas	Dumbarton

The following Royal Air Force and Procurement Executive airfields, all of which have sufficient operating facilities to enable them to fulfil their role, are allocated for use as collocated operating bases by United States forces:

Collocated operating bases	*Constituency*
Abingdon	Oxford West and Abingdon
Bedford	North Bedfordshire
Benson	Henley
Boscombe Down	Salisbury
Brawdy	Pembroke
Coltishall	Norfolk, North
Cottesmore	Rutland and Melton
Finningley	Don Valley
Odiham	Basingstoke
Scampton	Gainsborough and Horncastle
Waddington	Lincoln
Wittering	Huntingdon

In addition to the bases and facilities listed in the tables, a number of other facilities would be made available to the United States in wartime, but details of the sites involved are classified.

NATO (US Units)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis United States forces units in the United Kingdom not assigned to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation operate in support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: All United States forces in the United Kingdom contribute to the security of the United Kingdom and the NATO Alliance generally. The formal assignment to NATO of such forces is a matter for the United States Government.

RAF Greenham Common

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose and function of the proposed communications mast at Royal Air Force Greenham Common.

Mr. Freeman: The proposed communications tower at RAF Greenham Common would act as a communications relay station for United States forces based in Europe in support of NATO.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has made any decision on the future use of the United States Air Force facilities at Daws Hill, High Wycombe, that are used in support of the cruise missile deployment at Greenham Common and Molesworth, once those missiles have been removed.

Mr. Ian Stewart: High Wycombe air station at Daws Hill provides administrative and logistic support to the United States Air Force in London and south-east England and will thus have a continuing role after the departure of the ground-launched cruise missiles currently based at RAF Greenham Common and RAF Molesworth.

Sidewinder

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what improvements to the Sidewinder missile are planned to be in operation during the next two years; and which of these improvements result from experience gained in the Falklands war.

Mr. Sainsbury: We constantly seek to improve the performance of all our weapons. However, it is not our practice to give details of the operational capability of individual systems. For the performance of Sidewinder missile in the Falklands campaign, I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 222 of "The Falklands Campaign: The Lessons" (Cm. 8758) and paragraph 56 of "Implementing the Lessons of the Falklands Campaign: Government Response to the Fourth Report from the Defence Committee Session 1986-87".

Arms Exports

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total value of the United Kingdom arms exports in the last five years for which figures are available; what equivalent information he has about the United States of America; what is his estimate for 1988-89 for the United Kingdom; and what equivalent information he has for the United States of America.

Mr. Sainsbury: The total recorded value of deliveries of United Kingdom defence export equipment for the calendar years 1982-86 is assessed at £10,198 million. The equivalent United States figure (derived from the United States arms control and disarmament agency) is $51,460 million. Both figures are at current prices.

Equivalent figures for 1987 and 1988 United Kingdom defence exports are not yet available. (SDE Volume 2 gives only an incomplete figure for 1987). I am not aware of any estimates for United States arms exports for the same period.

The United Kingdom figures refer to actual deliveries of defence equipment as opposed to defence sales contracts signed during 1987 (vide para 420 Vol. 1 SDE 88).

NATO—Warsaw Pact Forces

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the latest balance between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and Warsaw Pact naval forces.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The latest figures showing the balance between the principal naval forces of NATO and the Warsaw Pact are shown in figure 17 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988".

Gibraltar (Shootings)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has now received any request from the Gibraltar coroner in relation to military personnel involved in the Gibraltar operation appearing at the inquest into the deaths of three IRA personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 17 May at columns *369-70*.

Jaguar Aircraft (Dropped Fuel Tank)

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement as to the circumstances in which an RAF Jaguar dropped a 10 ft long auxiliary fuel tank near the village of Halberton, Devon, at approximately 16.30 hours on Tuesday 14 June; and what effective action he proposes to take to prevent such an event happening again.

Mr. Sainsbury: At about 4.15 pm on 14 June, during a routine training flight, an external fuel tank was inadvertently released from a Procurement Executive Jaguar aircraft of the Empire test pilots' school at Boscombe Down, Wiltshire. The tank fell on open ground near Halberton. We have received no reports of consequential injury to any person or livestock or damage to property. A unit inquiry has been convened and I expect it to report on the incident in about two weeks' time. Meanwhile it would be premature to prejudge the outcome of the investigation or to predict any measures which it may suggest to be necessary.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he has carried out monitoring exercises in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively;

(2) whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the reply I gave him on 17 June.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to improve equality of opportunity for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades of his Department, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence has an equal opportunities action plan which is reviewed on an annual basis. The aim of the plan is to set out actions required in respect of women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities in relation to employment, recruitment, training and promotion within the Department. For example these actions include ethnic monitoring of recruitment, programmes for advertising in the ethnic press and including ethnic minorities in recruitment literature, and a review of women-only training.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mr. Sainsbury: The proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in the Ministry of Defence who were educated at private schools is 39·2 per cent. and at state schools is 60·8 per cent.

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans to introduce a computerised automatic flight planning system for the United Kingdom low-flying system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1988]:* Plans to introduce a computerised notification and deconfliction warning system in the United Kingdom low-flying system are currently under consideration.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are being introduced to improve the safety of night low-level flying over the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 May 1988]:* The deconfliction warning that would be provided by the introduction of a computerised notification and warning system, which is currently under consideration, could be expected to contribute to the safety of night low-level flying over the United Kingdom.

Missing Weapons

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether efforts are made to record all military weapons which go missing in the United Kingdom, which belong to *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Royal Air Force and *(c)* the Royal Navy; and if he will indicate in a table in the *Official Report*, by category of weapon, as recorded, such information as is available to him relating to weapons which have gone missing in each year since 1 January 1980.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 7 June 1988]:* Instructions require all weapon losses to be reported. Such losses are investigated by the appropriate authority in each service. The figures for small arms weapons lost and not recovered by year since 1980 are as follows:

Weapon	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*Total*
Army									
Pistol/revolver	10	12	6	8	3	10	5	12	66
Pistol-Very	4	1	1	2	—	1	1	—	10
SLR	2	1	1	—	4	—	—	—	8
SMG	5	3	—	—	—	1	—	—	9
LMG	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Others	3	1	—	—	—	—	—	4	8
RAF Nil									
Royal Navy (including RM)									
Winchester rifle	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
SMG	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
LMG	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1

Notes:

1. These figures do not include small arms weapons lost and not recovered from Cadet units or Service museums.
2. Figures for RN and RM not available before 1985.

Helicopters (Rescues)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish figures for the last available three years stating the number of rescues carried out in Devon and Cornwall each year by helicopter, proportioning the figures attributable to each helicopter station; what plans he has to make alterations to the service in Devon and Cornwall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 9 June 1988]:* Records are not kept of rescues in individual counties. The following information relates to an area from 3°W to 7°W and from 49°45′N to 51°15′N. This covers all of Devon and Cornwall (including the Scilly Isles and Lundy) with the exception of some very small parts of Devon; a large part of Somerset; and also the adjacent sea areas. The figures relate to persons rescued by military search and

rescue helicopters and record the number of people who were recovered alive from a hazard or who were transported for urgent medical attention.

Persons rescued in or near Devon and Cornwall

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Boulmer	—	—	4
Brawdy	4	1	4
Chivenor	50	46	59
Culdrose	74	55	51
Lee-on-Solent	—	1	1

Aircraft from these stations also rescued many people in other areas. The hon. Member may be aware that on 1 April 1988 the readiness states of the search and rescue Sea Kings at RNAS Culdrose were improved to enable them to respond to incidents within 15 minutes by day, and 45 minutes by night. As regards other decisions which may affect the service in Devon and Cornwall, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 13 June 1988 to my hon. Friends the Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) at column *71*.

Denmark (Nuclear-capable Ships)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his current policy towards the use of Danish ports by nuclear-capable ships of the Royal Navy.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* It remains our policy neither to confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons aboard particular HM ships. The new Danish Government have confirmed that visits by ships of the Royal Navy can continue under the same procedures which obtained previously and a normal programme of visits to Danish ports by HM ships is planned.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Heart Surgery

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons in Northern Ireland presently require heart surgery and await notification that bed space has become available in hospital; and how many heart operations have been carried out weekly in Northern Ireland hospitals during the last 12 months.

Mr. Needham: At 31 March 1988 the waiting list for admission for cardiac surgery totalled 707. The Royal Victoria hospital is the only hospital in Northern Ireland to provide cardiac surgery; the number of heart operations, excluding catheterisations, carried out during the period from 28 September 1987 to 6 March 1988 were as follows:

Week Commencing	Number of Operations
28 September 1987	6
5 October 1987	4
12 October 1987	10
19 October 1987	6
26 October 1987	5
2 November 1987	10
9 November 1987	7
16 November 1987	10
23 November 1987	7
30 November 1987	11
7 December 1987	6
14 December 1987	8
21 December 1987	6
28 December 1987	3
4 January 1988	7
11 January 1988	7
18 January 1988	6
25 January 1988	7
1 February 1988	10
8 February 1988	11
15 February 1988	9
22 February 1988	6
29 February 1988	10

Information on the weekly number of operations carried out before 28 September 1987 or after 6 March 1988 is not readily available.

WALES

Lithotripsy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) where, in Wales, hospitals are equipped to treat kidney stones by using lithotripsy; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will release funds to enable Clwyd area health authority to purchase equipment and to appoint staff to enable them to treat kidney stones by lithotripsy method; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the cost of equipping a hospital in Wales with lithotripsy method.

Mr. Grist: Lithotripters are a developing technology which is being monitored by the Department. The cost of equipping a hospital with a lithotripter is estimated to be in the region of £700,000 capital for installation and £200,000 annually for running costs. No hospital in Wales is presently equipped with the technology and the Department have no plans to fund Clwyd health authority to acquire a lithotripter. It is open to the authority to consider appropriate arrangements to obtain lithotripsy treatment from those centres which provide the service.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients are treated annually in each of the Welsh area health authorities, for kidney stones.

Mr. Grist: The latest available information, for 1986, is given in the table:

District health authority	Patients[1]
Clwyd	97
East Dyfed	28
Pembrokeshire	22
Gwent	144
Gwynedd	127
Mid Glamorgan	96
Powys	2
South Glamorgan	125
West Glamorgan	162

[1] Number of discharges (including deaths) from National Health Service hospitals with diagnosis Calculus of Kidney and Ureter.

Maternity Units (Closure)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many maternity units have been closed since 1979, or are planned to close, in each health authority area in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Since January 1979 a total of 14 maternity units have closed and four have opened in Wales. The breakdown by health authority is as follows:—

Maternity Units

	Closed	*Opened*
Clwyd	5	1
East Dyfed	2	—
Gwent	—	—
Gwynedd	1	—
Mid Glamorgan	2	2
Pembrokeshire	2	1
Powys	—	—
South Glamorgan	—	—
West Glamorgan	2	—

Closure proposals have been submitted to my right hon. Friend for decision in respect of St. David's hospital, Bangor, Gwynedd, and the unit at County hospital, Griffithstown, in Gwent.

Nuclear Accidents

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list those circulars produced by his Department relating to nuclear accidents and the response of the emergency services.

Mr. Peter Walker: The following are the circulars:

146/75
WHC (76)48
WHC (85)34
Letter dated 10 September 1985

Emergency plans for individual nuclear installations are drawn up by the operator in consultation with the emergency services and are available at local libraries in the vicinity of the plant. A description of the measures to be taken in the event of an emergency at any licensed nuclear installation in the United Kingdom is contained in the Health and Safety Executive's booklet "Emergency Plans for Civil Nuclear Installations", published by HMSO. The lead within Government for nuclear accident planning in respect of installations in England and Wales is taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Tonyrefail Railway Station

Mr. John: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether, pursuant to the statement on page 31 of his valleys initiative, it is proposed as part of new park and ride facilities at Tonyrefail to rebuild the disused Tonyrefail railway station and to relay the track necessary to reconnect it to the rail network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I apologise for an unfortunate clerical error; the reference in page 31 should have been to Tirphil and not Tonyrefail. I am arranging for the error to be corrected in future prints of the document.

Water Supplies

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are being taken by the Welsh water authority to reduce aluminium levels in water supplies in Wales.

Mr. Ian Grist: The Welsh water authority has an on-going programme of remedial works to water supplies in Wales containing levels of aluminium above that specified in EC directive 80/778/EEC (the drinking water directive). These works are part of an overall programme, which will be mostly completed by 1990, to ensure that all drinking water supplied complies with the provisions of the directive.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what studies have been conducted by his Department, the Welsh water authority and other bodies, respectively, into a possible link between high aluminium levels in water and senility; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No such studies have been conducted by the Department or the Welsh water authority.

Research at Southampton university is said to indicate a correlation between Alzheimer's disease (which causes premature senility) and aluminium in drinking water. The report has not been published and so it is not yet possible for medical advisers to comment. When it is published it will be assessed and appropriate action taken if necessary.

In the United Kingdom and many other countries, aluminium salts are used widely as coagulants in water treatment to remove undesirable suspended contamination and potentially harmful bacteria. Aluminium can also occur naturally in some raw waters. In the United Kingdom, however, the concentrations of aluminium in tap water are controlled mainly by the efficiency with which aluminium is removed during water treatment, irrespective of the source of aluminium.

The current standard which the Government have adopted, after taking advice from medical experts, for aluminium concentrations in drinking water is that contained within directive 80/778/EEC (the drinking water directive). Most water supplies comply and, where they do not, the Welsh water authority has a programme of remedial action.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mr. Peter Walker: All officers in my Department at grade 3 and above were educated in state secondary schools. However two of these 14 had some of their education in private schools.

Cancer Treatment (Clwyd and Gwynedd)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the English health authorities and with Welsh health authorities, indicating which, to agree the terms of reference for a comprehensive study of all cancer treatment services as they relate to patients from Clwyd and Gwynedd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The terms of reference of a study of cancer treatment services for north Wales patients have been the

subject of consultation with officials of Clwyd, Gwynedd, Powys, Shropshire and Wolverhampton health authorities and North Western, Mersey and West Midlands regional health authorities.

Satellite Radiotherapy Centre

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to see the establishment of a satellite radiotherapy centre in north Wales related to cancer radiotherapy, currently given to north Wales patients in Wirral, Cheshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: A review of cancer treatment services to north Wales patients, to be mounted as soon as possible, will address the feasibility of providing a satellite radiotherapy centre in north Wales.

Rents

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish estimates on the likely changes in average rents paid in *(a)* council housing, *(b)* housing association properties and *(c)* privately rented housing in (i) Wales and (ii) the area covered by the valleys initiative as a consequence of the Housing Bill.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Bill will have no effect on the determination of council house rents: this will continue to be a matter for the local authorities. It is not possible to give reliable estimates, for the whole or any part of Wales, of the Bill's possible implications for housing association or private sector rents. Rents charged by associations will continue to reflect the cost of providing accommodation and the availability of public subsidy. As regards private lettings, existing tenants will continue to be entitled to a fair rent, while rents for new lettings will primarily be for agreement between landlords and tenants.

Council House Completions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the totals of council homes completed by Welsh councils in each year since 1974 and the estimated totals for the next five years.

Mr. Grist: The total number of council homes completed by Welsh councils in each year since 1974 is show in the table:

	Local authority completions[1]
1974	3,247
1975	7,967
1976	7,369
1977	6,890
1978	4,459
1979	3,326
1980	3,702
1981	3,530
1982	1,875
1983	1,738
1984	2,152
1985	1,073
1986	870
1987	810

[1] Including Newtown.

Forecasts of housing provision in different tenure categories are not made by the Department.

Income Support

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish estimates of the likely changes in Wales this year and for the next five years, in the total amounts claimed in income support in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* the area of Wales covered by the valleys initiative.

Mr. Peter Walker: No Government, past or present, have ever produced estimates of this nature.

Private House Completions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the totals of new private homes *(a)* started and *(b)* completed in each local district council area in Wales in each year since 1974 and the estimated totals for the next fives years.

Mr. Grist: The required information on private housing starts and completions from 1974 to 1986 is published in "Local Housing Statistics" copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Data for 1987 are given in the following table.

Forecasts of housing provision in different tenure categories are not made by the Department.

1987 Private sector

Welsh Districts	*Starts*	*Completions*
Alyn and Deeside	232	208
Colwyn	369	241
Delyn	215	189
Glyndŵr	169	116
Rhuddlan	119	109
Wrexham Maelor	297	250
Carmarthen	205	169
Ceredigion	212	149
Dinefwr	91	69
Llanelli	98	51
Preseli	32	331
South Pembroke	193	166
Blaenau Gwent	64	59
Islwyn	64	25
Monmouth	468	376
Newport	407	335
Torfaen	220	219
Aberconwy	156	255
Arfon	126	110
Dwyfor	55	69
Meirionnydd	14	10
Ynys Môn	128	166
Cynon Valley	56	60
Merthyr Tydfil	149	127
Ogwr	408	438
Rhondda	43	15
Rhymney Valley	169	213
Taff-Ely	560	330
Brecknock	114	84
Montgomeryshire	206	207
Radnor	122	130
Cardiff	1,691	1,458
Vale of Glamorgan	584	457
Lliw Valley	87	160
Neath	121	96
Port Talbot (Afan)	29	15
Swansea	355	361
Cwmbran	57	54
Newtown	56	91
WALES TOTAL	8,741	7,975

Local Government (Labour Statistics)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish estimates based on experience elsewhere of the changes in the numbers employed by local government in the areas covered by his valleys initiative following the implementation of the privatisation proposals in the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker: Phased implementation of the competition provisions of the Local Government Act 1988 will not begin until 1 August 1989. Estimates of changes in the numbers employed by local government as a result of competition are not available. If local authorities are already competitive there would be no change. If they can improve their competitiveness it may make resources available for other activities.

National Health Service (Privatisation)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish estimates on the likely job losses or gains in the National Health Service that would result in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* the areas covered by the valleys initiative if the Government privatisation proposals are fully implemented.

Mr. Peter Walker: No such estimates are available. District health authorities in Wales have been encouraged to introduce competitive tendering for certain ancillary services. This, however, is not a policy of privatisation. The object is to compare the efficiency of in-house teams with that of private contractors. Authorities are asked to place contracts with whoever provides the lowest acceptable tender. To date, most tenders have remained in-house.

Budget (Income Tax Changes)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish estimates of the average change per household in income tax payments following the Budget in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* the area covered by the valleys initiative and *(c)* the south-east of England.

Mr. Peter Walker: I regret that regional estimates of the effect of the Budget changes are not available.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish amounts of rate support grant and other Government grants paid to all Welsh district and county councils each year since 1974, using 1974 as the base year expressed as 100.

Mr. Peter Walker: An index of the amounts of rate support grant and other Government grants paid to all Welsh district and county councils each year since 1974-75 as reported by local authorities is given in the table:

	1974-75 = 100
1974-75	100·0
1975-76	133·1
1976-77	151·3
1977-78	161·4
1978-79	174·2
1979-80	195·5
1980-81	235·4

	1974-75 = 100
1981-82	246·6
1982-83	257·3
1983-84	268·5
1984-85	276·5
1985-86	291·3
[1]1986-87	312·4

[1] Provisional.

Housing Association Homes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the totals of housing association homes *(a)* started and *(b)* completed in the areas of Welsh district councils in each year since 1974 and the estimated totals for the next five years.

Mr. Grist: The required information on housing association starts and completions from 1974 to 1986 is published in "Local Housing Statistics" copies of which are available in the Library of the House. The corresponding information for 1987 is shown in the table.

Forecasts of housing provision in different tenure categories are not made by the Department.

1987 Housing Associations

Welsh Districts	*Starts*	*Completions*
Alyn and Deeside	—	—
Colwyn	25	10
Delyn	12	—
Glyndŵr	28	9
Rhuddlan	—	—
Wrexham Maelor	32	47
Carmarthen	49	23
Ceredigion	27	12
Dinefwr	24	—
Llanelli	—	—
Preseli	30	33
South Pembroke	6	—
Blaenau Gwent	23	40
Islwyn	—	—
Monmouth	123	—
Newport	—	—
Torfaen	12	—
Aberconwy	—	—
Arfon	42	30
Dwyfor	8	35
Meirionnydd	—	—
Ynys Môn	27	—
Cynon Valley	81	40
Merthyr Tydfil	6	14
Ogwr	—	—
Rhondda	51	8
Rhymney Valley	19	14
Taff-Ely	—	12
Brecknock	—	12
Montgomeryshire	20	—
Radnor	6	—
Cardiff	265	23
Vale of Glamorgan	—	31
Lliw Valley	—	—
Neath	32	—
Port Talbot (Afan)	20	28
Swansea	16	46
Cwmbran	—	—
Newtown	—	—
WALES TOTAL	1,014	467

TRANSPORT

Cycling

10. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new efforts his Department is making to encourage cycling.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Safer cycling is a high priority. We have a continuous programme of research, and undertake advisory and promotional activities. We helped sponsor the Cyclists' Touring Club's new guide "Positive Cycling". I have just opened a major new cycle route in Exeter and innovative cycle schemes are being opened in Cheltenham and Darlington.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has had any communication with the European Commission over the implementation of the European Parliament report, "The Bicycle as a Means of Transport"; and whether his Department has taken any steps itself to fulfill the recommendations of the report, particularly with regard to paragraph 6 of the report concerning cycle tracks.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has had no communication from the European Commission over the implementation of a report from the European Parliament over cycling. We recognise cycle tracks as a means of enhancing the safety of cyclists. Other techniques, engineering treatments at danger spots such as some junctions and roundabouts, offer more generally applicable ways of helping cyclists.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps have been taken by his Department to ensure that Eurotunnel complies with its statutory responsibility to make provision for the conveyance by means of the shuttle trains of pedals cycles in the vehicles that will use the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: Eurotunnel is drawing up plans for the conveyance of pedal cycles on Channel tunnel shuttle trains. For safety reasons, it intends to transport cyclists in minibuses towing trailers carrying their cycles. The detailed arrangements will be submitted for approval by the intergovernmental commission.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department has spent on providing cycling facilities in the last financial year for which figures are available; and how much local authorities have spent during this time.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We spend much time on cycling. The Department spent £160,000 in 1987-88 on its programme of experimental cycling facilities. Figures are not collected centrally on the amounts spent by local authorities on cycle facilities, or on the Department's continuing expenditure on cycle elements in its trunk road improvement schemes.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of cycle track have been provided as a part of new and improved trunk roads during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Pedestrian Safety

19. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent measures his Department has taken to improve pedestrian safety.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have issued a number of leaflets to help local authorities reduce pedestrian casualties by improved road layout. On 17 May we co-sponsored a conference aimed at identifying the most promising new measures. A total of 95 per cent. of pedestrian casualties are in urban areas. First results from our "urban safety" pilot projects suggest that it is possible to reduce overall pedestrian casualties by 14 per cent. using an areawide approach. I am having copies of the reports placed in the Library.

British Rail (Privatisation)

20. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has made any studies of the potential for selling off rural railway lines.

Mr. David Mitchell: No.

Settle to Carlisle Line

21. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the organisations and individuals who have expressed an interest in buying the Settle to Carlisle railway line since 16 May.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. I regard such information as commercially confidential. It is for the organisation concerned to decide whether to seek publicity at this stage.

South-Western Region (Bypasses)

22. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many new bypasses are scheduled to open in the south-western region in the near future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Four new trunk road bypasses will open in July. The Blackwater bypass in Cornwall will open early in the month. I hope soon to perform three opening ceremonies at Bridport in Dorset, Ilminster in Somerset, and—the most significant of all for the west country—Okehampton in Devon.

Motorways (Charges)

23. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what reduction in motorway congestion he would expect from the introduction of tolled fast lanes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No assessment has been made of such a proposal.

46. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has made any assessment of the economic impact of charging vehicles for the use of motorway fast lanes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Tolling of individual lanes on existing motorways is impracticable. If we receive proposals for the construction of additional lanes on which tolls are to be charged we shall have a full assessment made of their effect. Meanwhile there is no need to do so in any detail.

Ferry Safety

24. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to seek to amend his powers to enforce safety improvements in ferry design on United Kingdom and foreign flagged ferries.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. I have the powers that I need under the Merchant Shipping Acts.

34. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied that the IMO is in a position to agree improvements in ferry safety within acceptable time scales.

Mr. David Mitchell: In April this year the maritime safety committee of the IMO adopted amendments to the safety of life at sea convention 1974 in the minimum time permitted by the articles of that convention. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already introduced regulations that apply those amendments to ships using our ports.

45. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what comments he has received from the IMO concerning his Department's research into roll-on roll-off ferry safety.

Mr. David Mitchell: Such comments as individual members of IMO have made welcomed my Department's research into ferry safety.

47. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the IMO concerning ferry safety.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State addressed the 15th session of the assembly of the International Maritime Organisation on 9 November last year when he impressed on representatives the United Kingdom Government's's concern to secure early international agreement on measures to ensure the highest safety standards for roll-on roll-off ferries. The assembly sympathised with and supported this concern. The *Maritime Safety* committee, at its April meeting, considered and endorsed our first package of proposals on ferry safety, including new international requirements on indicator lights, television surveillance and supplementary emergency lighting. The committee also agreed, with the United Kingdom's active support, upon new damage stability requirements for passenger ships, as explained in the answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on 19 May, *Official Report*, columns *524-25*.

Main Line Railway Stations

25. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise the question of the conditions of British Rail's main line stations.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The conditions of main line stations are purely a matter for British Rail, who are well aware of the importance of quality of service, in the widest sense. If the hon. Member has a particular area of concern perhaps he will write to British Rail (and copy his letter to me).

London Underground (Bakerloo Line)

26. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals there are to extend the southern end of Bakerloo line beyond the Elephant and Castle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for the operators to bring forward investment proposals. Possible extensions to the Bakerloo line, together with other proposals to relieve congestion in the central area of London, are being considered as part of the central London rail study announced on 25 March 1988.

London Underground (Security)

27. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about security on the London Underground.

Mr. David Mitchell: Following my Department's report on crime on the Underground, London Underground Limited is implementing a wide-ranging programme of security measures with the support of £15 million made available by the Government.

Channel Tunnel

28. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement as to the amount of room the statutory authorities will need on a train using the Channel tunnel; and whether this will give rise to any special difficulties in rolling stock construction.

59. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conditions as to space for their purposes the statutory authorities will impose on British Rail for trains using the Channel tunnel; and whether there will be any special conditions for rolling stock construction.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that the Customs and immigration authorities are currently discussing their requirements with British Rail. Any agreed on-train requirements will be taken into account in the specification for the Channel tunnel rolling stock.

31. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the provision of customs and immigration facilities for the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

54. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive from British Rail its report on additional rail routes to the Channel tunnel; and when he expects to publish it.

Mr. David Mitchell: I expect to receive British Rail's report in July, and that it will be published before Parliament rises for the recess.

Basildon (Ministerial Visit)

29. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the visit by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) to Basildon.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I visited Hawtal Whiting of Pitsea, Essex on 10 June to see at first hand the work of a United Kingdom company successfully applying new technology in its work for home and overseas customers, particularly in the field of vehicle safety.

A1 (Improvements)

30. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the three road improvements under way on the A1 in Yorkshire to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Work on the new Wetherby bypass is due to end in August 1988. The new interchange at Dishforth should open by the end of 1989. Resurfacing work on the Leeming bypass should be completed in July 1988.

Car Telephones

32. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to stipulate that the only types of telephone permitted to be used by the driver of a car whilst in motion are those equipped with voice-activated dialling.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Our advice is clear: anyone who can afford a car phone can afford a hands-free microphone.

Current legislation already places the responsibility on drivers to have proper control of their vehicles at all times. A driver who fails to do so as a result of distraction or lack of concentration is liable to prosecution.

There are no plans to introduce legislation to stipulate the type of car telephones permitted to be used.

Ship Discharges

33. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he is planning in controls over discharges from ships in British coastal waters.

Mr. David Mitchell: There will be changes when annex V of the international convention for the prevention of pollution from ships enters into force on 31 December, 1988, when new restrictions will be placed upon the discharge of garbage into the sea. My officials are consulting the industry before I lay subordinate legislation before the House. Other recent changes in controls have come about as a consequence of decisions at the second North sea conference held in London last year. Subsequently airborne surveillance of our coastal waters, in particular for oil discharges, was increased, and new arrangements set up to ensure ships suspected of violations are visited by marine surveyors when they enter not only United Kingdom ports, but ports in Europe.

Motorways

35. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will prepare a new motorway construction programme for Great Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are continuing to develop and improve the trunk road and motorway network. The need for further motorway development is closely monitored and new schemes are added to the programme as the need

is identified. Motorways in Scotland and Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales.

British Rail (Rolling Stock and Locomotives)

36. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will hold discussions with the chairman of British Rail about the provision of rolling stock and locomotives for the 1990s.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I already hold frequent discussions with the chairman of BR on investment in new locomotives and rolling stock, for which BR plans to spend around £1 billion over the next five years, making this the biggest programme of locomotive and rolling stock renewal for decades.

Cars (Clamping)

37. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on research into alternatives to the clamping of cars in London and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Current research into parking enforcement is concentrated in and around wheel clamping areas in London and now takes into account the effects of vehicle removal in these areas. Wheel clamping commands much public support. Evidence so far is that clamping is uniquely effective for those parking offences that do not cause danger or delay by obstruction. Parking research elsewhere is largely confined to evaluating the effectiveness of new kinds of parking payment equipment.

IPCS (Meetings)

38. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to meet representatives of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants involved in transport industries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans at present to do so.

British Rail (Privatisation)

39. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has conducted any studies of options for the sale of British Rail.

40. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans for the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have no plans at present for the privatisation of British Rail. But I am beginning to consider long-term options for the future and the possibilities of privatisation are not ruled out.

London Underground (Safety)

41. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his staff have had any discussions with London Regional Transport concerning its report on actions taken to improve safety since the King's Cross fire.

Mr. David Mitchell: Actions to improve safety on the Underground as a result of the King's Cross fire are matters for the board of LRT which is statutorily responsible for safety; they keep my officials fully informed.

42. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recommendations his Department has made to London Underground concerning safety improvements, following the King's Cross fire.

Mr. David Mitchell: The safe operation of London Underground is the responsibility of London Regional Transport. However LRT has explained to my Department its plans for improving safety following the King's Cross fire.

British Rail

43. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last met the chairman of British Rail on 24 May and discussed a wide range of matters of mutual interest.

55. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Rail; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be meeting the chairman of British Rail on 27 July to discuss matters of current interest.

Drink-Driving Campaign

44. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made in his anti-drink and driving campaign.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Secretary of State launched the latest phase of the Government's campaign against drinking and driving on 15 June. This continues the "drinking and driving wrecks lives" theme from last year. We have now produced a new TV commercial to supplement the previous ones.

Our research shows that our campaigns are making an impact. There is evidence of a long-term reduction in the amount of drinking and driving.

We are greatly encouraged by the support of the private sector, and in particular the contribution of the brewing industry. New low and non-alcoholic beers have been introduced and sales are increasing rapidly.

We are determined to maintain the momentum of this campaign. Over 1,000 people each year are killed due to drinking and driving. It requires a major collective effort by all concerned to reduce this terrible toll.

London Underground (Automatic Ticket Barriers)

48. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications for passenger safety on the London Underground of the installation of automatic ticket barriers to replace manned ticket booths.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Underground Limited has discussed the safety implications of the new system with the railway inspectorate. All the new automatic ticket barriers can be opened simultaneously from any one of at least three separate places on each station.

Inspecting officers have visited a number of stations where the new barriers have been installed and are satisfied that the arrangements for the emergency opening of the gates are satisfactory. There will be a wider overall opening in the barrier line with the new system compared with the old manned ticket booth system. Therefore a better means of escape in an emergency will be provided.

Motorways (Franchisement)

49. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans for franchising individual motorway lanes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Not of existing lanes. If we receive proposals for the construction of new lanes on a franchise basis we shall consider them.

Autoguide System (London)

50. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the autoguide system to be in operation in central London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We hope that a pilot autoguide scheme will be operating in London by 1990, provided that Parliament grants the necessary powers and private industry makes a satisfactory proposal. The pilot scheme is intended to provide the basis for a fully commercial autoguide service, to which the public can subscribe in the early 1990s.

Lead-free Petrol

51. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has of how many vehicles on the road could be adapted to take lead-free petrol.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Nearly half the cars on the road could use or be easily adapted to use unleaded petrol. About 2 million cars currently on the road could use unleaded petrol without modification and about 7 million others could be easily adapted to do so.

London (Public Transport)

52. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further plans he has to improve public transport in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government have approved investment by London Regional Transport of £365 million for this year and for Network SouthEast the planned investment is £197 million per annum on average over the next five years. We look forward to receiving next month the initial report of the central London rail study on improvements to London's rail services in the longer term. London Buses will be restructured into smaller units, providing some benefits as a result of increased competition; and in the early 1990s the benefits of deregulation will further improve service for the public.

A1 (Ministerial Visit)

53. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last made an official visit to any part of the A1 in Yorkshire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State saw the constructional works on the new A1 Wetherby bypass on 13 December 1987. During his visit he inspected conditions on the road north of Wetherby.

Radioactive Waste

56. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has met representatives of the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive to discuss the transportation of radioactive waste and other nuclear materials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No, but regular contact is maintained at official level.

Passenger Transport Authorities

57. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has made for monitoring and acting upon the effects of the change in funding of passenger transport authorities, in the light of the proposed community charge.

Mr. David Mitchell: We shall be watching with interest metropolitan district expenditure billed from the PTAs and indicators of output made available annually by the PTES. The responsibility for deciding the levels of service will remain as now with the district representatives making up the PTAs.

Severn Crossing

58. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress with the provision of a second Severn crossing; and when construction is likely to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Preparatory work on the second Severn crossing is progressing well. Survey work necessary to develop the design of the crossing is under way and consultations with interested parties are continuing. This would enable the bridge to be completed by the mid-1990s if the build up of traffic needs it by then and Parliament so decides.

M25-M23 (Traffic Delay)

60. **Mr. Higgins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why traffic turning south from the junction of the M25 and M23 was delayed for over 50 minutes at about noon on Saturday 11 June; who is responsible for co-ordinating the work of the police and other authorities to ensure that traffic is not unnecessarily delayed and motorists are informed when approaching motorway junctions that an alternative route should be used; why no attempt to reduce congestion was made on this occasion; and if he will review his Department's policy to ensure that traffic flows are maintained.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The delays on 11 June were caused by lane closures imposed while a deflectograph machine measured the structural condition of the road. The county council, as the Department's agent, is responsible for co-ordinating lane closures and traffic management. The work was undertaken at short notice to take advantage of the availability of the machine and favourable weather conditions. I regret the inconvenience to motorists. We will aim to avoid similar hold-ups.

Wild Animals (Crossings)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what his Department does to assist wild animals in crossing busy roads and railways.

Mr. David Mitchell: On trunk roads the Department takes special measures to protect wildlife. Examples are deer runs to provide for safe crossing and special fencing and reflectors designed to frighten animals from straying on to roads. Special road signs advise motorists of 150 sites where migrating toads cross during the spawning season. British Rail takes similar measures where practicable, including provision of gaps in electric rails where there are known badger runs.

Roadworks

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the effect of construction prices on his plans for road building and maintenance this year.

Mr. Channon: We are achieving a high level of activity in road building and maintenance. Our planned spending on capital items is over 30 per cent. more in real terms than in 1978-79. Spending on roads this year is at an all time record level of over £1 billion.

We are also making more rapid progress with schemes than expected. I have reviewed the scheduling of our work. All work currently in hand will continue. I shall continue to give high priority to safety schemes, though there will be implications for the phasing of major reconstruction works. My aim remains to start within the year all planned new construction schemes which are ready.

Motor Cyclists (Prescription-lensed Goggles)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on helping those motor cyclists with prescription-lensed goggles comply with the eye protectors regulations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Amending regulations exempting existing prescription lensed goggles and postponing until 1 April 1989 the requirement for new ones to be approved and marked to BS 4110 were laid before the House today. The regulations also permit the use of glass lensed goggles approved to an earlier version of the standard which did not require marking with the letter "A" to show abrasion resistance. The regulations will come into force in early July.

M1 (Southbound Carriageway Congestion)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the causes of congestion on the southbound carriageway of the M1 between junctions 15 and 12 between 20.00 and 22.00 hours on Sunday 12 June, and what immediate action he intends to take to prevent a recurrence.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Southbound traffic on this section of M1 is very heavy on Sunday afternoons and evenings. A fatal accident near junction 12 at 18.30 hours on 12 June caused congestion to build up rapidly. The delays extended throughout the evening.

An experimental automatic incident detection system is being installed on the northbound carriageway of the M1 between junctions 10 and 19. No immediate measures are to be taken on the southbound carriageway until the results have been evaluated. We continue the work of engineering, education, enforcement, exhortation and example which is designed to cut casualties, their causes and consequences by one third in 12 years.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the last 30 months I have neither needed to know nor asked. I do not intend to start now. The hon. Member could associate information in "Whitaker's" and "Who's Who".

Motor Cycle Leg Guards

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he made of the cost of providing motor cycle leg guards when considering his policy towards their future fitting on motor cycles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It might range between 3 and 10 per cent. of the cost of a new motor cycle. Cost and benefits are always taken into account in considering safety specifications to cut deaths and injuries. In the case of leg guards the cost would vary according to the type of motor cycle, its equipment, the manufacturer's design and production methods.

Motor Cycles (Accidents)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many injuries there have been from road accidents involving motor cycles; and at what cost of treatment, over the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is as follows:

Number of casualties in accidents involving motor cycles Great Britain: 1986

Killed	*Seriously injured*	*Slightly injured*	*All casualties*
915	17,678	41,754	60,347
Of these, pedestrian casualties were:			
119	1,360	2,909	4,388

Number of casualties among motor cycle users Great Britain: 1986

Killed	*Seriously injured*	*Slightly injured*	*All casualties*
762	15,704	35,814	52,280

The estimated medical and ambulance costs of all accidents involving motor cycles were £42 million, out of a total of £150 million for road accident casualties, at 1986 prices; 406 of the pedestrian casualties were incurred at zebra crossings.

North Circular Road (Subsidence)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how long the 5 ft wide hole in the middle of the

northbound carriageway of the Barking to South Woodford relief road north of the viaduct over the Barking to Fenchurch Street railway line will take to repair; whether other structural defects have appeared; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set up an inquiry, with the results to be made public, into the circumstances of the subsidence on the northbound outside lane of the South Woodford to Barking relief road (north circular) between Barking and Ilford which occurred on or about 7 June; what action will be taken against those responsible; how much compensation will be received for the loss of use of part of the road; and when the repair work will be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Repairs will be carried out as quickly as possible. The subsidence was caused by the failure of a connection between a drainage gully and the main drain for the road, some 5 ft below the central reservation. Water draining through the gully washed away material below the surface.

As this occurred during the one-year maintenance period following the road's opening, the relevant contractor is responsible for the repairs at his own expense.

A considerable amount of material has blocked the main drain. Clearing this may involve further excavations and temporary traffic restrictions.

Roads (Private Investment)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the organisations and individuals who have expressed an interest in private sector investment in the provision of roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Much interest has been shown. I wrote to a number of firms asking for ideas on how to improve the country's transport infrastructure. Over 30 responded.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the campaign against vehicle excise duty evasion in the north-west.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The recent campaign against vehicle excise duty evasion in the north-west was run in conjunction with the Cumbria, Cheshire, Lancashire and Greater Manchester police forces. Two weeks of extensive local publicity in early May, to encourage motorists to license their vehicles voluntarily, were followed by a fortnight of intensified police activity to catch evaders who had failed to heed the warnings given. More than 1,400 offenders have so far been reported for prosecution. I shall write to my hon. Friend when the full results are available.

Home Defence Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 25 April to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock), *Official Report*, column *70*, if he will list the sites occupied by public sector transport undertakings at which exercise activities will take place in any or all of the military home defence exercises Eastern Shield, Capital Guard, Drakes Drum, Autumn Tiger, Northern Crusade, Western Encounter, Triple Crown and Strong Link; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. It would not be in the public interest to disclose these sites.

ATL Holdings

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many public service vehicle licences are held by ATL Holdings Ltd. or any of its subsidiary companies; when they were granted; how long they have been held; and what were the variations in those licences in the last five years;

(2) how many times the north-west traffic commissioners have reduced the public service vehicle licences held by ATL Holdings; on what dates; for which companies; and on how many vehicles;

(3) on how many occasions, and on which dates, ATL Holdings has had any of its public service vehicle licences reduced because of road safety violations or the use of unsafe vehicles.

Mr. David Mitchell: ATL Holdings does not hold a PSV operator's licence. The current licence of its subsidiary Yelloway Motor Services Ltd., was granted on 8 April 1988 and its first licence on 1 March 1982. The current licence of Crosville Motor Services was granted on 17 August 1987, and its first licence on 1 August 1981. The current licence of SUT Ltd. was granted on 19 June 1987 and its first on 1 May 1987. The current licence of Yelloway Trathens Express was granted on 1 November 1986 and its first on 28 November 1985.

The number of vehicles which Yelloways Motor Services is authorised to operate on its PSV operator's licence was reduced from 50 to 35 with effect from 1 June 1987 because of severe maintenance problems. It was further reduced from 35 to 30 on 8 April 1988 on account of new prohibition notices.

The other variations in the number of vehicles which these companies were authorised to operate over the last five years were:—

Yelloways Motor Services was granted a reduction from 60 to 50 in February 1987.

Crosville Motor Services Ltd. was granted an increase from 764 to 774 in January 1985; a reduction from 774 to 478 in October 1986 (when the company was divided into two); and a reduction from 478 to 450 in August 1987.

Yelloway Trathens Express Ltd. was granted an increase from 10 to 20 in March 1987.

National Bus Company

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when he last consulted the north-west traffic commissioners; what were the subjects of his consultations; and whether he discussed the sale of Crosville Motor Co. with any of the north-west commissioners before approving the sale by the National Bus Company of the company;

(2) what consultation procedures exist to enable him to establish from the traffic commissioners whether an applicant for the sale of National Bus Company assets is a fit and proper person; and how such procedures were followed in the case of ATL Holdings.

Mr. David Mitchell: There is no formal procedure for the Department to consult the traffic commissioners on

these matters. As I explained in my answer to the hon. Member's similar question on 18 May at column *614* the National Bus Company took steps to satisfy itself about the suitability of the purchasers of Crosville Motor Services. Its inquiries included discussion with the traffic commissioner's office and inspection of the maintenance facilities. The results of these inquiries were taken fully into account before approval to the sale was given.

Public Service Vehicles (Maintenance)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department lays down minimum requirements for the maintenance of public service vehicles in regard to adequate numbers of fitters, maintenance depots and general maintenance inspections; and how often the north-west traffic commissioners have discussed this matter with him.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 provides that an application for a public service vehicle operators licence shall not be granted unless the traffic commissioner is satisfied that there will be adequate facilities or arrangements for maintaining in a fit and servicable condition the vehicles to be used under the licence. It is for the traffic commissioner to decide how this requirement is to be met. The traffic commissioner for the north-western traffic area has had no recent discussions with the Department on maintenance matters.

Motor Insurance

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has concerning the extension of comprehensive and third party motor insurance to other European Community countries in the light of the forthcoming completion of the Channel tunnel and the single European market.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Motor insurance policies issued in one member state already provide the cover required by law in each of the others. From 31 December 1988, policies throughout the Community will cover liability for damage to property as well as bodily injury. This is required by directive 84/5/EC. We introduced regulations last December to comply with the directive. The Community's effort has been directed to the harmonisation of compulsory requirements to protect the interests of accident victims. Our view is that it is for individual drivers to decide what cover they require in addition to compulsory insurance.

Dial-a-Ride Service (London)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the number of drivers employers by each dial-a-ride service in the London Regional Transport area at *(a)* the most recent convenient date, and *(b)* 12 months earlier.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This is a matter for the management committees of the voluntary organisations concerned and for London Regional Transport which funds them.

Channel Tunnel Rail Service (Disabled People)

Mr. Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he is having with representatives of the British and French railways to ensure that all trains that will be used on the Channel tunnel rail service links will be properly equipped to ensure suitable seating and toilet facilities for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The design of the rolling stock for the Channel tunnel through rail services is the responsibility of the railway operators concerned. I understand that the draft specification for the high-speed rolling stock which has been agreed between the British and the French railways already includes suitable facilities for disabled people.

London Buses

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the number of vehicles operated by each district road service in the London Regional Transport area of *(a)* the most recent convenient date and *(b)* 12 months earlier.

Mr. David Mitchell: The detailed deployment of vehicles to services provided by London Regional Transport through its subsidiary London Buses Limited or secured by them through tendering is a matter for the operators concerned.

ENVIRONMENT

Bradfield Court, Nottingham

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the tenants of Bradfield court, Nottingham, regarding the selling of their homes.

Mrs. Roe: None.

Housing Bill

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning proposals contained in the Housing Bill to allow local authority tenants choice of landlords; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received many representations concerning the proposals in part IV of the Housing Bill —"Tenants' Choice"—from members of the public, from organisations and from local authorities. Where these were in response to our explanatory paper and the senders gave permission, copies were laid in the Library.

Water Supplies

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to make permissible levels of aluminium in the water supply lower than the level allowed under European Community regulations, following recent research suggesting that water that passes these regulations may be dangerous.

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, in view of the research findings of Southampton university on the possible link between Alzheimer's disease and aluminium compounds added to water, what immediate action he proposes to take to safeguard the consumer while scientific investigation is carried out; if he will consider alternatives to aluminium compounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 17 June.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to ensure that water authorities comply with the European Community regulations limiting the levels of aluminium in the water supply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: We have agreed action programmes for the 31 supplies which do not at present comply with the aluminium standard set in the EC drinking water directive, owing to the use of aluminium in the treatment process. Most of these supplies should comply by 1990.

Where aluminium is naturally occurring in water the directive allows the Department to grant derogations. The Department has granted 16 derogations, but has stressed that these should be phased out over the next few years.

The hon. Member is also referred to the statement I made in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 17 June.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by water authority areas and their districts, the levels of aluminium in the water supply.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much the water supplied by the Newcastle and Gateshead water company exceeds the European Economic Community limit for aluminium content; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The local areas served by the Newcastle and Gateshead water company which have been supplied with drinking water containing aluminium levels above those specified in the EC drinking water directive since the directive came into operation in 1985 are:

Rochester
West Woodburn
Otterburn
Wark on Tyne
Bellingham

There are about 3,500 people in these areas. However, improvements have been carried out and all the company's supplies now comply with the aluminium standard set in the directive.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusion he has reached as a result of the Hatton catchment nitrate study.

Mr. Moynihan: The Hatton catchment nitrate study provides a thorough and useful assessment of the various options for controlling nitrate in water supplies in an area which may have lessons for other areas. The study is being taken into account in the Government's current review of the nitrate issue.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a list of water authorities in England and Wales, indicating in each case how much use it makes of aluminium compounds to achieve the characteristics sought in the water which it supplies; and whether his Department is to issue guidance in response to the alleged link between the long-term generation of Alzheimer's disease and the employment of chemicals containing aluminium in the public water supply.

Mr. Moynihan: All water authorities in England and Wales use aluminium compounds in some of their treatment works for the removal of suspended matter from surface waters. Those which make the most use of aluminium are Northumbria, North-West, Severn-Trent, South-West and Yorkshire. With respect to the alleged link with Alzheimer's disease I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 17 June.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people in the Stockport area receive water with aluminium content exceeding European Community permitted levels; what are the levels of aluminium in such water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: About 180,000 people in the Stockport area receive water with aluminium content exceeding the aluminium standard in the EC directive for drinking water. Current concentrations of aluminium are not considered a health risk. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 17 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham).

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) where it is intended to locate the headquarters of the new National Rivers Authority;

(2) if he will locate the headquarters of the new National Rivers Authority in Liverpool.

Mr. Moynihan: No decision has yet been taken.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether community charge officers will be able to trace debtors and defaulters by asking for information concerning an individual's name and address from gas, water and electricity boards.

Mr. Howard: No. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 26 May at column *305*.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of (i) the staffing implications and (ii) the administrative costs of his proposals announced on 17 November 1987 and 25 April to require 10 London boroughs to operate residual domestic rating for four years in addition to the community charge.

Mr. Howard: I have not yet completed consideration of the findings of the Price Waterhouse study of the implementation of the community charge.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he used in establishing the threshold above which 10 London boroughs will be required to operate residual domestic rating, announced in his reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 25 April, *Official Report*, at columns *61-62*.

Mr. Howard: The basic criterion was the combined level of spending above assessed need on all local services, and therefore the implied level of community charges, based on 1987-88 budgets. We also had regard to the evidence from provisional expenditure returns for 1988-89

of reductions in aggregate overspending; to representations received and to assurances given about measures to be taken which would further reduce community charge levels. At the time of my announcement no representations had been received from the individual authorities to which part IV of the Local Government Finance Bill is now to apply.

Community Charge Register

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the procedures or restrictions that will be associated with the sale of names and addresses from the community charge register.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to what was said by my noble Friend the Minister of State during the Committee stage of the Local Government Finance Bill in another place—*Official Report, House of Lords*, 6 June; column 1139-41.

Environment Council

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Environment Council on 16 June.

Mr. Moynihan: My noble Friend the Minister for the Environment, Countryside and Water represented the United Kingdom at this meeting, which was adjourned at 4 am on 17 June and will resume on 28 June.

The Council adopted the directive limiting diesel car particulate emissions, on which the Council had previously adopted a common position.

I am pleased to say that the Council reached a common position on the Commission's proposals to ratify and implement the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer, subject to parliamentary reserves on behalf of the United Kingdom and several other member states. The Council also agreed a political resolution which emphasises the importance of voluntary action to reduce further the use of CFCs and halons and specifies that such reductions should not be offset by increases in other uses or in other parts of the Community. The Commission was invited to seek voluntary agreement with industry on a Community label for CFC-free products.

I am especially pleased to report that after four and a half years of negotiation the Council was able to reach agreement on the large combustion plants directive, subject to scutiny reserves by France, Italy, and Portugal and parliamentary reserves on behalf of Denmark and the United Kingdom. Under the agreement, the United Kingdom accepts a phased programme of reductions in sulphur dioxide emissions from existing large combustion plants, from 1980 levels, of 20 per cent. by 1993, 40 per cent. by 1998 and 60 per cent. by 2003; and in nitrogen oxide emissions of 15 per cent. by 1993 and 30 per cent. by 1998. These ambitious new targets will require a very substantial additional effort over and above our existing programe of retrofitting 6000 MW of coal-fired generating plant with flue gas desulphurisation equipment. The agreement represents a firm and positive commitment on the part of the United Kingdom which will result in substantial benefits for the environment, and will also give the industries concerned firm targets for their future planning.

There was further discussion of the second stage of exhaust emission standards for small cars (the "Luxembourg package"). My noble Friend indicated that the United Kingdom was willing to agree to the Commission proposal, subject to parliamentary reserve, and several other member states followed him in doing so. However, I am sorry to say that there remained a blocking minority which prevented progress. The dossier was referred for further discussion on 28 June.

I am pleased to report that the Council reached agreement in principle, subject to a United Kingdom parliamentary reserve, on a second amendment to directive 82/501/EEC on the major accident hazards of certain industrial activities (the "Seveso" directive). This amendment will strengthen the parent directive's provisions on informing the public and will extend the scope of the directive to cover more premises storing dangerous substances—both isolated warehouses and process-associated storage. In the light of this extension, the Commission undertook to review urgently the list of substances and thresholds in annex III of the parent directive.

The Council had a preliminary exchange of views on a Commission report on the environmental consequences of the changing nature of agriculture and also discussed the export of hazardous wastes to Third world countries and current pollution and algae problems in the North sea.

On 28 June the Council will resume consideration of emissions from small cars and will also discuss wastes from the titanium dioxide industry and a proposed pilot scheme concerning environment and employment.

Drinking Water

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 50 areas for which derogations have been given from European Economic Community requirements concerning levels of aluminium in drinking water.

Mr. Moynihan: The 47 areas where the Department has given the aluminium derogations under article 9 of the EC drinking water directive or has applied to the European Commission under article 20 for a further period of time to comply with the aluminium standard are as follows:

Northumbrian Water Authority
Tunstall

Severn-Trent Water Authority
Parts of North Warwickshire, Coventry and Nuneaton
Parts of Charnwood, Hinckley and Bosworth areas
Part of Stroud district council area
Areas supplied direct from Elan reservoirs aqueduct
Part of Montgomery

South West Water Authority
Parishes of Seaton and Beer
Areas supplied from Tottiford treatment works
Areas supplied from Prewley treatment works
Bideford
College supply zone—Falmouth and Penrhyn
Watercombe supply zone
Higher parts of Penzance
Launceston and Callington areas
Bodmin and Wadebridge areas
Princetown
Chagford Crediton hamlets

North West Water Authority
Parts of Sefton M.B
Parts of Stockport M.B
Parts of Bolton M.B.

Parts of Tameside M.B
Parts of Oldham M.B
Parts of Carlisle District
Parts of Eden District
Parts of Lancaster Borough
Parts of Ribble Valley District

Yorkshire Water Authority
South East Sheffield
Central Sheffield
Part of West Barnsley (2)
South West Sheffield
Thornton pressure treatment works supply area, West Bradford
Area east of Thirsk
Area west of Harrogate
Addingham
Parts of Dewsbury, Mirfield and Huddersfield
Part of North Bradford
Huddersfield, Holmbridge, Holmfirth area
Parts of Huddersfield
Rural area of Keighley
Reva treatment works supply area, Rombalds
Parts of Huddersfield
Rural areas west and south of Halifax (2)
Northern area of Halifax
Halifax, served by Thrum Hall treatment works
Otley

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the local areas, served by the Newcastle and Gateshead water company, which have been supplied with drinking water containing aluminium levels above recommended European Economic Community limits over each of the last five years;

(2) how many people in the Newcastle and Gateshead areas have been supplied with drinking water containing aluminium over recommended European Economic Community limits, for each of the last five years;

(3) he will list for each of the areas which have been given derogations from European Economic Community limits concerning aluminium levels, by how much the European Economic Community limits were exceeded for each of the last five years.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not held centrally. The level of aluminium in drinking water in areas which do not yet meet the standard for aluminium set in the EC drinking water directive is considered acceptable by medical advisers.

Planning Appeal (Banbury)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to announce his decision on the appeal relating to the retail warehouse parts and so on at the old automotive products site in Banbury.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Secretary of State currently awaits the submission of an agreement, to be concluded between the parties, under section 52 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, relating to various highways and access works. It is not therefore possible to state when a decision will be reached on the appeal.

Pollution

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what actions have been taken to reduce the emissions causing acid rain; by what percentage these emissions have been reduced to date; what further actions he proposes in this field; what is the largest percentage reduction; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the levels of sulphur emissions from power stations; and what action he is taking to have these levels reduced.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he now intends to take to introduce an urgent programme of heavy cuts in the pollution from cars and power stations that causes acid rain.

Mr. Moynihan: Total United Kingdom sulphur dioxide (SO^2) emissions have fallen by nearly 40 per cent. since 1970, while nitrogen oxide (NO_x) emissions have remained broadly stable. We have authorised the Central Electricity Generating Board to retrofit flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) equipment to 6,000 MW of electrical generating capacity (three major power stations) and low-NO_x burners to all 12 major CEGB coal-fired power stations. All new power stations are to have the technology to control acid emissions, to the requirements of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

We have now agreed, subject to parliamentary reserve, to a new European Community directive on the control of emissions from large combustion plants, and I would refer the hon. Member to my answer today to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). This will represent a very substantial reduction in United Kingdom emissions.

The European Community Luxembourg package which was agreed last December provides for substantial reductions in motor vehicle emissions. We intend to implement the new standards in full. We expect that the Luxembourg agreement will fully compensate for the growth in traffic between now and 2000 and will achieve significant reductions in both primary and secondary pollutants.

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the water authorities succesfully prosecuted under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 for excess discharge of sewage; what action he has taken to see that plant is updated by the water authorities before any privatisation takes place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that Thames water authority did not contest a prosecution last year for breaches of discharge consent conditions. I know of no other completed cases against water authorities. A major programme to renew and upgrade sewage treatment works is in progress. Investment in sewage treatment and disposal is planned to rise in real terms from £217 million last year to £260 million this year. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is investigating all sewage treatment works which failed to comply with consents in 1987 to establish the reasons for non-compliance and the remedial measures water authorities are proposing to deal with the problems.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number and the proportion of all households accounted for by owner-occupiers, for each of the last 20 years.

Mrs. Roe: Estimate of numbers and proportions of dwellings in owner-occupation from 1976 to 1987 appear

in table 2.22 of the quarterly "Housing and Construction Statistics", No. 32, a copy of which is available in the Library. Estimates for England from 1968 to 1975 are as follows:

Estimated stock of owner-occupied dwellings in England

End of year	*Thousand*	*Per cent. of all dwellings*
1968	7,870	50·6
1969	8,029	50·9
1970	8,214	51·4
1971	8,501	52·4
1972	8,780	53·5
1973	9,029	54·5
1974	9,205	54·9
1975	9,385	55·3

Note: Although numbers are expressed to the nearest thousand they should not be regarded as accurate to the last digit.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority area in England and Wales the number of homes made available to people under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act in 1986-87; and what percentage this represented of the total number of houses available for new tenants in 1986-87.

Mrs. Roe: The information provided by English local authorities in their housing investment programme returns for 1987 is in the following table. For information about Welsh authorities I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Local authority lettings to homeless households in priority need in 1986-87

Local authority	*Dwellings let to new tenants (excluding mobility schemes)*		*through mobility schemes*
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*
Region North Inc. Cumbria			
Cleveland			
Hartlepool	171	28	—
Langbaurgh	67	11	—
Middlesbrough	397	41	n.a.
Stockton-on-Tees	252	23	—
Cumbria			
Allerdale	45	15	—
Barrow-in-Furness	27	10	—
Carlisle	77	12	—
Copeland	68	17	—
Eden	23	14	—
South Lakeland	22	9	—
Durham			
Chester-le-Street	28	5	—
Darlington	66	13	—
Derwentside	17	2	—
Durham	78	11	—
Easington	24	2	—
Sedgefield	68	7	—
Teesdale	16	25	—
Wear Valley	51	9	—
Northumberland			
Alnwick	12	6	—
Berwick-upon-Tweed	11	6	—
Blyth Valley	78	14	—
Castle Morpeth	22	9	—
Tynedale	29	14	—
Wansbeck	112	19	—
Tyne and Wear			
Gateshead	335	21	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	781	15	n.a.
North Tyneside	719	45	—
South Tyneside	168	15	—
Sunderland	270	12	—
Region Yorkshire and Humberside			
Humberside			
Beverley	107	25	—
Boothferry	32	11	—
Cleethorpes	24	8	—
East Yorkshire	14	7	—
Glanford	41	10	—
Great Grimsby	78	13	—
Holderness	24	12	—
Kingston upon Hull	561	28	—
Scunthorpe	53	9	—
North Yorkshire			
Craven	37	22	—
Hambleton	46	21	—
Harrogate	71	24	—
Richmondshire	37	21	—
Ryedale	61	29	—
Scarborough	107	30	—
Selby	38	9	—
York	143	28	—
South Yorkshire			
Barnsley	83	5	—
Doncaster	53	2	—
Rotherham	119	5	—
Sheffield	1,042	25	—
West Yorkshire			
Bradford	508	15	—
Calderdale	156	11	—
Kirklees	1,023	30	1
Leeds	1,090	20	—
Wakefield	62	2	—
Region East Midlands			
Derbyshire			
Amber Valley	139	37	—
Bolsover	27	7	—
Chesterfield	75	10	—
Derby	313	22	—
Derbyshire Dales	39	16	—
Erewash	103	20	—
High Peak	65	19	—
North East Derbyshire	84	14	—
South Derbyshire	58	33	—
Leicestershire			
Blaby	61	31	—
Charnwood	96	14	—
Harborough	45	28	—
Hinckley and Bosworth	29	13	—
Leicester	443	21	—
Melton	50	28	—
North West Leicestershire	70	18	—
Oadby and Wigston	52	46	—
Rutland	45	58	—
Lincolnshire			
Boston	17	5	—
East Lindsey	56	16	—
Lincoln	101	14	—
North Kesteven	46	12	—
South Holland	38	26	—
South Kesteven	142	24	—
West Lindsey	62	15	—
Northamptonshire			
Corby	197	30	—
Daventry	74	27	1
East Northamptonshire	66	19	—
Kettering	62	20	—

Local authority	Dwellings let to new tenants (excluding mobility schemes) Number	Percentage	Through mobility schemes Number
Northampton	214	14	—
South Northamptonshire	95	41	—
Wellingborough	78	15	—
Nottinghamshire			
Ashfield	186	28	—
Bassetlaw	173	25	n.a.
Broxtowe	88	21	—
Gedling	57	24	—
Mansfield	201	21	—
Newark and Sherwood	41	8	—
Nottingham	355	14	—
Rushcliffe	59	23	—
Region East Anglia			
Cambridgeshire			
Cambridge	184	41	—
East Cambridgeshire	44	21	1
Fenland	21	9	—
Huntingdonshire	180	38	—
Peterborough	102	22	—
South Cambridgeshire	90	29	—
Norfolk			
Breckland	111	25	—
Broadland	54	28	—
Great Yarmouth	54	16	—
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	122	28	—
North Norfolk	103	43	—
Norwich	409	28	—
South Norfolk	62	32	2
Suffolk			
Babergh	147	63	—
Forest Heath	26	14	—
Ipswich	149	46	—
Mid Suffolk	58	23	—
St. Edmundsbury	49	15	—
Suffolk Coastal	18	7	—
Waveney	87	28	—

Local authority lettings to homeless households in priority need in 1986-87

Local Authority	Dwellings let to new tenants (excluding mobility schemes) Number	Percentage	Through mobility schemes Number
Region Greater London			
Inner London			
City of London	15	12	—
Camden	1,373	72	17
Hackney	674	64	151
Hammersmith and Fulham	437	60	42
Haringey	873	70	13
Islington	941	63	101
Kensington and Chelsea	255	49	5
Lambeth	1,142	48	75
Lewisham	1,219	73	76
Newham	818	59	n.a.
Southwark	1,404	59	173
Tower Hamlets	627	44	120
Wandsworth	364	49	82
Westminster	554	60	10
Outer London			
Barking and Dagenham	[1]142	13	n.a.
Barnet	319	46	25
Bexley	190	42	—
Brent	579	79	4
Bromley	602	80	6
Croydon	511	67	6

Local Authority	Dwellings let to new tenants (excluding mobility schemes) Number	Percentage	Through mobility schemes Number
Ealing	522	57	17
Enfield	353	42	1
Greenwich	[2]1,130	81	112
Harrow	211	59	—
Havering	260	35	4
Hillingdon	326	56	—
Hounslow	625	61	12
Kingston upon Thames	175	69	3
Merton	290	48	—
Redbridge	287	60	3
Richmond upon Thames	199	46	—
Sutton	285	57	n.a.
Waltham Forest	564	50	—
Region South East Excluding London			
Bedfordshire			
Luton	26	5	—
Mid Bedfordshire	43	14	—
North Bedfordshire	108	24	1
South Bedfordshire	122	37	—
Berkshire			
Bracknell	107	39	—
Newbury	116	39	—
Reading	159	52	—
Slough	236	46	10
Windsor and Maidenhead	73	26	—
Wokingham	46	24	—
Buckinghamshire			
Aylesbury Vale	144	30	—
Chiltern	43	17	—
Milton Keynes	119	30	—
South Bucks	13	9	—
Wycombe	179	47	—
East Sussex			
Brighton	185	44	—
Eastbourne	130	36	—
Hastings	141	42	3
Hove	138	63	—
Lewes	82	35	—
Rother	108	52	—
Wealden	154	51	—
Essex			
Basildon	121	30	—
Braintree	109	20	—
Brentwood	41	13	3
Castle Point	33	30	—
Chelmsford	162	39	3
Colchester	337	50	1
Epping Forest	13	4	1
Harlow	190	26	—
Maldon	61	48	—
Rochford	50	51	—
Southend-on-Sea	116	38	—
Tendring	57	30	1
Thurrock	198	33	10
Uttlesford	34	25	—
Hampshire			
Basingstoke and Deane	85	21	—
East Hampshire	85	42	—
Eastleigh	74	31	—
Fareham	41	25	—
Gosport	165	54	—
Hart	37	38	—
Havant	45	16	—
New Forest	308	73	—
Portsmouth	167	18	—
Rushmoor	173	65	—
Southampton	148	11	—
Test Valley	149	40	—
Winchester	84	25	—

Local Authority	Dwellings let to new tenants (excluding mobility schemes) Number	Percentage	Through mobility schemes Number
Hertfordshire			
Broxbourne	96	56	—
Dacorum	70	13	—
East Hertfordshire	133	43	—
Hertsmere	114	44	2
North Hertfordshire	63	16	—
St. Albans	139	51	—
Stevenage	160	28	—
Three Rivers	118	43	—
Watford	117	39	—
Welwyn Hatfield	89	18	1
Isle of Wight			
Medina	104	43	—
South Wight	85	58	—
Kent			
Ashford	84	19	—
Canterbury	163	43	—
Dartford	81	27	—
Dover	49	16	—
Gillingham	111	45	1
Gravesham	85	37	—
Maidstone	195	53	—
Rochester upon Medway	42	15	—
Sevenoaks	179	46	2
Shepway	5	2	—
Swale	85	30	—
Thanet	40	10	—
Tonbridge and Malling	156	64	—
Tunbridge Wells	128	49	—
Oxfordshire			
Cherwell	145	30	—
Oxford	119	30	—
South Oxfordshire	27	7	—
Vale of White Horse	18	8	—
West Oxfordshire	42	18	—
Surrey			
Elmbridge	117	44	—
Epsom and Ewell	10	13	—
Guildford	80	26	—
Mole Valley	21	13	—
Reigate and Banstead	87	30	—
Runnymede	62	45	—
Spelthorne	24	10	—
Surrey Heath	39	33	—
Tandridge	102	37	—
Waverley	119	45	1
Woking	101	35	—
West Sussex			
Adur	71	42	—
Arun	40	13	—
Chichester	145	36	—
Crawley	169	32	—
Horsham	98	35	—
Mid Sussex	90	46	3
Worthing	65	30	—

Local authority lettings to homeless households in priority need in 1986-87

Local Authority	Dwellings let to new tenants (excluding mobility schemes) number	percentage	through mobility schemes number
Region South West			
Avon			
Bath	177	42	—
Bristol	493	22	—
Kingswood	76	38	—
Northavon	65	26	—
Wansdyke	42	20	—
Woodspring	187	44	1
Cornwall			
Caradon	76	26	—
Carrick	57	27	—
Kerrier	51	27	—
North Cornwall	61	22	—
Penwith	46	28	—
Restormel	136	51	—
Isles of Scilly	1	13	—
Devon			
East Devon	86	77	—
Exeter	46	10	—
Mid Devon	49	24	—
North Devon	49	21	—
Plymouth	376	36	—
South Hams	28	14	—
Teignbridge	132	55	—
Torbay	132	53	—
Torridge	8	7	—
West Devon	44	31	—
Dorset			
Bournemouth	128	31	—
Christchurch	51	53	—
North Dorset	65	38	—
Poole	168	48	—
Purbeck	70	50	—
West Dorset	53	20	—
Weymouth and Portland	116	59	—
East Dorset	37	29	—
Gloucestershire			
Cheltenham	41	12	—
Cotswold	65	46	1
Forest of Dean	66	26	—
Gloucester	147	40	2
Stroud	145	44	—
Tewkesbury	71	29	—
Somerset			
Mendip	59	21	1
Sedgemoor	67	20	—
South Somerset	161	34	—
Taunton Deane	123	31	4
West Somerset	45	36	—
Wiltshire			
Kennet	106	56	3
North Wiltshire	144	44	—
Salisbury	117	47	—
Thamesdown	94	11	—
West Wiltshire	85	27	—
Region West Midlands			
Hereford and Worcester			
Bromsgrove	75	33	—
Hereford	98	37	—
Leominster	40	39	—
Malvern Hills	183	55	1
Redditch	157	22	—
South Herefordshire	29	25	—
Worcester	130	30	—
Wychavon	18	6	—
Wyre Forest	170	38	2
Shropshire			
Bridgnorth	22	12	—
North Shropshire	53	30	—
Oswestry	50	34	—
Shrewsbury and Atcham	45	8	—

Local Authority	Dwellings let to new tenants (excluding mobility schemes) number	percentage	through mobility schemes number
South Shropshire	24	24	—
The Wrekin	140	20	—
Staffordshire			
Cannock Chase	80	17	—
East Staffordshire	76	17	—
Lichfield	165	61	—
Newcastle-under-Lyme	170	22	—
South Staffordshire	90	31	—
Stafford	124	36	—
Staffordshire Moorlands	56	30	—
Stoke-on-Trent	490	31	—
Tamworth	146	21	—
Warwickshire			
North Warwickshire	54	22	—
Nuneaton and Bedworth	79	16	—
Rugby	79	18	—
Stratford-on-Avon	82	23	—
Warwick	88	25	—
West Midlands			
Birmingham	4,855	52	—
Coventry	314	15	—
Dudley	127	7	—
Sandwell	360	12	—
Solihull	283	29	—
Walsall	472	30	—
Wolverhampton	391	17	—
Region North West excluding Cumbria			
Cheshire			
Chester	248	43	—
Congleton	50	25	—
Crewe and Nantwich	105	21	—
Ellesmere Port and Neston	9	2	—
Halton	201	41	—
Macclesfield	222	42	—
Vale Royal	189	28	—
Warrington	60	9	—
Lancashire			
Blackburn	236	15	—
Blackpool	93	14	—
Burnley	107	14	—
Chorley	125	43	—
Fylde	20	15	—
Hyndburn	115	22	—
Lancaster	44	12	—
Pendle	60	10	—
Preston	152	19	—
Ribble Valley	41	28	—
Rossendale	62	12	—
South Ribble	62	18	—
West Lancashire	208	18	—
Wyre	97	40	—
Greater Manchester			
Bolton	726	36	—
Bury	291	29	—
Manchester	2,195	39	—
Oldham	62	3	—
Rochdale	53	2	—
Salford	110	6	—
Stockport	200	19	—
Tameside	251	14	—
Trafford	237	37	—
Wigan	364	14	—
Merseyside			
Knowsley	251	14	—
Liverpool	276	10	—
St. Helens	257	23	—
Sefton	98	9	—
Wirral	271	12	—

Notes:

[1] Barking and Dagenham—number of lettings to homeless households on non-secure tenancies not reported.

[2] Greenwich—number of lettings on non-secure tenancies not reported.

Longford Hall

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to respond to the request of the Longford park conservation area association for the listing of Longford hall in the borough of Telford.

Mr. Moynihan: I wrote to the hon. Member on 14 June with the news that Longford hall is to be listed grade II.

Green Belt

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of his Department's proposed new planning circular, he will make a further statement on his commitment to the green belt and, in particular, on whether the Government remain opposed to any new development taking place in existing green belt, as designated in existing structure plans.

Mr. Waldegrave: The planning policy guidance note on local plans, which my Department issued in draft for consultation on 15 June, would urge local authorities to define detailed green belt boundaries so that there is no uncertainty as to where green belt policies do and do not apply. Government policy on development in designated green belts remains as stated in PPG 2:

"Inside the Green Belt approval should not be given except in very special circumstances for the construction of new buildings or for the change of use of existing buildings for puposes other than agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds or other uses appropriate to rural areas."

Rents

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the latest available average level of fair rents registered for *(a)* private unfurnished tenancies and *(b)* private furnished tenancies in each London borough.

Mrs. Roe: The information is as follows:

Mean rents registered by rent officers in Greater London during 1987
(£ per annum)

Rent registration area	Regulated Unfurnished Tenancies £	Regulated Furnished Tenancies £
Barking and Dagenham	1,028	1,998
Barnet	1,491	2,526
Bexley	977	2,427
Brent	1,208	1,686
Bromley	1,248	2,319
City of London	1,352	1,533
Camden	1,865	2,083
Croydon	1,319	2,592
Ealing	1,337	2,531
Enfield	1,061	1,898
Greenwich	1,019	2,044
Hackney	1,226	1,498
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,239	2,010
Haringey	1,230	1,989
Harrow	1,260	2,356
Havering	1,125	1,678

Rent registration area	Regulated Unfurnished Tenancies £	Regulated Furnished Tenancies £
Hillingdon	1,261	1,994
Hounslow	1,299	2,192
Islington	1,204	2,018
Kensington and Chelsea	2,139	2,038
Kingston on Thames	1,289	1,872
Lambeth	1,194	2,057
Lewisham	1,024	1,505
Merton	1,280	3,416
Newham	819	1,663
Redbridge	1,029	1,391
Richmond	1,250	2,322
Southwark	1,044	1,635
Sutton	1,220	2,866
Tower Hamlets	922	1,253
Waltham Forest	876	1,942
Wandsworth	1,251	2,097
Westminster	2,622	2,091

Waste Disposal

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from *(a)* the European Commission and *(b)* elsewhere on the delay in implementing the European directive on the transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste.

Mr. Moynihan: We have received a number of representations about the difficulties and delay in implementing the EC directive on transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste, from the European Commission, waste disposal authorities and others.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to introduce enabling legislation or regulations to implement the European directive on the transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste.

Mr. Moynihan: We intend to lay regulations to implement these directives before the summer recess.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions for misleading, wrong or incorrect descriptions of special waste on the consignment notes required by the 1980 regulations have been brought in each year since 1981; and how many for failure to provide consignment notes.

Mr. Moynihan: Responsibility for administering the special waste regulations rests with waste disposal authorities. Data provided to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, which may be incomplete, give the following information on prosecutions for offences under section 17 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974:

1985	1986
3	5

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many major waste disposal sites have laboratory facilities for analysis of waste coming in.

Mr. Moynihan: Details of laboratory facilities are not held centrally. Few landfill sites have laboratory facilities, but Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution knows of testing facilities at some: for example; the L Field site in Bedfordshire; the Witton Flush site in Cheshire; the Colliers site at Rixton in Cheshire; the Himley Wood site in Staffordshire; the Wellford site in Northamptonshire; and the Pitsea site in Essex. The presence of laboratory facilities does not necessarily imply that all loads are tested on arrival. All major treatment and incineration facilities have laboratories on site.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many European countries have implemented the European directive on the trans-frontier shipment of hazardous waste.

Mr. Moynihan: We understand that Belgium and Denmark have done so.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of waste coming into the United Kingdom is defined as hazardous or special *(a)* under British regulations, *(b)* under regulations of the country of origin and *(c)* under the EEC directive.

Mr. Moynihan: It is estimated that some 28 per cent. of imported wastes are defined as special waste under our regulations. The proportion defined as hazardous or special in the country of origin or under the EC transfrontier directives cannot be estimated until the directives are implemented by other member states.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment at what time after the arrival of the vessel the importer of special waste is required to notify the local authority of the port of arrival of the nature of the consignment.

Mr. Moynihan: Under the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980, notification is linked to the removal of waste from the place where it is produced or held. Notification should take place not less than three days before the waste is moved. For imports of special waste, this means not less than three days before the waste is due to leave the port.

Under regulations to be laid to implement the directive on transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste, the Waste Disposal Authority will receive notification before the arrival of the shipment.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the figures for the import of *(a)* special waste and *(b)* general waste through Humberside in each year from 1980; and how much of it was deposited in Humberside.

Mr. Moynihan: Figures for the importation of special wastes via the port of Hull/Immingham for the years 1981 to 1986 are as follows:

	Tonnes
1981	2,886
1982	3,088
1983	2,444
1984	[1]2,000
1985	881
1986	12,504

[1] Approximately.

There is no requirement for other controlled waste to be pre-notified and therefore figures for the importation of these wastes through Humberside are not available.

Humberside county council is not aware of any imported wastes being deposited within the county.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what definition of hazardous waste has been used in other countries implementing the European directive on transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste; what definition he intends to use in the United Kingdom; and what representations he has made to the Commission for a common definition.

Mr. Moynihan: The directives include a general definition of hazardous waste but the detailed interpretation of this definition by other member states will not be known until they have completed their implementation. It is our intention to apply the provisions of the directives to wastes defined as special wastes in the United Kingdom and to imports which are notified as hazardous by other member states. The question of a common definition has been raised with the Commission on a number of occasions in the past three years.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been made to him from Humberside county council about proposals to import 15,000 tonne consignments of domestic waste for dumping in Humberside.

Mr. Moynihan: None.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has of increasing involvement of organised crime in the disposal of toxic waste.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* I have no evidence of the involvement of organised crime in the disposal of special waste in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of successful prosecutions for the illicit disposal of toxic waste for each year since 1979.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* The unlicensed disposal of any controlled waste is an offence under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, section 3, and unauthorised dumping of any article is an offence under the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978. Information on convictions for these two offences, which may be incomplete, as reported to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department is as follows:

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Control of Pollution Act, S3	13	24	35	48	66	67	65	93
Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act	385	570	648	605	584	560	436	380

Information is not collected separately on offences relating to special wastes.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will bring forward legislation to require consignment notes applying to imported toxic waste to be forwarded to the waste disposal authority responsible for its final disposal;

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that consignment note descriptions of imported toxic waste contains accurate descriptions of the quality and content of each consignment;

(3) if he will seek to amend the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Act 1980, in order to ensure that waste disposal authorities responsible for ports which import toxic waste are required to be notified of the quantity and content of such consignments before they arrive at the ports concerned.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* Regulations to implement the EC directives on transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste will be laid before the House shortly. They will require the use of standard consignment notes to give advance notice to the waste disposal authority responsible for the waste disposal of an intended shipment. The consignment notes will be required to contain details of the source, quantity, composition and destination of the wastes.

The regulations, which will replace existing controls on imported waste under the 1980 regulations, will also provide for the waste disposal authority at the port of entry to be notified in advance with full details of the intended shipment.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the loss of significant quantities from consignments of imported toxic waste between their arrival in the United Kingdom and final disposal.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* I have had no such representations.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislation to ensure that, before completing consignment notes, importers of toxic waste are required to carry out a chemical analysis of each consignment to ensure that the information concerning its quantity and content supplied by either the waste producer or waste broker is accurate.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* The Special Waste Regulations 1980 provide that the duties of a producer of special waste shall apply to the person who imports special waste. These duties include the completion of the consignment note on which details of the waste are required. The importer must declare that this description of quantities and chemical composition is correct. He is already therefore obliged to satisfy himself that the consignment note is complete and accurate. Failure to do so will render him liable to prosecution. There is no need for further legislation on this point.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that waste disposal authorities do not dispose of toxic waste until they are in receipt of the relevant consignment notes and are satisfied that they are fully aware of the quantity and contents of each consignment.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* The disposal of special waste is primarily a private sector activity, licensed and monitored by waste disposal

authorities. The transfrontier shipment of waste regulations, to be implemented in the autumn, will prohibit disposal of imported special waste unless the waste is accompanied by a consignment note which records that the waste disposal authority has received full details of the quantity and contents of the consignment and is satisfied that the disposal will be in accordance with the licence conditions. A consultation paper will be issued later in the year to amend the special waste regulations which will include proposals to introduce similar requirements for movements of special waste within Great Britain.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many incidents of imported toxic waste being disposed of in the United Kingdom before the waste disposal authority were in receipt of the relevant consignment notes were recorded in the past year.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* This information is not held centrally.

Ticket Touts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about ticket touting at major sporting events in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* I have received three letters on this subject. One concerning touting in general and two on touting at football matches and in particular the FA cup final.

This is an issue which the Department and the Home Office have considered very carefully, especially in the context of the damage that black market ticket sales for major football matches can do to the efforts of the police and clubs to segregate rival fans effectively. However, it is not yet clear that a practicable and enforceable legal answer to this problem can be found. It may well be that a better solution to the problem rests with tighter controls by the organisers of sporting events over the distribution of tickets, and the imposition of sanctions against those found abusing the controls.

Population Statistics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the household and migration estimates contained in "Serplan: Land for Housing in South East England 1991-2001", include any fiscal migration effects arising from the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* No. Any effects the community charge may have on migration are not sufficiently foreseeable to be incorporated into the population and household estimates.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate county populations within the Serplan area at 1986, 1991 and 2001, using the migration assumptions in the paper "Serplan: Land for Housing in South East England"; and if he will provide further estimates assuming the net in-migration levels of 1985-86 were to be *(a)* maintained, *(b)* reduced by 50 per cent. and *(c)* reduced by 75 per cent. in the years up to 2001.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* The table sets out the population in counties in the south-east for the years 1986, 1991 and 2001 as projected by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Alternative population projections on the same basis, but using different assumptions about net migration levels, could only be made at disproportionate cost.

Projected Populations for Counties in the South East of England: OPCS 1985-based Population Projections

(Thousands)

	1986	*1991*	*2001*
Bedfordshire	520	536	560
Berkshire	733	766	814
Buckinghamshire	610	648	719
East Sussex	687	704	740
Essex	1,512	1,546	1,612
Hampshire	1,538	1,609	1,750
Hertfordshire	991	1,013	1,053
Isle of Wight	123	124	127
Kent	1,502	1,533	1,596
Oxfordshire	573	595	627
Surrey	1,015	1,028	1,072
West Sussex	692	714	757
South East (excluding London)	10,494	10,816	11,427
Greater London	6,778	6,806	6,916
Total South East	17,271	17,622	18,343

Source: OPCS Monitor PP3 88/1

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate by country of origin and destination the migration flows to the south-east from outside England as in table 4 of his paper "Serplan: Land for Housing in South East England".

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* The assumptions about future net migration between counties in the south-east and areas outside England are set by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Detailed assumptions about country of origin or destination of future migrants are not made as they are unnecessary for the purposes of projecting the population of counties.

Housing

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide for each standard region, but distinguishing between London and the rest of the south-east, the net increase in dwelling stock for 1986 to 1991 on the same basis as in his paper "Serplan: Land for Housing in South East England", table 1, line E, but distinguishing between new build and conversion.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* Estimates of the possible net increase in dwelling stock over the period 1986 to 1991 on the basis referred to are set out in the following table. These have been obtained by taking recent annual averages of components of change and multiplying them by five. Averages for housebuilding completions relate to the three calendar years 1985 to 1987; averages for conversions and other gains, and for slum clearance and other losses relate to financial years 1984-85 to 1986-87.

Estimates for 1986 to 1991—Recent annual averages multiplied by 5, in thousands

	North	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	[1]South East (excl. Greater London)	South West	West Midlands	North West	England
Housebuilding completions	43	71	84	59	52	259	115	82	88	854
Net conversions and other gains	1	2	4	3	28	9	7	3	4	60
Slum clearance and other losses	10	14	7	2	10	7	3	10	35	98
Total net change	33	59	82	60	70	261	119	75	58	816

[1] Total net change of 261,000 compares with the implied estimate of 250,000 included in the paper "Land for Housing in South East England". The increase reflects upward revisions to estimates of housebuilding completions over the period 1985 to 1987 in the light of the most recent returns.

Some figures do not sum to totals due to rounding.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the extra 669,000 one-person households predicted in the south-east by 2001 in his paper "Serplan: Land for Housing in South East England," will be provided for by owner-occupation, council, housing association or private landlords.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* The tenure of one-person households will depend on incomes, house prices, the response of private investors to deregulation, and the way in which social landlords allocate their tenancies. It is likely that a higher proportion than now of older one-person households will be owner-occupiers.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the extra 184,000 lone-parent households predicted for the south-east by 2001 in his paper "Serplan: Land for Housing in the South East," will be provided for by owner-occupation, council housing, housing associations or private landlords.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* The tenure of lone-parent households will depend on incomes, house prices, the response of private investors to deregulation, and the way in which social landlords allocate their tenancies. It is likely that the proportion of lone-parent households that are owner-occupiers will continue to be somewhat lower than for all types of households taken together.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 21 June 1988

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Prevention

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much is being spent by his Department on crime prevention measures in the current year; and what were the comparable figures for 1979-80.

Mr. John Patten: It is estimated that direct Home Office spending on crime prevention—on publicity, research, training, the safer cities programme and support for the new national organisation, Crime Concern—will total approximately £9 million in 1988-89. This compares with expenditure of some £350,000 in 1979-80, supporting publicity, training and research, a more than tenfold increase.

Convicted Persons (Pardons)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases of conviction on indictment he has recommended a full pardon to Her Majesty The Queen in each of the years 1982 to 1988, inclusive.

Mr. John Patten: In one such case a free pardon was granted, in 1982.

Mr. E. Brambergis

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken in the case of Mr. E. Brambergis, referred to him on 18 April by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North.

Mr. Renton: As I advised the hon. Member yesterday, Mr. Brambergis was informed on 26 May that a visa promise for his son had been authorised by the Immigration Department.

Delible Security Markers

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the security marking industry regarding the need to improve the performance of current delible security markers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office has received no such representations.

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to publish the report on the evaluation of the civil defence region No. 2 REGEX exercise.

Mr. John Patten: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 20 May.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has any intention of supplying gas detection equipment, as demonstrated to the delegation from the Soviet Union at Porton Down on 24 May, to local authorities or to the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation for civil defence purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Consideration will be given to the need for such equipment when current studies into the effects of chemical weapons and protective measures against them have been completed.

Channel Tunnel (Immigration Clearance)

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he proposes for immigration clearance on trains using the Channel tunnel which are designed to provide a high-speed link between the north of England and the continent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Immigration Service is discussing with British Rail its requirements for official accommodation and facilities on trains which, using the Channel tunnel, will proceed via Olympia to destinations in the United Kingdom beyond London. Arrangements for immigration clearance will depend on the outcome of those discussions.

Terrorism (Suspects)

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been detained in the last five years at the Channel ports on suspicion of terrorism, when seeking entry to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd: The available information is shown in the following table. The information collected centrally does not distinguish whether the person concerned was attempting to enter or to leave the country.

Persons detained at the Channel ports[1] under the Prevention of Terrorism legislation

Numbers of persons

	Persons detained	*Persons examined for more than one hour but not detained[2]*
1983	16	—
1984	4	13
1985	6	12
1986	2	8
1987	5	5
1988[3]	1	—

[1] Sea and air ports (excluding Gatwick) on or near the south coast between Land's End and North Foreland.
[2] Operative from 27 March 1984.
[3] 1 January to 31 March.

London Prisons

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much land each of Brixton, Holloway, Pentonville, Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs occupies; and what is the market value of the land in each case.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The approximate amount of land occupied by each prison is as follows:

	Hectares
Brixton	4
Holloway	4
Pentonville	4
Wandsworth	9
Wormwood Scrubs	10

The market value of this land, were it to be available, is not known.

Community Radio

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce regulations to remove from community radio stations the right to apply for licences if they continue to broadcast unlicensed after a specified date.

Mr. Renton: We are giving thought to the possibility of including in the legislative proposals for radio broadcasting which we intend to bring before Parliament a provision disqualifying persons convicted of offences of unlawful broadcasting from obtaining licences from the Radio Authority.

Registration and Naturalisation (Fees)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total net income to his Department in 1985, 1986, 1987 and to date from applications for registration and naturalisation.

Mr. Renton: Fees received for applications for naturalisation and registration, net of refunds to unsuccessful applicants, for the financial years 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88 and for April and May 1988 are as follows:

Financial year	Receipts £
1985-86	3,269,000
1986-87	4,241,000
1987-88	14,218,000
[1]1988-89	4,175,000

[1] To end May.

Broadcasting Standards Council

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider locating the new Broadcasting Standards Council in Huddersfield.

Mr. Renton: No. As the headquarters of most of the broadcasting authorities are located in London, it makes sense for the Broadcasting Standards Council also to be located there.

ENVIRONMENT

Water

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the levels of impounded water in the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Avon, Gloucestershire, and Wiltshire; and if levels are sufficient to avoid restrictions on use during the next three months.

Mr. Moynihan: Water undertakers serving these counties consider that impounded water levels are sufficient to avoid restrictions on the use of water this summer unless a drought develops.

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statistical information is obtained from water authorities about levels of impounded water stocks; and what information there is as to which water authorities are more than 10 per cent. below levels impounded in early June 1987.

Mr. Moynihan: Limited information upon rainfall; river flows and reservoir levels, representative of the country as a whole, is collected by my Department throughout the year. If the onset of drought is perceived, detailed information is then collected from all water authorities supplemented by information from the Institute of Hydrology and the British Geological Survey. Information upon impounded water stocks in relation to water stocks in June 1987 is not held centrally.

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what improvements in impounding water stocks and its distribution have been achieved since 1984.

Mr. Moynihan: Since 1984 major reservoirs at Colliford in Cornwall and at Grimwith in Yorkshire have been completed. Improvements have also been made to the water distribution system through the investment of over £500 million by water authorities in England.

Local Authority Publicity

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance has been given to local authorities on the implementation of section 28 of the Local Government Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Department of the Environment circular 12/88 provides guidance for local authorities on various provisions in the Local Government Act 1988, including section 28. A copy of the circular is in the Library.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of home improvement grants awarded, and what was the total amount spent on home improvement grants in each of the financial years since 1978-79 inclusive.

Mrs. Roe: The information is as follows:

Renovation grants paid to private owners and to tenants: England

	Number of dwellings thousands	Amount £ million
1978-79	58·8	81·3
1979-80	70·6	111·0
1980-81	71·8	126·8
1981-82	72·3	167·4
1982-83	131·6	367·4
1983-84	250·6	796·1
1984-85	195·2	737·1
1985-86	124·4	461·4
1986-87	110·9	384·7
1987-88[1]	114·1	371·1

[1] = provisional estimate.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation (London)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the number of people who were living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in each of the London boroughs on 1 June having been placed there by the local council.

Mrs. Roe: The latest figures, for the end of March 1988, appear in table 7 of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the first quarter of 1988. Supplementary Tables", which is in the Library.

Waste Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for requiring strict declaration of quantities of waste shipped to the United Kingdom to avoid losses en route to the British port.

Mr. Moynihan: Regulations soon to be laid to implement the EC directive on the transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste require the use of consignment notes which will enable any losses during the journey to be identified.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for requiring notification to waste disposal authorities in ports of import of the quantity, nature, and dangers of all waste imports, before arrival in Britain.

Mr. Moynihan: Under regulations soon to be laid to implement the EC directive on the transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste, the waste disposal authority at the port of entry will receive detailed information on the quantity, nature and dangers of consignments of special waste before arrival at the port. We have no plans to require the pre-notification of wastes which are not covered by the directive.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the toxic waste imported into Britain during 1987 was hazardous but not recorded as special waste.

Mr. Moynihan: The records available relate only to special waste; that is, waste which is dangerous or difficult to dispose of.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take action to ensure the independent monitoring of all imported waste.

Mr. Moynihan: Disposal of all controlled waste, including imports, is subject to licences issued by waste disposal authorities.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the total cost of waste disposal authorities of undertaking the chemical analysis of imported toxic waste for the latest available year.

Mr. Moynihan: None.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the toxic waste imported into Britain during 1987 was subsequently recycled into other products.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not available.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has made any assessment of the extent to which imported domestic waste from the United States of America is likely to contain cockroaches.

Mr. Moynihan: No.

Water Pollution

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next intends to meet representatives of the Water Authorities Association to discuss controls on water pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend and I regularly meet the water authority chairmen, and pollution control is among the issues discussed.

Woodlands

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being taken to protect woodlands following the judgment of the Court of Appeal about entitlement to compensation in the case of Bell *v.* Canterbury City Council.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend, jointly with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, has laid before the House the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation Order) (Amendment) Regulations 1988, which come into operation on 30 June. This is an interim measure taken in response to the widespread concern about the continued effectiveness of tree preservation orders on woodlands in the light of the implications of the Court of Appeal decision for the compensation payable by local authorities. We are undertaking a general review of tree preservation policy and legislation, and the appropriate scope of arrangements for compensation will be considered further as part of that review.

The new regulations will bring the compensation provisions for those trees in woodlands which do not require a Forestry Commission felling licence into step with the compensation provisions applicable to non-woodland trees protected by tree preservation orders. Local authorities will be enabled, when refusing consent to fell a woodland protected by a tree preservation order, to certify, in appropriate cases, that the trees have "outstanding or special amenity value". The effect of such a certificate will be that no compensation will be payable as a result of refusal of consent. However, there is a right of appeal against certification to the Secretary of State, who may cancel the certificate. Accordingly the interests of owners will be adequately safeguarded under the new arrangements.

Local authorities will also now have the opportunity to consider whether any tree preservation orders previously made should be varied to reflect the amending regulations. My Department and the Welsh Office have written to them today to draw their attention to the regulations.

In order to ensure a comparable degree of protection for woodlands containing trees which are above the thresholds for Forestry Commission felling controls, the commission has agreed to change its practice in dealing with applications for a licence to fell trees in woodland which is subject to a tree preservation order. Where the purpose of such an application is to convert the land to

agricultural use after felling, or in any other case where the applicant has not stated an intention to continue to use the land as woodland, the Forestry Commission will in future consider the application itself rather than refer it to the local authority to decide. In considering such applications the commission will be guided by its general presumption against the granting of felling licences to convert woodland to agricultural use, and will also take amenity considerations into account. Any claim to compensation as a result of refusal of consent will be against the commission and will be determined under forestry legislation. It is only in the exceptional case where the commission proposes to give consent that the matter would be referred to the Secretary of State for decision if the local authority objected, and that compensation would then be payable on the same basis as in the Canterbury case if consent were refused.

On the other hand, where the Forestry Commission receives an application for a licence to fell trees subject to a tree preservation order and the application is accompanied by proposals for replanting, the commission will continue to follow its present practice and refer the application to the local authority to deal with. In those circumstances, any claim to compensation as a result of refusal of consent would be against the local authority and would be determined under town and country planning legislation. But, in view of the replanting proposals that would have been submitted, we are advised that the amount of any compensation, being limited to the actual loss or damage caused or incurred, would be likely to be much more modest than in the Canterbury case.

Industrial Dredging

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has conducted as to the effects of industrial dredging on the United Kingdom coastal erosion.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* Two specific studies have been undertaken by Hydraulics Research Ltd. into the possible effects of marine dredging for sand and gravel on erosion of the United Kingdom coast. These are:

Wave Attenuation over Uneven Sea Bed Topography—A Study of Wave Changes in relation to Offshore Dredging. September 1983.

Sand and Gravel Mobility in relation to Offshore Dredging—A Radioactive Tracer Study in the Shipway Channel off the Suffolk Coast. February 1984.

The possible effects of marine sand and gravel dredging on coastal erosion were reviewed in a recent study of the United Kingdom aggregates dredging industry entitled "Marine Dredging for Sand and Gravel," which was commissioned by the Department of the Environment and published by HMSO in 1987.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last reviewed the effects of industrial dredging upon the United Kingdom coastline.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* A report on marine dredging for sand and gravel was published by HMSO in 1987. It includes a section on the interaction of dredging with the coastal environment and a review of the known literature on shoreline stability in so far as it is relevant.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many tonnes of gravel for commercial use were extracted from the sea bed off the United Kingdom coast by industrial dredging vessels for each year since 1979;

(2) how many tonnes of sand for industrial use were extracted from the sea bed off the United Kingdom coast by industrial dredging vessels for each year since 1979.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* No figures are available to identify separately the sand and the gravel extracted off the United Kingdom coast. However, the combined tonnages of sand and gravel dredged from the sea areas off the coast of the United Kingdom for each year since 1979, in millions of tonnes, are as follows:

	Tonnes Millions
1979	18
1980	17
1981	15·3
1982	14·8
1983	15·9
1984	15·4
1985	16·3
1986	17·6

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what discussions he has had with his European Economic Community colleagues as to the number of licences to be issued for industrial dredging off the European Economic Community coastline; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he has had with his European Economic Community colleagues aimed at limiting the number of vessels involved in industrial dredging; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* There have been no discussions with European Economic Community colleagues concerning either the number of licences for sand and gravel dredging off the coastline of the European Economic Community or the number of vessels involved. The Crown Estate Commissioners manage the rights to exploit minerals (other than gas or oil) in territorial waters and on the United Kingdom continental shelf and it is they who are responsible for the issue of licences to dredge such minerals.

Merseyside Development Corporation

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much members of the Merseyside development corporation are paid each year.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* Each member of the Merseyside development corporation receives an annual salary of £3,770 per annum.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the salaries of the chairman, deputy chairman and chief executive of the Merseyside development corporation.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* The annual salaries of the chairman, deputy chairman and chief executive of MDC are £14,223, £6,436 and £41,049, respectively.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many meetings have been held by the Merseyside development corporation in each of the years since it was established.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* Since its inception in 1981 MDC has held 79 board meetings. An annual breakdown is provided as follows:

Year	*Number of meetings*
April 1981-December 1981	9
1982	11
1983	11
1984	11
1985	11
1986	12
1987	9
January 1988-May 1988	5

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many members of the board of the Merseyside development corporation reside within the city of Liverpool.

Mr. Trippier: *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* None of the current board members resides within the city of Liverpool.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions in each of the last five years *(a)* high level, *(b)* low level and *(c)* intermediate level nuclear waste has been moved within the United Kingdom or in United Kingdom airspace, to or from (i) any civil British nuclear installation and (ii) any British nuclear electricity generating station or reprocessing plant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

The Department does not collect details of the kind requested.

Nitrates

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what latest information he has on the medical effect of excess levels of nitrate on human beings.

Mrs. Currie: I have been asked to reply.

The most recent United Kingdom epidemiological study, published in 1986, did not indicate any relationships between exposure to raised levels of nitrate and cancer in humans. Whilst infantile methaemoglobinaemia is known to be caused by high concentrations of nitrate in drinking water, no cases of infantile methaemoglobinaemia attributable to concentrations of nitrate in drinking water have been reported in the United Kingdom since 1975.

Advice on the medical aspects of nitrate in drinking water was last given in a letter from the Government's chief medical officer in November 1985. The Department continues to review all relevant scientific literature including epidemiological studies in other countries, and is presently seeking the advice of the committee on the medical aspects of the contamination of air, soil and water on the findings of studies published since 1985.

Greater London (Studies)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* all studies and investigations he has announced concerning any aspect of planning and housing in the Greater London area, stating for each the purpose of the study, by whom it is being undertaken, and the date of expected publication.

Mr. Trippier: The Department has commissioned an east London housing study to examine the scope for housing in five areas of east London. Coopers and Lybrand Associates are undertaking the study, which is due to be completed by October 1988.

In addition, the Department has commissioned a number of other studies, which while not dealing specifically with London, may touch on some aspect of housing or planning in London. Full lists of the 1988-89 studies are given in DOE planning research programmes newsletter and the housing research programme as annexed to DOE press release 224. Copies of both of these have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey on 9 June, *Official Report*, column *653*, he will estimate the population for that part of each of the dockland boroughs which lies within the area of the London Docklands development corporation, for each year since its creation and for each year for which projected figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* I will write to the hon. Member.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Radio Surveillance Equipment

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *588*, what powers are available to his Department to monitor the use of radio surveillance equipment; what use has been made of these powers over the last five years; and what plans he has to strengthen those powers.

Mr. Butcher: There are no specific powers, but during and before the last five years the parts of the radio spectrum allocated for civil use have been regularly subject to monitoring exercises to establish patterns of use, to trace radio interference and to assist in the general management of radio services. I have no plans to take any specific powers.

Home Accidents

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many people in England and Wales in the latest complete year for which figures are availale were killed or injured by accidents occurring in the home; and what proportion of these is estimated to be as a result of misuse of electrical equipment.

Mr. Butcher: In 1984, the most recent year for which complete data are available, there were 4,593 fatal home accidents in England and Wales recorded in the home accident deaths database. 120 (3 per cent.) of these involved mains electrical products, but only for the 26 cases of electrocution was there expert judgment of the extent of misuse. It was noted as a contributory factor in

14 of them. In 1986, from data collected by the home accident surveillance system, there were estimated to have been about 1,990,000 patients treated in hospitals in England and Wales as the result of non-fatal home accidents. About 64,000 (3 per cent.) of these cases involved mains electrically powered products. No information is available on the extent to which misuse was a contributory factor.

Girobank

Mr. Stott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will discuss the status of Bootle as the major operations centre of Girobank with the Post Office board;

(2) who is to determine the value of Girobank before it is sold to the private sector;

(3) if, during his discussions with the chairman of the Post Office board, he will make it his policy to seek to ensure that the contingency centre for Girobank is sited in close proximity to the Bootle centre;

(4) if he will discuss with the chairman of the Post Office board the protection of conditions of service, pension rights and continued trade union recognition before Girobank is privatised.

Mr. Butcher: Girobank belongs to the Post Office, with whose chairman and board I am in frequent touch, and the Post Office is managing the sale. The Post Office has already said that an important issue in discussions with potential purchasers is to pay proper regard to the interests of Girobank's staff at Bootle and elsewhere. The price offered will of course also be a major consideration. The siting of a contingency centre is a matter for the Post Office and for Girobank.

Clinical Thermometers

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the value of clinical thermometers exported from the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community and from the European Economic Community to the United Kingdom in the most recent annual period for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: For the period April 1987 to March 1988 trade with the EEC in clinical thermometers was valued at: exports £54,000 and imports £105,000. These figures should be treated with caution because of major changes to Customs procedures introduced in January 1988, details of which were given in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) on 7 December 1987, at columns 34-35.

Airbus

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to why the West German Economics Ministry has agreed to provide more aid to the Airbus project; whether the United Kingdom Government were consulted; and what is his latest assessment of the financial prospects of Airbus.

Mr. Atkins: Issues relating to the German Government's financial support for the Airbus programme are a matter for the German Government. I am in touch with British Aerospace about the problems which it believes the company faces in connection with Airbus programmes, and have asked for its latest assessment of the financial prospects of Airbus.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total amount of aid and guarantees provided by Her Majesty's Government to the Airbus project; and what percentage of this has been given to British Aerospace plc.

Mr. Atkins: British Aerospace has received launch-aid totalling some £249·3 million in connection with its participation in the Airbus A320 programme. It has been agreed that further launch-aid of up to £450 million will be made available in connection with the company's involvement in the A330/340 programme.

Existing intergovernmental agreements, in connection with the A300 and A310 aircraft, provide in certain events for intergovernmental liability. The Government's present liability under such arrangements is in the region of £500,000.

Steel

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster why the Council of Ministers was unable to agree quota reductions, and whether steel may now be freely traded without price restriction within the European Economic Community.

Mr. Atkins: The future of the quota system is to be discussed at the Council of Industry Ministers on 24 June. In the absence of adequate commitments from industry to reduce excess capacity by the amounts agreed at the 22 December Council, quotas should end on 30 June. Pricing practices for ECSC steel producers are governed by article 60 of the Treaty of Paris, which prohibits unfair competitive practices and discriminatory pricing arrangements.

Furniture (Fire Safety)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the proposed test for fabrics under the draft furniture fire safety regulations will be ignition source one, rather than crib four ignition procedure.

Mr. Butcher: Yes.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whereabouts on a sofa or chair the crib would normally be placed when carrying out crib ignition tests on furniture.

Mr. Butcher: In the BS 5852 tests required by both the existing regulations and by the proposed new ones, the upholstery composite is represented on a perpendicular seat/back test rig. The crib is placed on the seat in contact with the back, at least 100 mm from the edge.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether flammability testing of domestic upholstery covering material is normally carried out using the crib four procedure to cause ignition.

Mr. Butcher: The only flame test applied to domestic furniture covering material both in respect of the labelling option of the 1980/83 regulations and the draft new

regulations, is the simulated match of BS 5852, part 1. There is no proposal to test covering fabrics using ignition source 4, a small wooden crib.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether flammability testing of contract upholstery covering material is normally carried out using the crib four procedure to cause ignition.

Mr. Butcher: It is for the specifying authority to decide what ignition source to use in relation to any contract.

Ignition source 5 is the most widely used of the cribs detailed in BS 5852. I am not aware of any which use the crib specified as ignition source 4.

Fire-Safe Cigarettes

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has to promote the development and use of fire-safe cigarettes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* The United States interagency committee reported on 29 October 1987 that it was technically feasible to make cigarettes with reduced liability to ignite upholstered furniture.

The report further stated that the tar nicotine and carbon monoxide yields of such cigarettes were in line with the levels obtained from many popular brands, but added that further study of potential for causing disease would be required. The committee had not attempted to assess consumer acceptability of these "fire safe" cigarettes.

The policy recommendations of the interagency committee dated 23 December recommended an examination of the health aspect and consumer acceptability and I shall monitor the progress made in this further examination.

DEFENCE

Nuclear-powered Vessels (Accidents)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information has been provided by his Department to the Australian Senate Standing Committee on Defence, Foreign Affairs and Trade's inquiry into safety procedures and contingency planning for accidents involving nuclear-powered vessels in harbour.

Mr. Ian Stewart: General information about the Royal Navy's nuclear submarine safety procedures and reactor accident contingency planning was passed to the Australian Department of Defence last year. I understand that the Department has drawn on this as appropriate in responding to the Standing Committee's current inquiry on safety procedures relating to nuclear-powered vessels in Australian waters.

Marconi

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether activities by Marconi companies in relation to defence contracts have been referred to the serious fraud office.

Mr. Sainsbury: I understand from my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General who has responsibility for the serious fraud office, that this matter is being dealt with by it.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further discussions have taken place with the Soviet authorities about the implications of the recent visit by Soviet scientists to the Porton Down establishment for future exchanges of this kind in relation to chemical weapons.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A United Kindom delegation will be visiting the Soviet military chemical facility at Shikhany from 30 June to 4 July. This will be the second part of the exchange of visits between the Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down, and Shikhany. Any assessment of the merits of further exchanges should await the outcome of that visit.

Disarmament

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a further statement on his policy towards multilateral disarmament.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Bilateral and multilateral agreements offer the only sure means for achieving equitable and lasting arms control and disarmament measures; the recent INF treaty is a vindication of this approach. NATO's next arms control priorities of a 50 per cent. reduction in the strategic nuclear weapons of the United States and Soviet Union, the achievement of stability in conventional forces in Europe and a global ban on chemical weapons fully meet the requirement that arms control measures should maintain and, if possible, enhance security.

Nuclear Missiles

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to be in a position to announce specific decisions on the development and acquisition of new short range nuclear and nuclear-capable missiles.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to be in a position to announce specific decisions on the development and acquisition of new short range nuclear and nuclear-capable missiles.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A decision on the procurement of a weapon system to replace the free-fall bomb which currently provides the United Kingdom's independent sub-strategic nuclear capability will probably be taken next year. The timing of any decision to take into service with British forces a follow-on to the Lance missile system would depend on progress made by the United States in its efforts to meet SACEUR's requirements in this area.

RAF Aircraft (Swedish Interceptions)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in each year since 1979 Royal Air Force aircraft have been intercepted by aircraft from the Royal Swedish Air Force.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No such records are maintained.

Nuclear Accidents (Compensation)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the compensation arrangements in the event of

civilian death, injury and property damage resulting from *(a)* a military nuclear reactor accident and *(b)* a nuclear weapon accident.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In the unlikely event of a military nuclear accident in the United Kingdom, the Ministry of Defence would offer compensation under the same arrangements which exist for dealing with any other claims for personal injury, loss or damage.

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints about low-flying aircraft were received from Northern Ireland in 1987.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 22 February 1988]:* No fixed-wing low-flying training is currently carried out in Northern Ireland. However, helicopters do undertake low-flying operations in Northern Ireland. Although no central records are available of complaints received, HQ Northern Ireland received 32 complaints in 1987.

PRIME MINISTER

Security

Q49. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what proposals she has to improve the security of information passing in *(a)* the Department of Education and Science and *(b)* other Government Departments, in the light of recent unauthorised disclosure of correspondence and briefing material.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

Every effort is made to keep classified information held in Government Departments secure. The arrangements are kept under review and modified when necessary.

Allt Yr Yn, Newport

Q86. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Allt Yr Yn, Newport, Gwent.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Arpley Meadows, Warrington

Q128. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to pay an official visit to Arpley Meadows, Warrington.

Mr. Wakenham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is in Toronto for an economic summit meeting.

Poland

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if, when she visits Poland later this year, she will raise with the authorities there the treatment of workers in joint ICL-Polish Government enterprises; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend will certainly emphasise her concern about human rights in Poland and the need for trade union pluralism. I understand that ICL's joint venture agreement covers the marketing of their products in Poland and of Polish furniture in the West, and that the company has no direct involvement in manufacturing or the management of individual enterprises in Poland.

WALES

Government Achievements

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the Government's achievements in Wales since June 1987.

Mr. Peter Walker: Seasonally adjusted unemployment in Wales has fallen by 23,200 over the past 12 months and has now fallen every month for 24 consecutive months. We have just seen the largest monthly fall in unadjusted unemployment since May 1983. The total of unemployed school leavers is down by 28 per cent. over the past year and the number of vacancies continues to increase. Advertisements for jobs in the main daily newspapers of Wales have increased very substantially in the first six months of 1988 compared to the same period in 1987.

Over the past year, 96 inward industrial investment projects have been secured. These projects involve £370 million of capital investment and promise over 8,000 new jobs. Among the major projects are ones from companies based in the United States, Japan and Europe. Important projects have also been obtained in the financial services industries including the decision by the Trustee Savings Bank Trust to create an establishment in Newport that will provide 2,000 new jobs.

The move of the Patent Office from London to Newport has also been secured which will provide 600 new jobs.

During the year I made visits to Japan, the Minister of State visited the United States and West Germany, and visits to West Germany, the Soviet Union, Japan and Saudi Arabia are planned in the future.

The Welsh Development Agency budget for 1988-89 is a record for mainstream spending in both cash and real terms enabling it to significantly increase the range and intensity of its activities.

The £127 million factory programme announced in January 1988 will enable the Agency to build up to 4·5 million sq ft of additional industrial work space, 50 per cent. higher than previously planned and 75 per cent. more than the area completed in the three years prior to May 1979. The new capacity will have the potential to accommodate over 13,000 new manufacturing jobs. The 2·2 million sq ft of factory lettings by the agency in 1987-88 were at a record high.

In June last year I launched an exporting awareness campaign at a seminar of leading Welsh business men. The performance in Wales in terms of exporting has considerable scope for improvement. This campaign has been followed by an export promotion team from the Welsh Office contacting and working with many businesses. There has been a Principalitywide advertising campaign supplementing the national British Overseas Trade Board campign. There followed two major export advisory service promotions held in the early morning, one in Cardiff and the other in north Wales. These were considered to be the most successful export promoting meetings that have taken place in the Principality. Both were exceedingly well attended and a substantial increase in inquiries for Government export services has taken place as a result of them.

The £45 million land reclamation programme launched on 14 June 1988 is the largest ever undertaken and will enable the agency to reclaim an extra 4,300 acres of derelict land.

Registrations of new companies in Wales increased substantially during the year. The Welsh Development Agency's business development unit dealt with a record 39,000 inquiries from small enterprises in 1987-88—18 per cent. more than the previous year.

WINtech's manufacturing technology centre has been opened at Cleppa park to act as a focus for activity in promoting the use of new technology.

The Welsh Development Agency has been given approval to establish a £5 million Welsh technological development fund aimed at stimulating innovation employment in Welsh high technology enterprises.

A major initiative was launched in April 1988 aimed at increasing the real value of the craft industry's sales and jobs by at least 50 per cent. within three years.

Since June 1987 a total of 3,100 applications for regional development grant have been received—an increase of 80 per cent. over the previous year. There have been over 200 applications for regional selective assistance. If the potential of these applications is fully realised, it will increase investment in Wales by almost £2,000 million and create around 59,000 new jobs over the next few years.

Since the launch of the new enterprise initiatives in January of this year we have received around 370 applications for consultancy assistance.

Enterprise Wales has been launched, a major new package of assistance to industry. Welsh Office resources have been increased by some 40 per cent. over previous plans and new grant and support schemes have been introduced for small firms and for firms in all sectors who wish to take advantage of consultancy advice.

A major initiative has been launched to strengthen the financial services sector in south-east Wales. The campaign is being led by the Welsh Development Agency and backed by a consortium of local authorities.

It has been agreed that the Welsh steel industry should be privatised which will give an opportunity to those that work so hard in the industry to participate in its ownership and in its future success.

The gateway network was launched last October. This is an initiative that brings together central Government, local government and the private sector to co-ordinate and improve the help available to small businesses in Wales. Seven major banks have joined the network.

Investment in trunk road improvements has continued at a high level. Since June 1987 the following schemes have been opened to traffic: A48 Cross Hands-Llanddarog dual carriageway bypass; A483 Ruabon bypass; A48 Chepstow Inner relief road and A40 Haverfordwest Relief Roads Phase 1. Construction has also started on the A483 Newbridge bypass; A55 Llanfairfechan bypass and A55 Northop bypass.

The part I played in the discussions between the United Kingdom Government and the European Commission about integrated operations submissions, and the programme for Dyfed, Gwynedd, Powys in particular, helped to lead the negotiations to the recent adoption by the Commission of a £108 million national programme of community interest for the area and the acceptance in principle of the integrated operations programme for the three counties. In addition my discussion with Commissioner Varfis in February, were I believe, contributory to the recent recognition by the Commission of the need for continuing access to structural fund assistance on the part of rural Wales.

I negotiated improved arrangements for the overseas promotion of Wales as a tourism destination, with the BTA providing £70,000 for 11 distinctively Welsh promotions and a further £94,000 to lever trade contributions of £220,000. This has already led to the establishment of a Wales reservation centre in the United States of America. In addition, a futher £50,000 was provided to the WTB for expenditure in the United Kingdom that complements this overseas marketing. In February 1988 an additional £250,000 was added to the WTB's budget to finance an immediate additional marketing campaign to assist the industry in Wales.

In the year 1987-88 the commercial performance of CADW: Welsh Historic Monuments exceeded all targets and broke previous records for attendance and revenue. Admissions to monuments in care increased by 11 per cent. to £1·56 million and revenue exceeded £1·78 million, a rise of 18·7 per cent.

In December 1987 Mid Wales Development, the Welsh Development Agency and the Wales Tourist Board jointly decided to fund a new company to be called "Taste of Wales" (Blas ar Gymru) solely for the purpose of furthering the objects of the rural products group, by involving the hotel and catering sector and by encouraging them to use and promote the best of Welsh food. I formally launched Blas ar Gymru in May in Cardiff castle.

The farm diversification scheme, which came into force on 1 January 1988, is intended to assist farmers to develop alternative commercial uses for agricultural businesses and

land. This covers investment in tourism, rural crafts, farm shops, on-farm catering, livery and pony trekking in the less-favoured areas only.

I have designated the Lleyn peninsula as an environmentally sensitive area (ESA). I have also extended the area of the existing Cambrian mountains ESA. Farmers participating in the scheme are offered financial incentives to maintain the broad pattern of land use, protect the rough grazing, hay meadows and archaeological features and retain broadleaved woodland. This will enable all farmers in the original area recommended by the Countryside Commission for designation to be considered for participation in the scheme and to obtain its benefits.

A new woodland grant scheme to provide Government support for private forestry planting was announced in March this year. The scheme replaced the forestry grant scheme and the broadleaved woodland grant scheme. The main features of the new scheme are increases in grants for conifer and broadleaved planting and new provision to conserve the environment.

The Welsh rural products group was formed in June 1987. This body came about at my instigation. It includes representatives from all the statutory bodies and parties interested in improving and encouraging the development of food production, as well as the marketing of Welsh food and agricultural produce.

Private housebuilding starts in Wales totalled 9,353 in 1987-88—this represents an increase of 24 per cent. on the previous year. The private sector total of over 9,000 starts in 1987-88 is the highest total for some considerable time. Taking into account starts in the public sector, over 11,500 new homes were started in 1987-88. Wales has led the way in establishing the principle of mixed funding schemes involving local authorities, housing associations and private finance. The mixed funding concept has been developed with the active support of the Housing Corporation and housing associations in Wales. It should attract approximately £7 million in private funding in 1988-89. This will be in addition to the £60 million being provided by the Government for the Housing Corporation's gross development programme. The objective of the initiative is to increase the provision of much needed social rented housing using a limited injection of public funds to trigger additional private sector investment.

A total of 20 mixed funding schemes, which will provide over 1,000 houses, have been approved. The pilot scheme at St. Mellons will alone provide over 560 houses. The scheme commenced in September 1987 and is due for final completion in 1989. Associations started over 630 more new homes on site in 1987-88 under the mixed funding initiative—an increase of 50 per cent. over the corporation's target for the year. This was a particularly welcome achievement in the first year of the scheme. I have established my alternatives for social housing (ASH) programme to promote a wider choice in social rented housing in Wales. Consultancy advice is being made available to a limited number of councils to help them formulate proposals for transfer of their housing stock to new landlord bodies.

As a consequence of our housing legislation, housing associations are set to become of increasing importance as providers of housing for those in need, in Wales as elsewhere. We have decided therefore that the time is now right to establish the independence of the Housing Corporation in Wales. The current Housing Bill makes provision to achieve this by establishing a new body, Housing for Wales, which we believe will have a major contribution to make towards helping to tackle the housing problems we face in Wales.

Between 1987-88 and 1988-89 revenue funding for the hospital and community health services in Wales has increased by £80 million or 10·7 per cent. over last year. Between 1987-88 and 1988-89 capital allocations to district health authorities increased by nearly 21 per cent.

Within this overall total I would particularly like to point to the increased funding for the all-Wales mental mehandicap strategy of £3·75 million raising it to a record level of £13·75 million for 1988-89. I launched my strategic proposals for the development of locally based mental illness services in Wales on 16 May, for a period of six months consultation. In the current financial year I am making available a record £2·3 million to assist in the development of new patterns of mental illness services.

A director has been appointed to oversee the introduction of breast screening for women aged 50 to 64 and a headquarters building has been purchased; screening will begin later this year.

An additional £400,000 a year was allocated to health authorities in November 1987 to help improve their cervical screening programme, making a total of £800,000 a year of central support for this service; all but one authority are currently using family practitioner committee computers for call and recall and the computer should come on stream in the remaining district next month.

A total of £1 million was allocated to health authorities in 1987-88 to help tackle the worst waiting list problems. I am happy to report that an additional 2,900 patients were treated and 6,600 additional out-patients were seen.

I gave approval in November 1987 to the development of a paediatric cardiac unit at the University hospital of Wales, Cardiff as the first phase of a major expansion of cardiac services. An additional four computerised tomography (CT) scanners are to be installed in hospitals in Wales bringing to eight the number, provided at a cost in the region of £3·8 million from central funds.

It was announced in May 1988 that two subsidiary renal dialysis units are to be developed and operated at the University hospital of Wales, Cardiff and Prince Charles hospital, Merthyr Tydfil, by Unicare Medical Services Limited under contract to South and Mid Glamorgan health authorities respectively.

The report of the community nursing review for Wales entitled "Nursing in the Community—a Team Approach for Wales" has been submitted and a public consultation on it completed. The resources available for use by the Welsh Health Promotion Authority (amounting to nearly £1·8 million) have been allocated in full taking account of the authority's operational plan for 1988-89 submitted at its first performance review. Recognising the importance of lifestyle in the maintenance of good health, my Department has also completed a review of the plans provided by both local drugs advisory committees and AIDS co-ordinating teams. A new training grant to support social workers involved in dealing with child abuse has been introduced.

My office is about to issue the corporate management programme for the Health Service in Wales. This is a five-year agenda for management action aimed at maximising the effectiveness of the NHS in Wales. It details the work which must be undertaken by a whole range of interests to enable health care services in Wales to

adapt constructively so as to ensure the highest standards of care and value for money. The number of people waiting for in-patient treatment on 31 December 1987 was lower than the number waiting on 31 December 1986. NHS hospitals are treating an increasing number of people. In the year to 31 December 1987, an additional 14,846 in-patients were treated over the numbers treated in 1986 and an additional 12,101 out-patients were seen for the first time in the same period. This represents increases of 99,021 (28·3 per cent.) and 88,122 (20·6 per cent.) in the treatment on in-patients and out-patients respectively over the numbers treated in 1979. In view of this success, a further £1 million is being made available to health authorities in the current year.

A consultative process has been undertaken and completed on each of the proposals within the Education Reform Bill. The working group on Welsh in the national curriculum has been established and is expected to produce its report next April. The appointment of the Curriculum Council for Wales has been announced. It will be established subject to parliamentary approval of the Education Reform Bill. From September 1987, a total of 115 additional places were taken up under our assisted places scheme.

November 1987 saw the launch of the language exports centre for Wales at University College, Swansea, funded as part of the PICKUP (professional, industrial and commercial updating) programme. The aim of the centre is to help industry and education in providing foreign language and export marketing training for small and medium-sized firms.

I ensured the future of the Sherman theatre by providing £900,000 to enable the building to be purchased by the Welsh Arts Council and a grant of £27,000 to assist the Sherman Theatre Company in the short term.

Government support for the Welsh language was a record total of £3·283 million of support for voluntary bodies and for bilingual education, nearly £250,000 has been allocated to the Welsh language education development committee to enable it to start work on its first major project. This is to develop a co-ordinated effort to prepare and distribute Welsh language teaching material for secondary schools.

I have benefited in my understanding of the place of the language in Wales from discussions I have had with leading Welsh language organisations and others and from the valuable advice I have received from the working group I established in December 1987 under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Minister of State.

The education support grant (ESG) programme in 1988-89, announced in August last year, totalled £7·39 million expenditure compared with a total of £4·18 million expenditure approved for 1987-88—an increase of over 75 per cent. Activities supported in 1988-89 include: mid-day supervision (£2·57 million); information technology (IT) in schools (£1·48 million); books and equipment for GCSE (£0·61 million); IT in non-advanced further education (£0·26 million); computer-aided engineering (£0·24 million); and 14 other categories.

The technical and vocational education initiative (TVEI) helps to develop practical and relevant elements in the curriculum for 14 to 18-year-olds. All Welsh LEAs have been involved in pilot schemes. We announced in February 1988 their extension to all schools and colleges in Wales over the next few years, with £45 million of Government support.

Adult training schemes helped over 27,500 people, and over 20,000 people were involved in community programme work throughout the year. A further 12,000 people took part in the voluntary projects programme.

A total of 19,080 young persons entered YTS in Wales during 1987-88. Once again the Training Commission undertook to guarantee all school-leavers a YTS place by Christmas 1987, and a success rate of 99·9 per cent. in Wales bettered anywhere else in Britain.

In my statement to the House on 14 June I announced a three-year programme for the revitalisation of the valleys of south Wales designed to help improve economic, environmental and social conditions across the whole valleys area. It identifies almost 50 proposals for new and increased activity including record levels of activity in land clearance, factory building and urban programme support along with other action to promote enterprise, strengthen tourism and the arts, promote housing improvement, improve health care and education and strengthen voluntary bodies.

Public expenditure on key programmes promoting economic development, urban renewal and other environmental improvement and youth adult training is expected to be about £500 million over the life of the programme. It is also anticipated that over £1 billion of private sector investment will take place in the valleys over the same period.

Hospital Patients (Treatment Statistics)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage increase there was in patients treated in hospitals in Wales in 1986 over those treated in 1979; and what percentage increase there was in outpatients treated.

Mr. Grist: Twenty-four per cent. more in-patients were treated and 18 per cent. more new out-patients were seen in Welsh hospitals in 1986 than in 1979. I am pleased to say that the 1987 figures show an even further improvement to 28 per cent. and 21 per cent. respectively.

CAT Scanners

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will take steps to release extra funds to Clwyd area health authority to enable CAT scanners to be more widely available to the people of north Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) where CAT scanners currently operate in north Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Computerised tomography scanners are presently in operation at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd and Ysbyty Maelor Wrexham. Funds have been made available to Gwynedd health authority to enable a scanner to be provided at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor. The Department has no plans to release additional funds to Clwyd health authority for computerised tomography scanning. It is open to the authority, should it so wish, to provide additional facilities.

Cancer Treatment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when his Department first gave evidence to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs concerning cancer treatment in north Wales and in the north-west of England for north Wales patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Evidence was given by officials to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs concerning cancer treatment in north Wales on 27 June 1984.

NHS Patients

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the action taken, and the studies made and the evaluations undertaken by Welsh and English authorities since evidence was last given by his Department to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, including cash allocations, staff appointments, treatment centres made available and efforts made to improve the liaison between north Wales and the English authorities for the benefit of north Wales patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Valleys Programme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide details of the criteria used in delineating the boundaries of the area to be aided under his recent valleys programme.

Mr. Peter Walker: The area covered by the new programme took as its starting point the area of the south Wales coalfield. This was adjusted to exclude localities such as the coastal towns, which do not exhibit the economic, environmental and other characteristics associated with the valleys and to ensure that wherever possible the boundary follows existing administrative boundaries or physical features.

Power Stations

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Welsh power stations have installed flue gas desulphurisation air pollution filtering equipment.

Mr. Grist: None.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to require the fitting of flue gas desulphurisation equipment to Welsh power stations.

Mr. Grist: It will be for discussion between the industries concerned and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution how to meet the requirements on the United Kingdom, agreed at the EC Environmental Council on 16 June, to reduce the overall total of sulphur dioxide emissions from existing large combustion plant.

Snowdonia National Park

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the threat now posed by air pollution and acid rain to Snowdonia national park.

Mr. Grist: Over the last 12 months we have received two representations—one from Friends of the Earth Cymru and one from a Welsh Member in response to a circular letter from that organisation.

Unconventional Transport Services (North Gower)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is now in a position to make a decision on the transport innovation grant to West Glamorgan county council for the provision of unconventional transport services in north Gower.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* No application for such grant has been received from West Glamorgan county council. However, my right hon. Friend expects to make a decision soon on an application under the scheme from West Glamorgan community service council.

Water Supplies

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those areas in which the Welsh water authority has applied for derogations from European Community regulations governing water quality on the grounds of excessive aluminium levels in the supply; and, in each case, what was the aluminium level.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on Thursday 16 June at columns *237-38*.

Regional Development Grants

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial provision is made for regional development grants in his estimate of the cost of the valleys initiative.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* Applications for regional development grants received in the last 15 months from the valleys programme area involved investment of about £620 million. On the basis of applications and approvals currently outstanding, and the average payments that experience indicates will result from these, I would expect regional development grant payments to be of the order of £70 million over the next three years.

Valleys Initiative (Expenditure Estimates)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish estimates of the expenditure likely in his valleys initiative under headings of the sources of the moneys such as urban aid, private industry, local authority, European Economic Community, Welsh Development Agency and so on.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* I estimate that over the three years of the new valleys programme expenditure on key programmes for the promotion of economic development will total some £529 million. I anticipate that approximately £215 million of this will be spent on Welsh Development Agency factory building, regional development grants, regional selective assistance and other investment assistance; some £164 million will be spent on urban programme schemes, urban development grants, road improvements, derelict land clearance and other environmental measures and £150 million on industrial training and work experience programmes.

On past experience, the payment of regional development grants and regional selective assistance on the scale envisaged would lead to additional private sector investment of well over £1 billion. In addition there will, of course, be substantial private sector investment not linked to such assistance.

It is not possible to give exact figures for local authority expenditure, but it is estimated that (excluding their expenditure on the key programmes identified above) their spending in the valleys in 1988-89 will be of the order of £500 million.

It is estimated that European regional development fund (ERDF) grants totalling £26 million are likely to be available to projects in the valleys as part of the Mid Glamorgan national programme of community interest. The proposed integrated operations programme for industrial south Wales may also attract a further £100 million from the ERDF and European social fund in the years to 1992.

Rating Reform

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish estimates of the average change in total household costs to families living in the areas covered by the valleys initiative when the change over is made from domestic rates to the poll tax.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* It is not possible to make an estimate of the full effects for the area. The effects upon particular households will be influenced by the assistance which will be available to those on low incomes. Those on income support will receive an automatic 80 per cent. reduction in their community charge bill and their income support will include an uprating (based on the average for Great Britain) to help them meet the remaining 20 per cent. There will also be lesser reductions in community charge bills for people on low incomes but above income support levels.

What can be said generally is that most single-parent families, widows and widowers living alone, and many other single householders are likely to benefit substantially. Many households with more than two people over the age of 18 will contribute more towards the cost of local services. But in fact only 14 per cent. of local government expenditure will come from the community charge; 66 per cent. will come from central Government grant and the remaining 20 per cent. from non-domestic rates.

NATIONAL FINANCE

School Outings (VAT)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will issue advice to local education authorities concerning the circumstances in which value added tax ought to be charged on school outings;

(2) whether value added tax is now charged on school outings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Schools purchasing taxable goods or services from VAT-registered persons have always been charged VAT. From 1 April 1988, however, local education authorities have been unable to reclaim from Customs and Excise the VAT on purchases of accommodation and the like for school outings which they have organised where the cost is passed on to the parents and pupils. This is because, from that date, a new scheme has debarred tour operators from deducting tax on such purchases, and not to extend the restriction to local authorities making essentially similar purchases would put commercial tour operators at a competitive disadvantage. However, where school outings are subsidised by the education authority, the tax remains refundable.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, at the request of Customs and Excise, issued detailed guidance to local authorities on the new VAT arrangements in its "VAT News" in February this year.

Employment Training (Taxation)

Ms. Short: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, and in what way, any of the payments that will be paid to trainees on the proposed employment training scheme, including their training allowance, any end of scheme bonus, any earnings outside the programme and any topping up payments they receive from their training placements, will be assessed for taxation purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The training allowance payable to trainees who participate in the employment training programme will not be chargeable to income tax. Similarly, top-up payments received from a training provider during an individual's training, or an end-of-course training bonus, will not be taxable provided a trainee's entitlement to such payments arises only from the completion of part or all of his or her training plan.

The tax treatment of a trainee's income which does not arise from participation in the programme will depend on the precise circumstances in each case. Income from an employment would be chargeable to income tax under schedule E and tax would normally be deducted under the PAYE arrangements.

Building Societies

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the organisations approached by himself and by the Building Societies Commission in consultations held in connection with proposed changes to schedule 8 of the Building Societies Act 1986, and in connection with the procedures set down for the conversion of societies into public limited companies; and what discussions he or the commission has had with organisations representing individual depositors or borrower members of building societies in the course of these consultations.

Mr. Lilley: The review of schedule 8 of the Building Societies Act was undertaken by the Treasury and the Building Societies Commission in close consultation with the Building Societies Association and, through it, with the societies themselves. The commission has also consulted extensively other Government Departments, the Bank of England, the Securities and Investments Board, and the relevant self-regulatory organisations.

The commission issued consultation documents on conversion in July and December last year. Copies were sent to interested parties, including the Consumer Council among others. There has also been full consultation with the Treasury and other Government Departments, and the Bank of England together with the Building Societies Association and with individual societies and their financial and legal advisers. Abbey Members Against Floatation (AMAF), approach the commission in late May and have been invited to comment on the consultation paper.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the European Court to announce its ruling on value added tax on domestic and non-domestic construction work and other matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The court delivered its judgment today.

Economic Growth

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the growth in the United Kingdom economy in the next 12 months.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's latest forecast was published at Budget time. It showed growth of 3 per cent. in whole economy output in 1988, equivalent to 3½ per cent. growth on a non-oil basis. However, as my right hon. Friend reported to the House on 16 June at column 554, it now looks as though growth in 1988 may prove slightly higher than this.

SCOTLAND

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether community charge officers will be able to trace debtors and defaulters by asking for information concerning an individual's name and address from gas, water and electricity boards.

Mr. Lang: Responsibility for the recovery of arrears of community charges will fall to regional and islands councils as levying authorities. They will have no access to information held by electricity boards or British Gas plc (Scotland). However, under a Scottish amendment to the Local Government Finance Bill my right hon. and learned Friend may make regulations providing that a levying authority may make use of information which it has at its disposal for any other purpose with the exception of prescribed sensitive information. Regional councils would, therefore, be able to use information which they had collected as a result of their responsibilities as water authorities.

Single European Market

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to ensure that the Scottish Development Agency, Locate in Scotland and Enterprise Trusts will have a full and effective role in explaining and promoting the significance of the single European market to Scottish industrialists.

Mr. Lang: My Department is working closely with the Scottish Development Agency, enterprise trusts, chambers of commerce and other organisations in Scotland to alert business to the implications of completion of the single European market. Seminars and business meetings are being organised throughout Scotland. Our aim is to ensure that every sector of industry and commerce in Scotland is fully aware of the challenges and opportunities which the single market will present.

Widowers' Pensions

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects that the Government Actuary Department's review of the various proposals relating to the payment of widowers' pensions to widowers whose wives were employed in the teaching profession between 1972 and 1988 will be published; and when he expects a ruling will be made on the Scottish scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government Actuary's Department is not conducting a review of proposals relating to the payment of pensions to widowers whose wives were employed in teaching between 1972 and 1988. The Government Actuary has, however, just presented an actuarial report to the Secretary of State in respect of the Scottish teachers superannuation scheme for the quinquennium 1981-1986 which is currently being considered.

With regard to the question of widowers' pensions the Scottish teachers superannuation scheme is being amended to introduce widowers' benefits in respect of service undertaken by women teachers from 6 April 1988. The Social Security Act 1986 requires that, for service from this date, a widower will become entitled to a restricted pension of one-half of the minimum pension of his spouse guranteed for the purposes of contracting out of the state earnings related pension scheme. However, after consultation with teachers' associations and employers, it has been agreed that, in respect of service after 6 April 1988, the teachers' scheme will go further than the statutory requirement and will provide widowers' benefits on the same basis as those currently available to widows. In order to cover service prior to that date it will be necessary, however, for those women teachers, who so choose, to make appropriate payments. This is because the contributions already paid do not reflect the cost of giving such a substantial improvement.

School Rolls

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in each regional authority which have a school roll of (i) less than 500, (ii) between 500 and 1,000, (iii) between 1,000 and 1,500 and (iv) over 1,500.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers at September 1987 are set out in the table:

	Primary Schools			*Secondary Schools*			
Roll	*1-499*	*500-999*	*1000+*	*1-499*	*500-999*	*1000-1499*	*1500+*
Borders	77	—	—	2	5	2	—
Central	117	4	—	4	9	7	1
Dumfries and Galloway	118	—	—	7	7	2	—
Fife	143	5	—	—	7	7	5
Grampian	269	5	—	10	21	6	3
Highland	209	1	—	12	14	1	—
Lothian	236	8	—	6	36	8	1

Roll	Primary Schools 1-499	500-999	1000-	Secondary Schools 1-499	500-999	1000-1499	1500+
Strathclyde	902	19	—	34	105	50	3
Tayside	189	2	—	8	14	9	1
Orkney	24	—	—	5	1	—	—
Shetland	35	—	—	8	1	—	—
Western Isles	54	1	—	15	—	1	—
Total	2,373	45	—	111	220	93	14

East Kilbride Development Corporation

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met officials of the East Kilbride development corporation; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend last met officials of East Kilbride development corporation on Monday 9 May when he had the pleasure of opening the new JVC plant in the town. On that occasion he discussed the very successful year the corporation were having, with particular successes in the electronics, biotechnology and engineering industries.

Needles and Syringes

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when his Department will issue guidance to health boards on the sale of needles and syringes by pharmacists in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A circular is being issued today, and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

The circular asks health boards to promote local discussions to establish the need for the sale of injecting equipment to drug misusers in their area, and the number of pharmacists, who would participate on an entirely voluntary basis, willing to sell equipment to meet that need. This move is in recognition of the particularly significant problem of HIV infection in drug misusers which we face in Scotland. Of those who have been tested for HIV infection and found to be positive, over 50 per cent. are injecting drug misusers. HIV infection can be transmitted from one injecting drug misuser to another through the sharing of needles and syringes.

The circular is concerned with facilitating sales as a normal commercial transaction between pharmacists and their customers. Boards are, however, being asked to provide pharmacists with information about local support services. They are also being asked to ensure that adequate facilities are available for the disposal of used equipment so that the risk of its reuse by other drug misusers, and hence the transmission of infection, and the risk to the general public, in particular to children, from used equipment which has been carelessly or recklessly discarded, are minimised. The circular indicates that pharmacists should be encouraged to provide disposal facilities but that it should not be a condition of sale that used equipment is first returned. Boards are also asked to consider whether there is a need for disposal facilities in places frequented by drug misusers such as certain health board clinics.

The circular provides guidance on the procedures and conditions for the sale of equipment. These include restricting the number of needles and syringes which may be sold to each customer to five per visit. It also specifies that sales should be accompanied by the provision of advice and appropriate health education material.

As regards the legal position, while no general unqualified assurance of immunity from prosecution will be given, my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has said that he would not authorise the prosecution of any pharmacist in respect of sales by him of needles and syringes to drug misusers, provided the pharmacist has acted in accordance with the conditions and procedures set out in the circular.

Greenland White-fronted Geese

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the numbers and geographical locations of flocks of Greenland white-fronted geese, consisting of 1 per cent. or more of the world population of this sub-species, that regularly occur in the United Kingdom outside designated or proposed special protection areas.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 June 1988]:* I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that there are no such flocks regularly occurring in the United Kingdom outside areas which have already been classified as special protection areas under article 4 of EC directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds or areas which in the opinion of the Nature Conservancy Council meet the criteria for classification.

Maternity Units

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many maternity units have been closed since 1979, or are planned to close, in each region in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* Two maternity units have been closed since 1979 and one is planned to close in August. In the same period, three maternity units have opened and one is planned to open in August.

Life Expectancy

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current expectation of life for *(a)* men and *(b)* women at the age of 45 years in (i) England and Wales, (ii) all EEC countries, (iii) Scandinavian countries and (iv) Scotland; and what were the comparable figures in 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* The information is not available on a comparable basis. The information which is readily available is as follows:

Male and Female life expectancy at age 45 years

	1978-80 Male	1978-80 Female	1984-86 Male	1984-86 Female
England and Wales	28·3	33·7	29·4	34·7
Scotland	26·5	31·9	27·7	32·9

Housing Benefit

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the estimated numbers of tenants of *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* the Scottish Special Housing Association, *(c)* new town development corporations, *(d)* housing associations and *(e)* other private sector landlords who are in receipt of rent rebates or rent allowances for (i) certificated cases and (ii) standard cases.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* I have been asked to reply.

The available information is in the tables. Housing benefit for tenants of housing associations (other than the Scottish Special Housing Association) and other private sector landlords is administered by local authorities and information is not separately recorded. The numbers of recipients in these two groups are therefore included in the rent allowance figures for the appropriate local authorities. I apologise to the hon. Member for the delay in providing this information.

Estimated number of housing benefit recipients
Scottish district and island authorities: 1987-88

Authority	*Certificated rent*		*Standard rent*	
	Rebates	*Allowances*	*Rebates*	*Allowances*
Aberdeen	7,400	900	11,000	4,100
Angus	3,130	480	4,370	520
Annandale and Eskdale	1,100	185	1,620	150
Argyll-Bute	2,470	650	2,365	625
Badenoch	250	100	400	140
Banff and Buchan	2,759	275	3,393	224
Bearsden and Milngavie	393	24	706	55
Berwickshire	513	143	871	178
Caithness	922	136	968	107
Clackmannan	2,500	95	3,120	165
Clydebank	3,372	231	4,107	201
Clydesdale	2,100	140	3,000	110
Cumbernauld	1,007	36	1,374	27
Cumnock and Doon	2,174	119	3,337	122
Cunninghame	6,989	618	6,770	306
Dumbarton	3,800	280	3,420	290
Dundee	11,441	1,443	11,474	2,542
Dunfermline	4,465	323	7,251	439
East Kilbride	366	112	449	81
East Lothian	3,050	320	4,850	350
Eastwood	432	75	641	140
Edinburgh	14,500	8,900	17,000	16,700
Ettrick and Lauderdale	785	160	1,360	290
Falkirk	8,125	490	8,675	540
Glasgow	69,500	15,000	51,000	8,000
Gordon	782	343	1,869	379
Hamilton	6,800	240	7,800	200
Inverclyde	6,600	430	5,500	700
Inverness	2,018	246	1,958	251
Kilmarnock	5,087	156	5,592	58
Kincardine and Deeside	688	219	957	271
Kirkcaldy	6,187	559	9,728	889
Kyle and Carrick	4,985	488	5,530	430
Lochaber	714	178	860	96
Midlothian	2,200	320	3,650	700
Monklands	8,980	56	8,709	154
Moray	2,750	480	3,750	470
Motherwell	10,360	268	14,911	372
Nairn	323	60	355	83
Nethsdale	1,870	320	2,180	320
North East Fife	1,780	390	3,070	850
Orkney	351	133	427	92
Perth and Kinross	3,500	800	5,000	1,000
Renfrew	10,600	1,200	12,500	900
Ross and Cromarty	1,960	337	1,636	212
Roxburgh	1,090	170	1,910	200
Shetland	350	98	620	56
Skye and Lochalsh	247	135	251	171
Stewartry	650	140	800	110
Stirling	3,000	400	4,800	710
Strathkelvin	2,290	120	3,074	160
Sutherland	440	70	597	41
Tweeddale	240	120	510	190
West Lothian	5,040	280	6,040	470
Western Isles	1,133	205	689	87
Wigtown	1,500	200	1,500	200

Authority	Certificated rent Rebates	Certificated rent Allowances	Standard rent Rebates	Standard rent Allowances

Estimated number of housing benefit recipients, Scottish special housing association and new town development corporations: 1987-88

Authority	Certificated rent rebates	Standard rent rebates
Cumbernauld (DC)	2,400	2,400
East Kilbride (DC)	3,200	4,300
Glenrothes (DC)	1,900	2,100
Irvine (DC)	1,200	1,200
Livingston (DC)	2,800	2,200
Scottish Special HA	22,000	25,200

Note: These authorities do not administer rent allowances.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Consumer Services

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received seeking improved consumer services for right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Wakeham: During this Session, I have received representations from two hon. Members concerning the provision of ladies' hairdressing facilities, one of whom also requested the provision of a shop. In addition to these two letters, I have answered two parliamentary questions on matters relating to improved consumer services for right hon. and hon. Members: one concerning the aforementioned services from the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), and one concerning the provision of cas dispensing facilities from my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler).

Retired Members

Mr. Biffen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many Members who retired at the 1979, 1983, and 1987 general elections respectively were aged 65 and over, and what in each case was their period of service in the House.

Mr. Wakeham: The information is as follows:

Completed Years of Actual Service	Number of Members aged over 65 years leaving the House at the General Election held in		
	1987 (47)	1983 (38)	1979 (40)
4	—	1	—
5	—	—	1
8	2	—	1
9	—	1	1
10	—	—	1
12	1	1	—
13	4	—	—
14	—	—	7
15	—	—	1
16	7	—	—
17	—	1	2
18	—	5	1
19	—	—	4
21	3	—	1
22	10	—	—
23	1	4	3
24	—	2	—
26	2	—	—
27	4	5	3
28	1	—	3
29	—	2	—
31	5	2	1
32	—	5	1
33	2	—	8
34	1	—	—
35	—	1	—
36	3	1	—
37	—	6	—
41	1	—	—
46	—	—	1
47	—	1	—

Mr. Biffen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the estimated annual cost of making severance payments to Members aged 65 and over based upon experience of the last three general elections; what would be the effect of such a figure upon the total Members' contribution to the pension fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: The circumstances in which a severance payment is payable to a Member who leaves the House at a general election have changed between each of the elections of 1979, 1983 and 1987. The payment (now known as the resettlemant grant) is currently payable to any Member who ceases to be a Member at a general election while aged under 65 years. Expenditure arising from the payment of each grant, which is charged to the House of Commons Vote (Class XX Vote 21), only occurs in a year in which a general election takes place, and, therefore, no annual cost arises.

The amount of the grant paid to a Member depends on his age and length of service and since it is not known which Members are likely to leave the House at the next election it is not possible to predict what costs would arise if Members aged 65 and over were entitled to the grant. However, having regard to the number and length of service of Members aged 65 or over who left the House at the last three general elections, the cost of resettlement grants, based on the current salary level and on the assumption that the percentage of yearly salary payable is equal to the rate currently applicable to those aged 55 to 64 years, would amount to an average cost of £897,560 in a general election year.

As the payment of resettlement grants is a direct charge on the Vote of the House no costs fall on the Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund and, therefore, Members' contributions to that fund are not affected.

Palace of Westminster (Accidents)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Lord President of the Council if, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column 667, he will place in the Library details of all accidents in the Palace of Westminster referred to therein.

Mr. Wakeham: No. The records of accidents, which are maintained by Departments of the House, the Parliamentary Works Office and the Security Force, contain personal details of the individuals affected. It would not be appropriate to make them available in the Library.

Scottish Office (Joint Committee)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he intends to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland of early May on the setting up of a Joint Committee of Lords and Commons to scrutinise the work of the Scottish Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: I am still considering how best to proceed with regard to a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. As I told the House during business questions last Thursday, I will shortly be discussing this matter with the Chairman of the Committee of Selection. I hope to be in a position to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland soon.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has arranged for urgent research to be undertaken into the possible transmission of the causative agent of bovine spongiform encephalopathy to human beings in such a way that potentially fatal human Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease results.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Studies are already under way to discover whether BSE is transmissible between cattle and to other species.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is taking any action to prevent butchers selling for human consumption uncooked brains from cattle infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Legislation comes into force today which makes bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) a notifiable disease. The Ministry's veterinary service will be retaining the heads of all cattle in respect of which disease is notified, in order to examine brain tissue for diagnostic purposes. The brains will not, therefore, be available for human consumption.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will arrange for urgent research to be undertaken to develop a test for discovering the presence of the causative agent of bovine spongiform encephalopathy before its presence is revealed by the behaviour of the infected beast.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Yes. Immunological tests are being developed which, as part of their objectives, are designed to detect the presence of the agent in various tissues of the animal. The research programme will also address the need to try and develop a test in the live animal.

Cereals (Seed Testing)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the estimated cost savings which have been identified as arising from the ending of the requirement for cereal seed testing before marketing; what is the estimated cost of (i) additional enforcement measures and (ii) additional monitoring measures arising from the proposed change; and if he will make a statement on his proposals for funding any additional costs.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* The information requested is given in paragraphs 394, 403 and 476 of the report on plant variety testing and seed certification systems in the United Kingdom. The cost of additional monitoring measures are estimated to be minimal. The additional enforcement and monitoring costs can be accommodated within the gross saving of £652,000 proposed for seed certification.

Milk

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made to the EC Commission following the recent European Court judgment relating to the non-marketing of milk scheme, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* I am aware of this case which has implications for quota allocation in all member states; however, it is for the EC Commission to consider the necessary steps to comply with the judgment and to make proposals to the Council of Ministers. In the meantime, it would be inappropriate to advocate specific action.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Multi-sensor Platforms (South Africa)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has made to representatives from the World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa to the effect that multi-sensor platforms are being exported by British Aerospace to South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We have informed the director of the World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa that we are considering his representations carefully. We have invited him to provide specific evidence.

Southern Africa

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further action Her Majesty's Government will take to support the front-line states in the face of continued South African aggression.

Mrs. Chalker: We have repeatedly condemned cross-border incursions from whatever quarter. As part of our policy of encouraging stability and development in the

region we will continue to give civil aid and, where appropriate, military training assistance to the front-line states.

EEC (Staff)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total number of persons employed in the European Economic Community Commission, the European Parliament, and other European Economic Community institutions, respectively; and what were the comparable totals in 1979.

Mrs. Chalker: The tables show the maximum authorised staff establishment for 1979 and 1988. The 1988 total represents a 37 per cent. increase over the 1979 figure. The Community grew from nine to 12 member states during the same period.

Financial Year 1979

Institution	*Permanent posts*	*Temporary posts*
European parliament	1,837	158
Council:	1,541	6
Economic and social committee	325	—
Commission:		
Operation	8,302	278
Research and investment	2,636	135
Official publications office	237	—
European centre for the development of vocational training	33	—
European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions	28	—
Court of justice	311	4
Court of auditors	190	24

Source: Official journal of the European communities.

Financial Year 1988: Draft Budget

Institution	*Permanent posts*	*Temporary posts*
Parliament	2,967	430
Council	2,119	1
Economic and social committee	479	—
Commission:		
Operation	11,518	388
Research and investment	2,664	480
Office for official publications	396	—
European centre for the development of vocational training	57	—
European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions	51	—
Court of justice	612	46
Court of auditors	319	55

Source: Provisional Draft Budget of the European Communities: 1988.

South Georgia

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to control fishing in the waters around South Georgia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Since 1980 fishing around South Georgia has been subject to the provisions of the convention for the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources (CCAMLR). The United Kingdom and a majority of members of the Antarctic treaty are signatories. The CCAMLR Commission have banned fishing for Antarctic cod and in 1987 fixed a total allowable catch (TAC) for mackerel icefish around South Georgia.

In order to increase knowledge of the conservation needs of the South Georgia fishery, the Commissioner for South Georgia last month commissioned the renewable resources assessment group of Imperial college to analyse all existing relevant data. The results of this study will be presented to CCAMLR on completion.

Immigration Fees

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the fee for settlement and other long-term entry clearances *(a)* has been increased by around 20 per cent. and *(b)* is to be charged on a per capita rather than a per passport basis; and what total net income he expects to result from these changes to the end of this year and in subsequent years.

Mr. Eggar: *(a)* Settlement and other long-term applications take substantially longer, and thus cost more, to process than visit applications. The increase in this fee aims to reflect the disparity more closely.

(b) The amount of work involved in processing a settlement application relates to the number of applicants regardless of whether they are travelling on a single or a family passport. It was therefore decided that all entry clearance fees should henceforth be charged on a per capita rather than a per passport basis.

It is not expected that there will be any net income. Assuming settlement applications remain at existing levels, estimated additional revenue from these changes is about £500,000.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by how much entry clearance fees would have been required to be increased in the current year to recover costs of administering the entry clearance system.

Mr. Eggar: In the financial year 1987-88 the subsidy from public funds to the overseas entry clearance operation was about £9 million. With the fee increases introduced on 1 June 1988, it is estimated the subsidy will be reduced to approximately £6·7 million by the end of the current financial year. Fee revenue would have to be increased by approximately a further 25 per cent. to meet the full cost of the entry clearance operation overseas.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what net income he estimates for the remainder of the current year, and in 1989 from making fees for single entry clearance non-refundable.

Mr. Eggar: Estimates can only be tentative at this early stage, but, on the basis of past refusal rates, it is unlikely that more than £300,000 will accrue from the decision to make fees for single entry clearance non-refundable.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why revised entry clearance fees were introduced with effect from 1 June rather than 1 January as in previous years.

Mr. Eggar: There is no set date for introducing changes to entry clearance fees. The aim is to recover the costs of

the entry clearance operation by the early 1990s. It was decided that some increases from 1 June 1988 were necessary to meet that longer-term objective.

Antarctic (Minerals)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the recent Antarctic minerals regime negotiations.

Mr. Eggar: The convention on the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activities was adopted on 2 June 1988 in Wellington, New Zealand. I am placing copies in the Library today.

EMPLOYMENT

Careers Officers

64. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of secondary schools have careers officers; and what guidelines his Department gives them on the performance of their duties.

Mr. Cope: On 1 October 1987 there were 3,740 posts for careers officers in local education authorities in England. Careers officers undertake a wide range of duties, including work in secondary schools. Local education authorities decide how careers officers are deployed to carry out their duties.

Local education authority careers officers perform their functions in accordance with statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State, most recently in March 1988.

Adult Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training agencies and training managers are planned for each of the 54 Manpower Services Commission areas under the new adult training programme.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training is being locally planned and will be locally delivered. Each of the 57 Training Commission area offices is currently arranging to contract with potential training agents and training managers and the number of contracts will vary from area to area to meet local needs.

Deptford Skillcentre

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he intends to take to incorporate the recommendations of the Deptford skillcentre inquiries report into the equal opportunities policies and practices of the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Nicholls: The Manpower Services Commission (now the Training Commission) has already investigated and, where necessary, responded to allegations about equal opportunities at Deptford skillcentre.

The Training Commission is committed to an equal opportunities policy for all its programmes and has taken many steps to put it into effect. As part of this, the Skills Training Agency recently issued an equal opportunities guide for staff and trainees, after consulting the Commission for Racial Equality and Equal Opportunities Commission.

Cooke's Works, Penrhyndeudraeth

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received a report from the Health and Safety Executive following the explosion at ICI Cooke's works, Penrhyndeudraeth on 14 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive is currently investigating the explosions and inquiries are still at an early stage. Two of its explosives inspectors have been at the site since 14 June 1988.

Co-operative Development Agency

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library a copy of the report of the assessment of the Co-operative Development Agency carried out by his Department during early 1987.

Mr. Cope: I have today placed in the Library a copy of the report of the policy review and financial management survey undertaken in 1987, as part of the general programme of reviews of non-departmental public bodies.

Disabled Persons

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for the future funding of workshops offering sheltered employment for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The arrangements for supporting in employment people with severe disabilities falls within the scope of the internal review of the assistance offered by my Department to people with disabilities announced in March. We aim to complete this review as quickly as possible.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many adults are registered as disabled under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 on the latest date for which figures are available; and what percentage this represents of the total work force.

Mr. Lee: The number of adults registered as disabled under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 on 18 April 1988 was 371,631. I regret that the number of adults in the total work force is not available. The only figure available for the total work force is that of the total working population of Great Britain which includes young people. In December 1987 this amounted to 27,212,000 (seasonally adjusted). The number of adults and young people registered as disabled under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 on 18 April 1988 was 374,238. This represented 1·4 per cent. of the total working population in December 1987.

Part-time Workers (Holiday Pay)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the uniformity of approach of unemployment benefit offices with respect to holiday pay for part-time workers.

Mr. Lee: Procedural instructions are common to all UBOs and provide for reference to the independent adjudicating authorities of any unemployment benefit claim where a doubt on entitlement arises. This will

include doubts on claims made by part time workers who have received holiday pay from employment which has not been finally terminated.

Earnings

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the proportion of full-time employees earning less that (i) £130 a week and (ii) £140 a week, when overtime earnings are excluded, for men and women separately, in each county in England and in each London borough, as recorded by the 1987 new earnings survey.

Mr. Lee: The available information is as follows:

Proportion of full-time employees earning less than £130 and £140 per week excluding overtime payments. Employees on adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence; April 1987.

per cent.

Counties of England by standard region	Full-time Men £130	Full-time Men £140	Full-time Women £130	Full-time Women £140
Bedfordshire	17·4	23·0	54·4	61·7
Berkshire	14·4	19·5	40·1	49·1
Buckinghamshire	18·0	23·6	41·5	50·2
East Sussex	29·6	37·2	58·4	64·2
Essex	19·3	24·7	56·1	63·0
Hampshire	20·6	27·3	49·3	57·3
Hertfordshire	13·9	18·1	42·0	50·8
Isle of Wight	31·9	40·4	..	..
Kent	24·1	30·4	56·7	63·0
Oxfordshire	20·3	26·1	46·8	57·2
Surrey	18·3	23·81	41·2	51·3
West Sussex	21·5	27·0	47·0	55·7
Cambridgeshire	21·0	27·6	54·1	62·1
Norfolk	27·8	36·0	60·0	67·0
Suffolk	26·9	33·3	55·8	62·1
Avon	19·5	26·1	55·9	64·8
Cornwall	35·6	44·0	63·4	73·1
Devon	33·2	41·4	60·0	65·8
Dorset	25·8	33·8	59·6	66·1
Gloucestershire	20·5	27·8	55·7	66·8
Somerset	27·2	34·7	58·5	64·4
Wiltshire	21·1	28·5	58·5	67·7
West Midlands MC	20·1	26·0	57·4	65·4
Hereford and Worcester	29·6	35·9	61·2	67·8
Shropshire	34·6	44·5	66·2	73·7
Staffordshire	27·4	34·7	59·3	65·7
Warwickshire	19·3	25·1	63·3	68·9
Derbyshire	21·7	30·4	63·8	70·6
Leicestershire	25·3	33·4	61·0	69·9
Lincolnshire	35·6	43·2	69·3	74·2
Northamptonshire	23·4	30·0	61·2	70·0
Nottinghamshire	25·0	31·6	58·0	66·9
South Yorkshire MC	22·1	27·6	60·7	68·0
West Yorkshire MC	26·0	32·8	57·7	65·4
Humberside	28·1	34·1	61·0	69·9
North Yorkshire	34·4	41·9	60·9	69·4
Greater Manchester MC	23·0	29·7	56·8	63·5
Merseyside MC	21·9	28·1	53·0	63·5
Cheshire	18·0	24·5	55·8	62·2
Lancashire	26·9	34·8	62·6	73·7
Tyne and Wear MC	20·9	29·8	53·7	64·6
Cleveland	18·1	24·9	57·0	63·4
Cumbria	19·9	25·1	56·2	67·3
Durham	23·4	30·5	58·0	69·0
Northumberland	29·8	36·3	67·2	74·3

London boroughs	Full-time men £130	Full-time men £140	Full-time women £130	Full-time women £140
Barking	9·5	13·1	..	..
Barnet	11·9	17·4	33·0	42·9
Bexley	14·2	16·5	42·1	48·6
Brent	13·0	17·9	43·0	51·0
Bromley	..	..	37·3	44·3
Camden	8·5	12·4	16·4	22·8
Croydon	14·0	18·8	30·9	40·9
Ealing	11·1	16·7	42·9	48·0
Enfield	13·2	21·1	36·0	50·8
Greenwich	13·7	18·3	39·2	45·6
Hackney	..	..	23·4	29·7
Hammersmith	8·8	12·6	24·4	29·4
Haringey	13·2	19·8	32·2	37·3
Harrow	8·9	11·7	..	..
Havering	14·5	20·1	40·7	44·4
Hillingdon	11·8	16·8	39·8	51·2
Hounslow	7·3	10·6	26·2	32·5
Islington	9·6	14·0	21·3	30·5
Kensington and Chelsea	17·0	20·8	22·2	27·8
Kingston-upon-Thames	16·4	21·0	32·0	44·8
Lambeth	8·6	11·7	21·5	22·9
Lewisham	18·0	25·8	..	..
Merton	16·0	20·5	..	..
Newham	13·9	19·0	..	..
Redbridge	12·0	19·2	30·8	38·3
Richmond-upon-Thames	10·2	14·1	30·1	37·9
Southwark	10·4	14·5	21·5	27·4
Sutton	..	..	31·2	42·7
Tower Hamlets	12·5	17·4	26·2	30·5
Waltham Forest	18·1	21·5	29·0	36·0
Wandsworth	13·5	16·6	30·3	37·1
City of London	4·5	6·7	12·0	15·2
City of Westminster	9·3	12·8	13·8	20·5

.. denotes not available.
Source: New Earnings Survey 1987.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Test Results (Seven-year-olds)

11. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has yet decided whether test results at the age of seven years will be established; and if he will make a statement.

28. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has yet decided whether test results at the age of seven years will be published; and if he will make a statement.

55. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has yet decided whether test results at the age of seven years will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: As my right hon. Friend announced to the House on 7 June, we have decided that national assessment and test results for individual pupils should not be published. There will be no legal requirement for schools to publish aggregated results for pupils aged seven, but we will strongly recommend them to do so.

Primary Schools (Rural Areas)

12. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received regarding primary schools in rural areas.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend regularly receives representations about rural primary schools which are the subject of reorganisation proposals.

A-Levels

13. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received following the publication of the Higginson report on the future of A-level examinations; and if he will make a statement.

24. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the Higginson report on the future of A-levels.

53. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the future of general certificate of education A-levels examinations.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since the report was published on 7 June about 12 representations have been received.

Biological Sciences (Review)

14. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the Advisory Board for the Research Council's review of the biological sciences.

Mr. Jackson: The ABRC is establishing a working group to review the disposition between the research councils of responsibilities for the biological sciences. The group will be chaired by Mr. J. R. S. Morris and is expected to report to the board around the end of the year.

Opting-out Proposals

15. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received concerning opting-out proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has now received rather more than 1,000 letters about his proposals for grant-maintained schools.

Speech Therapy

16. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to discuss the provision of speech therapy for children in the special educational needs category; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: No. The provision of speech therapy is the responsibility of district health authorities and not a matter for my Department.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

17. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent progress has been made towards the establishment of a permanent body to negotiate schoolteachers' pay and conditions.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have already held preliminary discussions with the local authority associations and teacher unions about the Green Paper on future machinery. I intend to hold further discussions over the next few months.

National Curriculum

18. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is now in a position to publish figures of the number and type of teachers required to deliver the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

58. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is now in a position to publish figures of the number and type of teachers required to deliver the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Not yet. Firm estimates will depend upon reports from the relevant subject working groups. There are likely to be additional demands in some subjects but not necessarily an increase in numbers overall.

45. **Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what amount of teaching time will be lost to primary school teachers during the implementation of assessment arrangements for the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: Time spent on assessment is not "lost" to teaching, but is an essential part of the teaching process. The national arrangements will represent a development of present practice designed to improve the effectiveness of assessment in schools for the benefit of parents, pupils and teachers.

56. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will itemise the principal suggestions and elements in any recent public representations received by his Department for the specific contents of the proposed new national core curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has not received any such recent public representations. The targets and programmes of study which my right hon. Friend will propose later this year for English, maths and science will be based on the reports of the working groups on these subjects. In producing their final reports, the working groups on maths and science will take account of detailed responses to their interim reports, and the English group will be considering comments received on the Kingman report on the teaching of English.

Adult Education (London)

19. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has made for the provision of adult education in inner London following the abolition of the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Dunn: Adult education is essentially a local service which should be responsive to local needs and can thus be more effectively organised by the boroughs. There may, however, be scope for certain boroughs to co-operate over certain areas of provision. In addition, there are several high-quality adult education institutions of national repute which carry out a high proportion of advanced work. The Government have made clear their intention to direct the London residuary body to provide financial support for Morley college, the Working Men's college and the Mary Ward centre, all of which are aided colleges. After the London residuary body has been wound up, the Government will be prepared to continue to provide financial support to these institutions as necessary. The Government believe that central funding may also be required for the City Lit.

Polytechnic Students

20. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the number of students entering polytechnics.

Mr. Jackson: The figures given are taken from the Department's published "Statistics of Education: Further Education" volumes. Corresponding figures for 1987 are expected to be available in about two months.

England Polytechnics—First year students[1] (Thousands)

Enrolments on 1 November[2]	*Modes of attendance*		
	Full-time and sandwich	*Part-time day and evening only*	*Total: all modes*
1982	64	49	113
1983	64	52	116
1984	65	50	115
1985	67	53	120
1986	69	49	118

[1] First-year students do not align exactly with entrants; some students may repeat the first year of a course and some may enter at the second or later year.

[2] Home, EC and other overseas students on both advanced and non-advanced courses are included.

Sheffield (Further Education)

21. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the relative merits of further funding city technology colleges and providing teacher funding and investment for the reorganisation of 16-plus education in the city of Sheffield; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No such assessment has been made since it is for Sheffield local education authority to decide how to deploy its teaching force to best meet the demands following the reorganisation of 16-plus education in Sheffield in September 1988.

Qualified Teacher Status

22. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the consultation document "Qualified Teacher Status"; and if he will make a statement.

36. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the consultation document "Qualified Teacher Status"; and if he will make a statement.

37. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the consultation document "Qualified Teacher Status"; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State issued the consultation document on qualified teacher status on 24 May. Responses are requested by 14 October; a few have already been received by the Department.

Foreign Language Teaching

23. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the intended time scale for the introduction of foreign language teaching as an internal part of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend expects to require all pupils in the first three years of secondary school to study a modern foreign language for a reasonable time from autumn 1989. A similar requirement for pupils in years four and five will be introduced as soon as possible thereafter, taking account of pupil's commitments to studies for GCSE. The introduction of attainment targets, programmes of study and related assessment arrangements must await the setting up of a working group for modern foreign languages. My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to set up such a group. His decision to do so will depend on factors such as the outlook for teacher supply and deployment.

27. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in north-east England teach (i) Japanese, (ii) Arabic and (iii) Latin as a normal part of their curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not collected centrally.

Nursery Education (London)

25. **Mrs. Rosie Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any further information as to how the provision of nursery education in inner London boroughs is to be safeguarded following the abolition of the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Dunn: The inner London boroughs will inherit from ILEA the responsibility for nursery provision in their area. They will not be able to discontinue or curtail significantly any existing nursery schools or classes without the publication and approval of statutory proposals under the Education Act 1980.

Under-Fives (Provision)

26. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department plans to commission or undertake any survey, review or inquiry into the quality and standard of educational provision for children under five in reception classes in primary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The Government believe, and have on various occasions publicly expressed the view, that provision for four-year-olds in reception classes should be appropriate to their stage of development. While no formal investigation is planned, my Department and Her Majesty's Inspectors are monitoring the situation closely. The Department will, from next year, include in the annual statistical return submitted by schools additional questions on admission policies for four-year-olds. My right hon. Friend believes the availability of experienced teachers to be an important qualitative factor, and he has proposed the inclusion in the LEA training grants scheme for 1989-90 of an appropriate national priority area.

35. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action his Department has taken or is planning to take to ensure that local education authorities implement DES circular 2/73 recommendations on hours of attendance, staffing, and so on, for children under five years in reception classes in primary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The Government have no plans to require local education authorities to implement the guidelines in circular 2/73, whose detailed recommendations have been largely overtaken by events.

41. **Mrs. Llin Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will outline his Department's strategy for improving the provision of education for children under five years.

63. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures his Department is taking to encourage an increase in the number of full-time nursery education places for children aged three and four years old.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Members to the replies that I have given today to the hon. Members for Easington (Mr. Cummings), for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth), and for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram).

Local Government Act 1988

29. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance he is issuing to local education authorities and school governors about the application of section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Advice on the provisions of the Local Government Act 1988 was issued to all local authorities on 20 May under the Department of the Environment circular 12/88. Section 28 of the Act relates to the activities of local authorities and there are no plans to issue separate advice to school governors. Copies of Department of Education and Science circular 11/87 "Sex Education at School" were sent to all schools in England and Wales in September 1987. The circular makes clear that there is no place in any school in any circumstances for teaching which advocates homosexual behaviour, which presents it as the norm, or which encourages homosexual experimentation by pupils.

GCSE

30. **Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is in a position to assess the success of the general certificate of secondary education; and if he will make a statement.

60. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is in a position to assess the success of the general certificate of secondary education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Her Majesty's inspectorate's interim report on the GCSE provided reassuring evidence that the new examination is being successfully introduced and is already leading to better teaching and learning in many schools. HMI is continuing to monitor progress and will publish a further report in the autumn. The Secondary Examinations Council (SEC) and the examining groups are already reviewing syllabuses and procedures.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements are being made for those candidates who wish to resit this summer's GCSE examination, including those where an assessment of course work is part of the examination; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The GCSE examining groups will provide opportunities for pupils to resit GCSE in the winter on a comparable basis to what was available in the past for O-level and GCSE examinations. The groups have also generally made arrangements for GCSE coursework to be carried forward in circumstances where a pupil changes school during the course or resits the examination. Detailed information relating to the arrangements in a particular subject or syllabus is available from the group concerned.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many cases of incorrect or late arrival of GCSE papers have been reported; what were the comparable figures under the previous GCE/CSE system; and what steps he is taking to ensure that no further such errors occur.

Mrs. Rumbold: The distribution of GCSE papers is entirely the responsibility of the examining groups. The Secondary Examinations Council and the examining groups are collaborating to review the experience of the first GCSE examinations this summer and to make any necessary administrative improvements quickly.

Science Base (Report)

Dr. Bray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the Advisory Board for the Research Council's report entitled "A Strategy for the Science Base".

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 17 May to the hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) at column *394*.

Teachers (Collective Bargaining Rights)

32. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received seeking the restoration of collective bargaining rights for teachers and their organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received various responses from teacher unions and local authority associations to the Green Paper "Teachers' Pay and Conditions: A Consultative Document." He will be holding discussions about future machinery with interested parties over the next few months.

School Building Maintenance

33. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what extra funding his Department is planning to provide for school building maintenance over the next three years, in the light of the report "Local Authority Property: a Management Handbook and a Management Overview."

Mr. Dunn: The Government's expenditure plans already include provision for local authority spending on repairs and maintenance of school buildings to increase each year. The expenditure plans for 1988-89 provide for authorities to spend 40 per cent. more in cash on the repair and maintenance of schools than in 1985-86.

Head Teachers (Training)

34. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the training of head teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend recognises the importance of systematic and well-targeted training for senior teachers with a management responsibility. He proposes in 1989-90 to extend the national priority area covering management training within the LEA training grants scheme and he is now setting up a new task force on the management training of heads.

Anti-Racist Measures

38. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards anti-racist measures adopted by education authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is Government policy that ethnic minority pupils should have the same opportunity as all others to profit from what the schools can offer them and that schools should preserve and transmit our national values in a way which accepts Britain's ethnic diversity and promotes tolerance and racial harmony. It is for individual local education authorities and schools to determine, in the light of their own needs and circumstances, how to give effect to those policies.

Nurseries

39. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action his Department is taking to encourage the establishment of nurseries in institutions of further and higher education.

Mr. Jackson: None. The provision of nursery facilities is a matter for individual institutions.

Teachers (Salary Structure)

40. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he held any discussions with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities before announcing the latest salary structure for teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend held discussions with representatives of the National Employers Organisation (School Teachers), representing both metropolitan and non-metropolitan authorities, before making his announcement on 26 May.

City Technology Colleges

42. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the future of city technology colleges.

46. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement about progress in relation to his plans for city technology colleges.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the progress on city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on 17 May at column *392*. Since that date BAT industries and others have announced their sponsorship of a Teesside CTC in Middlesbrough.

48. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a further statement about the financing of city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier this afternoon to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner).

Interdisciplinary Research Centres

43. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional funding he is providing for the new interdisciplinary research centres.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on 13 April at column *135*.

University Education (Funding)

44. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next proposes to meet the University Grants Committee to discuss the future funding of university education.

Mr. Jackson: There are no present plans for such a meeting. The committee recently conveyed its views in writing.

Children's Playgrounds

47. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on children's playgrounds in the light of the Consumers' Association survey on children's playgrounds, published in April, a copy of which has been forwarded to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Government welcome this report by the Consumers' Association which will be of interest to everyone with a responsibility for children's playgrounds and should be useful to them in reviewing their policies and practices. The Department's general requirements on school playgrounds are set out in the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 which require up to two thirds of a school's recreation area to be paved or have a hard porous surface. The remaining area need not be paved.

16-plus Education

49. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the Government have any proposals to improve the staying-on rate at the age of 16 years; and if he will make a statement.

52. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the Government have any proposals to improve the staying-on rate at the age of 16 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are committed to increasing the post-16 participation rate in education and

training. The proposal in the Education Reform Bill will help to secure that by giving more young people the motivation and the qualifications they need to stay on after 16. The Government are also working to broaden the range of opportunities available to those who want to stay on; to ensure that young people know what their options are; to give greater coherence to the pattern of post-16 vocational qualifications; and to bring home to both young people and employers the vital importance of education and training.

Cleveland

50. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last visited a school in Cleveland; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend visited the site of the new city technology college in Middlesborough on Thursday 16 June, for the announcement of the BAT sponsorship of the college.

Nursery Education

51. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about Her Majesty's Government policy towards encouraging nursery education.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations recently.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the Government have any plans to introduce legislation to make it a statutory duty of local education authorities to provide education for three and four-year-old children of parents who wish their children to benefit from it.

Mr. Dunn: No. The Government believe that local authorities are best placed to judge the extent and form of provision for the under-fives appropriate to their circumstances, in the light of local demand.

National Association of Head Teachers

54. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next intends to meet the leaders of the National Association of Head Teachers; and what issue he will discuss.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend last met leaders of the National Association of Head Teachers on 11 May to discuss the report of the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions. He also addressed its annual conference on 3 June. No date has been set for a further meeting with the National Association of Head Teachers.

Latin

57. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will estimate the number of school children studying Latin to O-level.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1985-86, the latest year for which information is available, the number of school leavers attempting O-level classics (including Latin, Greek/Greek translation, general classics and ancient history) was 24,560.

New Polytechnic, Kent

59. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to designate a new polytechnic in Kent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has no such plans. However, the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council that will be established following the passage of the Education Reform Bill will be asked to include among its early tasks an assessment of whether any further designations would be appropriate.

Basic Science (Funding)

61. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration he has given to the proposal by the chairman of the Science and Engineering Research Council that funding of basic science should be a fixed proportion of gross domestic product, with the proportion to be reviewed every four years.

Mr. Jackson: We have noted the proposal in Professor Mitchell's recent lecture. The possibility of a link between part or all of the science budget and the growth of GDP was also suggested in the ABRC's discussion document, "A Strategy for the Science Base." We are currently considering the ABRC's recommendations and the comments on them which we have received from the higher education and scientific communities. My right hon. Friend expects to make a statement later in the year on the Government's policy objectives for the science base and the steps we will be taking to achieve them.

School Meals

62. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his policy on the nutritional content of school meals.

Mr. Dunn: Under the provisions of the Education Act 1980, the nutritional content of school meals is the responsibility of individual local education authorities. Many LEAs are promoting healthy eating options, often supported by work in the classroom and through marketing campaigns. The Government support such approaches.

Education Reform

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the progress of the working parties established in relation to the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes).

Student Funding

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on progress in relation to his plans to review methods of student funding.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley).

Parental Involvement

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received upon involving parents further in their children's education.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received a number of letters from hon. Members and others on this subject. The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 increased the representation of parents on school governing bodies, and provided for more information to be give to parents. The proposals in the Education Reform Bill will further enhance parents' influence.

Schools (Discipline)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the maintenance of discipline in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since my right hon. Friend announced the establishment of the committee of inquiry into discipline in schools on 18 March this year, we have received about 80 letters on the general subject of discipline in schools from hon. Members and others.

Universities (Funding)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the current level of Government funding of the universities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend receives many representations bearing on present and prospective university funding.

TRANSPORT

Ports (Employment)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the change in the number of people employed in United Kingdom ports and associated employment since *(a)* 1978, *(b)* 1968 and *(c)* 1958.

Mr. David Mitchell: The following figures, published annually in "Port Statistics" by my Department and the British Ports Association, are estimates of the number of people employed in the port transport industry. They are derived from the Department of Employment's standard industrial classification. Because of changes in the definition of the classification, the figure for 1986 (the latest available year) may be rather lower than an entirely consistent series would have given. The figures relate to Great Britain and to the middle of each year.

	Employees
1958	[1]155,450
1968	129,625
1978	62,600
1986	35,100

[1] Including perhaps some 8,000 employed in inland waterway transport and other ancillary industries.

A separate survey undertaken by the British Ports Association and National Association of Port Employers in March 1987 produced a total for Great Britain of 38,989.

Leeds/Bradford Airport

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many representations he has received in favour of extending the operating hours of Leeds/Bradford airport;

(2) when he will make a decision about the hours during which Leeds/Bradford airport may be used.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A number of such representations have been received. The decision, to be made jointly by the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment, will be announced as soon as possible.

Vehicles (Lighting Standards)

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the upper and lower standards of illumination for lights on motor vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1984 require nearly all lights on vehicles to meet European standards of performance. These cover both maximum and minimum levels of intensity for a large number of individual types of light.

Marine Surveyors

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if there was any change in his Department's plans for the number of marine surveyors to be employed in any of the years 1987, 1988 and 1989 as a consequence of the capsize of the Herald of Free Enterprise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Yes. For 1988-89 and subsequent years, the planned level of staffing in the Surveyor General's organisation has been increased compared with previous plans, to provide for additional inspection work on roll-on/roll-off passenger ferries.

Greater London

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* all studies and investigations he has announced concerning the planning or improvement to all modes of transport in the Greater London area, stating, for each, the purpose of the study, by whom it is being undertaken and the date of expected publication.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have announced the following relevant studies and investigations which are yet to be completed:

Study	*Purpose*	*Undertaker*	*Expected publication date*
Stage 2 of London Assessment Studies	To indentify practical options for tackling transport problems in four areas of London	Ove Arup and Partners, Travers Morgan Planning, Mott Hay and Anderson, Sir William Halcrow and Partners	Spring-early summer 1989
Western Environmental Im-provement Route	Investigation into carriageway standards, junctions and associated management measures	Husband and Co.	Public Consulta-tion on study options by end 1988
Trunk Road Signing Review	To review London's trunk road signing with a view to the provision of better information along main routes	MVA Consultancy	No plans
Development of Traffic Management and Accident Prevention Measures	To examine systematically all traffic management measures currently used on trunk roads	W. S. Atkins and Partners	No plans
M25 Review	To assess traffic trends on M25 and adjacent radial routes, identify existing and potential problem areas and recommend solutions	Rendel, Palmer and Tritton	No plans
M25 Widening Study	To investigate the best way of providing a fourth lane in each direction between junctions 15 and 16	Sir William Halcrow and Partners	No plans
Central London Rail Study	To develop a strategy for improving services in the Central London area and to provide for forecast demand up to the end of the century while maximising the use of existing assets	Joint study by Department of Transport British Rail and London Regional Transport	An initial report is expected in July. Further work will be required before publication is considered
Central London Employment Trends	To provide an appreciation of likely future trends in employment in London and hence in demand for rail services	Joint study by Department of Transport and British Rail	Expected to report early 1989
Channel Tunnel Rail Capacity Study	To examine options for increasing route, seating and terminal capacity between London and Channel tunnel in the longer term	British Rail	By BR in July 1988

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report*, for each of the last five years, the numbers of people killed or injured on roads in South Killingholme, Immingham, Flamborough, Brockelsby, Melton Ross, Croxton, Keelby, and Great Limber, by age group.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information in the form requested is not available centrally.

I shall write to the hon. Member.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Schoolchildren (Illegal Employment)

65. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the illegal employment of school-age children.

Mrs. Currie: No information is available on children who may be employed illegally.

The Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1920, which applies to Great Britain, prohibits the employment of children in industrial undertakings. The Health and Safety Executive has powers under this Act to take immediate action if a child is found to be working illegally in any such employment; and through its agricultural inspectorate to enforce legislation which prohibits the employment or involvement of children in certain agricultural operations.

The Children and Young Persons Act 1933, which applies to England and Wales, prohibits the employment of children under 13 and restricts the part-time employment of children between the ages of 13 and 16. Local authority byelaws made under this Act place further restrictions on the hours and occupations of schoolchildren's employment. Local authorities have powers, which are usually exercised through the educational welfare service, to enforce the byelaws and, under section 59 of the Education Act 1944, which also applies to England and Wales, to prohibit or restrict the employment of any child.

Oxford Regional Health Authority

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the population served by each district health authority in the Oxford region in 1986-87, 1987-88 and the forecast for 1988-89; and what was the per capita expenditure for each district in these three years.

Mr. Newton: The information requested for 1986-87, together with the projected population figures for 1987-88

and 1988-89 is shown in the table. Figures from the accounts of each health authority for 1987-88 will be available in the autumn. However, for that year and forecast expenditure figures for each district for 1988-89 (which are not collected centrally) my hon. Friend may wish to approach the chairman of the Oxford regional health authority who may be able to assist.

1986-87

	Total revenue expenditure £000s	*Population (thousands)*	*Revenue expenditure per capita* £	*Projected population (thousands)* 1987-88	1988-89
East Berkshire	54,411	361·3	151	364·2	365·7
West Berkshire	72,384	445·0	163	448·9	453·9
Aylesbury Vale	41,497	142·5	291	142·5	143·9
Wycombe	29,943	271·6	110	271·9	271·7
Milton Keynes	21,031	161·8	130	166·3	172·6
Kettering	32,749	253·2	129	252·6	253·9
Northampton	57,013	301·3	189	303·6	307·3
Oxfordshire	110,946	539·6	206	543·8	549·1

Sources

a. 1986-87 annual accounts of the district health authorities

b. Mid-year estimates of population 1986. Population figures for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are 1985 based projections (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).

Notes

1. Expenditure on family practitioner services is excluded. Such expenditure is accounted for by family practitioner committees and cannot strictly be attributed to particular regions or districts.
2. Significant variations in per capita expenditure figures at district level arise principally because:
   i. people travel across boundaries for treatment and sub-regional resource allocations reflect the pattern of service provision locally.
   ii. the population figures used make no allowance for people resident in one district who receive treatment in another or for the difference in morbidity and age/sex structure of particular populations.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the budgeted expenditure for Oxford regional health authority for the financial years 1987-88 and 1988-89; and what was the increase between the two years;

(2) what is the budgeted expenditure for each district health authority in the Oxford regional health authority for 1987-88 and 1988-89; and what is the percentage increase for each.

Mr. Newton: The table provides the information requested for the Oxford region in terms of net cash limits.

Similar information for each district within the Oxford region is not available centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairman of the Oxford RHA for this information.

Oxford RHA

	1987-88 £ million	*1988-89* £ million	*Percentage increase* Cash	Real terms
Revenue cash limit[1]	[2]475·8	[3]521·2	9·54	4·82

[1] Net of income.

[2] Adjusted cash limit ie initial cash limit and subsequent adjustments (including additions from waiting list fund and following 1987 review body pay awards).

[3] Initial cash limit and subsequent additions from waiting list fund and following 1988 review body pay awards.

Leaflets

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects his Department's offices will have a full stock of all leaflets.

Mr. Portillo: The few outstanding leaflets referring to the April 1988 social security reforms will be available in local social security offices in the first week of July.

Doctors (Derbyshire)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many doctors are currently employed by the National Health Service in Derbyshire; and what was the figure in 1979.

Mr. Newton: The information in the table shows the total number of hospital and community health service medical staff based on whole-time equivalents at 30 September each year. The figures exclude all consultants and senior registrars whose contracts are held by the regional health authority. There will therefore be more doctors actually working in Derbyshire than accounted for in the table.

Hospital and community health service medical staff at 30 September each year
Derbyshire

	Whole-time equivalent
1979	250
1986	290

Note:

Figures include permanent paid, honorary and locum staff but exclude consultants and senior registrars whose contracts are held by the regional health authorities. Distribution of consultants and senior registrars within non-teaching district health authorities is not collected centrally. Figures are rounded to nearest 10.

Paediatric Occupational Therapists

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps have been taken by his Department to deal with the shortage of paediatric occupational therapists.

Mr. Newton: The joint DHSS/NHS manpower planning advisory group has commissioned a study to look at future staffing and skill mix in occupational therapy.

The project does not single out paediatric occupational therapists as a particular group but will cover the profession as a whole.

Preliminary results will be available in late 1989.

Home Responsibilities Protection

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase the qualifying years for home responsibilities protection to include tax years before 1978; and if he will estimate the cost of such an increase.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so. It is very difficult to arrive at a precise costing, but the best estimate would suggest a cost of several hundred million pounds.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the answer of 26 May, *Official Report*, column 265, he will make it his policy in future, when producing statistics about rates of HIV infection, to make clear whether the figures are based on reported cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The statistics for HIV infection which the Department publishes in the regular quarterly reports have always been based on cases of HIV seropositivity and AIDS which are reported to the national surveillance centres. This is always explained in the text which accompanies the statistics.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what response he has made to representations by the Family Planning Association to the effect that cuts in family planning clinics are increasing the risk of young people catching HIV infection.

Mr. Newton: In correspondence with the Family Planning Association I have expressed the view that public awareness of the risks of transmission of HIV infection and the consequent demands on the services of family planning clinics are among the issues for health authorities to consider in determining the level of local provision.

AIDS

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all funds or grants made available to National Health Service laboratories, hospitals or consultants for the purpose of conducting research on HIV infection or AIDS by the following organisations: (i) the Wellcome Foundation, (ii) Burroughs Wellcome, (iii) Abbot Laboratories, (iv) du Pont and (v) Glaxo, identifying the organisation, amount, principal recipient and purpose of grant.

Mr. Newton: Such information is not held centrally. However, the Department is administering, at the request of Abbot Laboratories, the allocation of £65,000 set aside by Abbot for travel fellowships, to allow health care professionals who are undertaking research into AIDS or HIV infection to travel to the United states of America to meet other researchers working in the same field. So far eight fellowships have been awarded.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has authorised for use within the National Health Service any anti-HIV antibody test which has not previously been the subject of an evaluation as to efficiency conducted by or on behalf of his Department.

Mr. Newton: Anti-HIV antibody tests employed in the National Health Service do not require authorisation from the Department.

The Department seeks to evaluate commercially available HIV tests on a systematic basis, and makes the reports of these evaluations available to the NHS and other interested parties, but we do not authorise particular test kits.

Doctors (Competition)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department will be contributing to the Office of Fair Trading's inquiry into the competitive position of doctors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Director General of Fair Trading has now referred the question of restrictions on doctors' advertising to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I understand that officials from this Department will be invited to give evidence to the commission.

Income Support

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of recipients of housing benefit supplement prior to 4 April who qualify for income support, and what proportion are pensioners.

Mr. Portillo: Information is not available to enable us to make such an estimate.

Income Support

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, under the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987, he is empowered to direct that payments of income support relating to accommodation charges be made direct to the organisation providing the accommodation in cases where such charges have been incurred, but the claimant has moved on between the date of claim and the first pay day.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) on 16 June at column *281*.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether payment direct to the creditor of a debt owed by an income support claimant would be treated as income of the claimant under regulation 42(4)(a)(ii) of the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987.

Mr. Portillo: A single payment made by a third party to a creditor of a debt would normally be treated as part of the claimant's capital under regulation 51(3)(a)(ii) of the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987 if it were used in respect of food, clothing, footwear, fuel or certain accommodation costs. Payments made regularly by a third party could be treated as income of the claimant under regulation 42(4)(a)(ii) if they were used in respect of these items. The first £5 a week of these payments would be disregarded.

NHS Managers

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if the moneys paid to National Health Service managers through the performance related bonus scheme are financed *(a)* centrally, *(b)* from district or *(c)* from regional budgets.

Mr. Newton: Health authorities are expected to meet all pay costs including performance related pay for managers from their overall cash allocations.

Ambulances

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the current National Health Service review on ambulance purchase will be concluded.

Mrs. Currie: The review of purchasing policy for NHS ambulances is expected to be completed later this year.

Foetal Tissue

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to his reply of 7 June to the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos), *Official Report*, columns *557-58*, if he will list the members of the ethical committees which approved the use of human foetal tissue in the transplant operations to which he refers;

(2) pursuant to his reply of 7 June to the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos), *Official Report*, columns *557-58*, upon what information he based his understanding that the ethical committees to which he refers considered the issues involved in the use of foetal tissue in transplant operations with care and over a long period of time;

(3) pursuant to his reply of 7 June to the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos), *Official Report*, columns *557-58*, upon what date the ethical committees to which he refers first deliberated upon each of the applications for permission to transplant human foetal tissue; on how many separate days such deliberations continued in each case; and on what date a decision finally was minuted in each case.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *557*, he will now take steps to hold centrally the lists of names of members of ethical committees; and if he will list the members of all the ethical committees which approved the use of foetal tissue in the transplant operations to which he refers.

Mr. Newton: I understand the ethical committee at the midland centre for Neurosurgery and neurology has discussed Professor Hitchcock's work on using transplantation techniques to treat Parkinsonism on a number of occasions since 1982. The specific procedure referred to was first discussed in February last year when further information was called for. A decision to authorise it was taken in December. The members of the ethical committee who considered this procedure were:

Dr. J. M. Anderson, Consultant neurologist (December 1987 only)
Mrs. B. J. Baker, Senior Nurse Manager
Dr. S. W. Chauda, Neuro-radiologist (February 1987 only)
Dr. J. Milligan, General Practitioner
Dr. M. V. Salmon, Neuro-pathologist
Dr. R. J. West, Neuro-radiologist
Mrs. M. Wilkes, Community Health Council
Mr. J. Ballantyne, Hospital Administrator and Secretary to the Committee

Professor Hitchcock himself is also a member of the committee, but I understand attended the relevant meetings primarily to speak to his protocol and would have been excluded from any vote.

We have no plans to hold the names of local ethical committee members centrally.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 7 June to the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos), *Official Report*, columns *557-58*, if he will arrange for the publication in the *Official Report* of the text of the declaration which was signed by the mothers in the cases to which he refers in which human foetal tissue was used in transplant operations.

Mr. Newton: The text of the declaration referred to was as follows:

"I have no special wishes concerning the disposal of material arising from my pregnancy."

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 7 June to the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos), *Official Report*, columns *557-58*, whether, during the course of the prolonged and careful deliberation by ethical committees to which he refers, any of those committees sought advice from his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: No.

Research Findings (Publication)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the light of the chairman of the university vice-chancellors, Sir Mark Richmond's letter to him about the Government's proposal on the right to republish research findings, he proposes to reconsider these proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have taken careful note of the points Sir Mark made in his recent letter, but we have no plans to change our policy.

Obstetricians

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many consultant obstetricians are employed by each of the outer London health districts.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally. Information on medical staff in the NHS is collected by the employing authority. Employing authorities for consultants are regional health authorities, district health authorities designated for undergraduate teaching purposes, and special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.

NHS (Technicians)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy for bringing about an improvement in the salaries of cardiac technicians, physiological measurement technicians, employed by the National Health Service; what information he has on the difficulty of recruiting and retaining student technicians due to low rates of pay; and if he will institute a review of the basis upon which this group of technicians are paid.

Mr. Newton: I presume that my hon. Friend refers to physiological measurement technicians (cardiology). Their pay and conditions of service are matters for negotiation in the professional and technical staffs B Whitley council and I understand the management side recently offered a 5·5 per cent. increase in pay and allowances for physiological measurement technicians. The staff side is consulting its members on the offer. I am not aware of any reports of difficulty in recruiting and retaining student technicians. The number of students in post since 1979 has increased by over 10 per cent.

Körner Committee

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the cost to date of implementing the recommendations of the Körner committee.

Mr. Newton: Regional health authorities are responsible for implementing Körner; information about costs is not held centrally. The major expenditure has been on the implementation of operational computer systems to facilitate patient management and personnel administration, which provide Körner data as a by-product.

Maternity Pay

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that holiday pay is taken into account as part of a woman's earnings for purposes of calculating statutory maternity pay.

Mr. Portillo: Under current provisions employers are already required to take into account in calculating statutory maternity pay entitlement any contractual payment which is made during the test period, and which is treated as earnings for national insurance contribution purposes. This can include holiday pay.

Blind Persons

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what he estimates is the total annual cost of a blind person to the Exchequer, indicating what proportion is resourced from central Government and local government, respectively.

Mr. Scott: I regret that information is not available centrally in the form required.

Single European Market

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes will be necessary in United Kingdom health and social services legislation in order to satisfy the harmonisation requirements of the European Community for the achievement of the single market in 1992.

Mrs. Currie: Provision of health and social services as such does not fall within the terms of the treaty establishing the European Community and therefore no change in the basic legislation covering their operation is likely. In other areas, for example the mutual recognition of professional qualifications, compliance with harmonised safety requirements for medical devices and supplies, authorisation and pricing arrangements for medicinal products and measures for the health and safety of workers, legislative changes may be necessary, depending on the measures adopted by the Community, which could affect the health and social services. The proposals for the approximation of duties on tobacco and alcohol, the labelling of tobacco products and the tar yield of cigarettes also have important health implications.

Funeral Expenses

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the qualification for the payment of a contribution towards funeral expenses to widows following the death of the spouse or a dependent relative.

Mr. Portillo: We do not plan such a review. Regulated provision is made under the social fund for claims to be made by anyone, including widows, who is awarded either income support, family credit or housing benefit who has to take responsibility for a funeral and needs help to meet the expenses involved. For this purpose, particular provision is made to disregard, for 12 months, the £1,000 lump sum payable to widows when calculating the amount which may be paid under the social fund.

Health and Social Service Benefit

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what entitlement to health and social service benefit *(a)* citizens of Eire and *(b)* citizens of Commonwealth countries have in the United Kingdom; and if these rights are reciprocal for United Kingdom citizens in Eire.

Mrs. Currie: All people ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom are eligible to use the full range of NHS facilities and the personal social services regardless of their own nationality. For health benefit the position in respect of temporary visitors from overseas depends on country of origin. All citizens of EC countries who are resident in the Community may obtain immediately necessary treatment for health conditions arising during a visit on the same terms as residents of the host country, by virtue of the EC social security regulations; this includes Irish visitors to the United Kingdom and United Kingdom visitors to Ireland. Similar arrangements for immediately necessary treatment exist for visitors from Australia, Malta and New Zealand, member countries of the Commonwealth with which the United Kingdom has concluded bilateral health care agreements. Visitors from other Commonwealth countries must pay for treatment received in the United Kingdom though they may do so through private insurance. United Kingdom citizens resident in Ireland are covered by the Irish health care scheme.

Entitlement to income support (social service benefit) is dependent on immigration status. People from Commonwealth countries who are accepted for permanment settlement here are entitled to income support in the same way as United Kingdom citizens. Temporary visitors (students, tourists, business people) however, are only admitted if the immigration officer is satisfied that they will not have recourse to public funds.

There are no immigration controls between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Consequently Irish citizens can claim income support in the same way as British citizens, and similarly British citizens can claim social welfare whilst in Ireland on the same terms as Irish citizens.

Glue Ear

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of glue ear are currently diagnosed annually in children; and what were the figures in the previous five years.

Mrs. Currie: The information available centrally relates to treatment in NHS hospitals. The table shows the most recent data on the number of patients treated in NHS hospitals with a main diagnosis of chronic mucoid otitis media (ICD[1] 381.2).

	0-14 years	*15 years and over*	*All ages*
1985	12,980	720	13,700
1984	11,320	700	12,020
1983	9,920	570	10,490
1982	8,070	490	8,560

[1] ICD: International Classification of Diseases.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average waiting time for admission of children to hospital for operations in connection with treatment for glue ear in each regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie: Information on waiting times for operations carried out in NHS hospitals is not collected centrally by diagnosis of the patient, but according to the type of surgical operation or procedure performed. A number of different operations are performed for the treatment of glue ear; the principal one is myringotomy/tympanostomy, for which information on waiting times of patients treated in 1985 (the latest year for which information is held centrally) is given in the table.

Median waiting time in weeks between the time a patient was placed on the waiting list and admission to an NHS hospital in England for myringotomy/tympanostomy, by age and region of residence, 1985

Region of residence	*Median waiting time (weeks)*		
	0-4 years	*5-14 years*	*All ages*
Northern	12	11	11
Yorkshire	9	10	10
Trent	10	15	13
East Anglian	6	11	10
North West Thames	7	8	8
North East Thames	8	11	9
South East Thames	10	12	10
South West Thames	11	10	10
Wessex	10	12	12
Oxford	7	11	9
South Western	10	9	9
West Midlands	7	12	9
Mersey	7	9	8
North Western	11	11	11

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether his Department issues any guidance to doctors about recognising behavioural changes in young children as a symptom of the onset of deafness due to glue ear;

(2) whether he will make it his policy to establish a committee of inquiry to take evidence from those with experience of the condition glue ear and to make recommendations as to how treatment of the condition can be improved.

Mrs. Currie: We have issued guidance in the past on various screening and diagnostic services for hearing-impaired children. In order to obtain more up-to-date information, we commissioned research in 1985 from the Medical Research Council Institute for Hearing Research. The results, which include various considerations in respect of otitis media or glue ear, were received recently. When these have been studied we should be in a much better position to take matters forward.

Low-income Families

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of persons in low-income families in England (i) on supplementary benefit, (ii) below 100 per cent. of supplementary benefit and (iii) below 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit, for each of the years 1979, 1981, 1983 and 1985, as reported for Great Britain in the Department of Health and Social Security low-income families tables.

Mr. Portillo: A reply can be supplied only at disproportionate cost. In addition, however, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 27 May at columns *413-14*.

NHS Patients (Physiotherapy)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his question of 12 April, *Official Report*, column *343*, what is his policy towards the treatment of National Health Service patients in need of physiotherapy outside the National Health Service by non-state registered physiotherapists.

Mr. Newton: Physiotherapy treatment for National Health Service patients is provided within the National Health Service by state registered physiotherapists. Where an NHS patient is referred outside for treatment, which is likely to be only in very unusual circumstances, there is no formal requirement that the physiotherapist should be state registered. Outside the NHS patients have the right to choose to seek treatment both from physiotherapists who are state registered and from those who are not.

Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations 1983

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why the word "extra" was omitted from paragraph 14(e) of schedule 4 to the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations 1983.

Mr. Portillo: The Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations 1980 were amended, before they took effect on 24 November 1980, to omit the word "extra" from column 2 of paragraph 13(e) to schedule 3. This was done to avoid the great difficulty of requiring the adjudication officer to establish the cost of a normal diet in order to determine the extra cost of a special one.

Women's Refuges

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to protect the financial situation of women's refuges in any changes resulting from the review of board and lodging payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: We have commissioned a study by the Policy Studies Institute into the characteristics of hostels, including women's refuges, providing accommodation for income support recipients. We expect to receive the results shortly. In the meantime, no decisions have been taken on future arrangements for paying these claimants.

Benefits

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people, at the latest date for which information is available, were in receipt of *(a)* invalidity benefit, *(b)* invalidity benefit and supplementary benefit, *(c)* severe disablement allowance and *(d)* severe disablement allowance and supplementary benefit;

(2) how many people were in receipt of severe disablement allowance at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

(a) 899,000 at April 1986
(b) 112,000 at May 1987
(c) 261,000 at April 1986
(d) 136,000 at May 1987

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time taken between the date of claim for severe disablement allowance and the date of the decision on that claim where *(a)* the claimant is not required to undergo the 80 per cent. disablement test and *(b)* the claimant is required to undergo the 80 per cent. disablement test.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for severe disablement allowance were made in each of the years 1984 to 1988.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows, based on calendar years.

	Claims
1984	[1]9,398
1985	46,997
1986	38,508
1987	41,323
1988	[2]21,835

[1] Severe disablement allowance first became payable on 29 November 1984.
[2] Up to 30 April, the latest date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the classification of refusals of severe disablement allowance to *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women according to the following reasons: (i) over pension age, (ii) not incapable of work, (iii) failed the 80 per cent. disablement test, (iv) failed the residence and presence conditions and (v) other;

(2) what is the classification of awards of severe disablement allowance to date to *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women according to whether they (i) were exempt from the 80 per cent. of disablement, (ii) were passported to the 80 per cent. test or (iii) passed the 80 per cent. test;

(3) how many *(a)* favourable and *(b)* unfavourable decisions on applications for severe disablement allowance have been made to date.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to her on 23 July 1987 at columns *488-90*. Since April 1987 statistics for severe disablement allowance have been collected on the same basis as those for sickness and invalidity benefit and updated information in the form requested is not available.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many appeals there were, for each of the years 1984 to 1988, against refusals of severe disablement allowance because the claimant was judged not to satisfy the test of 80 per cent. disablement; and how many of these appeals resulted in the claimant being awarded severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Scott: Information is not readily available on the grounds of appeal or the satisfaction or otherwise of the 80 per cent. disablement test. The available information on severe disablement is provided in the table. National administrative statistics for social security appeal tribunals are not available in the equivalent form prior to the second quarter of 1984, while the latest available figures are for the third quarter of 1987.

Social Security Appeal Tribunals (Great Britain)
Severe Disablement Allowance Appeals

Period	*Number of appeals lodged*	*Number of appeals heard*	*Number decided in claimants favour*
April-December 1984	[1]18	1	—
Year ending December 1985	[1]204	87	14
Year ending December 1986	[1]227	138	53

Period	Number of appeals lodged	Number of appeals heard	Number decided in claimants favour
Quarter ending March 1987	[1]51	27	12
Quarter ending June 1987	60	32	9
Quarter ending September 1987	54	30	11

[1] Estimated.

Invalidity Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time taken between the date of a claim for invalidity benefit and the date of a decision on that claim.

Mr. Portillo: As at 8 April 1988 the average time taken between the date of claim to sickness and invalidity benefit and a decision on the claim was 11 days.

Separate records are not kept of the number of claimants to sickness benefit and invalidity benefit.

Clinical Thermometers

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southend, East on 16 June, what evidence he has of British producers of clinical thermometers having difficulties in exporting their products to the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have no evidence that the one existing United Kingdom producer of clinical thermometers covered by directive 76/764/EEC has difficulty in exporting his products to Europe. But under present arrangements the manufacturer needs to have his products tested by BSI in respect of sales to the NHS and also separately in Germany for the purpose of having the EEC mark applied in respect of sales elsewhere in Europe. When regulations are laid to give effect to the directive it is expected that the manufacturer will be able to reduce costs and simplify arrangements by using a single British or other approved test house to cover approval for home and export sales.

Single Payments

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East of 16 June, when he will be in a position to give the national outstanding total of single payment claims as at 31 May.

Mr. Portillo: I expect to be able to do so shortly.

Virus Reference Laboratory

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if any members of the virus reference laboratory of the public health laboratory services are now or have at any time been employed as consultants by Burroughs Wellcome.

Mr. Newton: I am advised that to the best of the knowledge of the public health laboratory service no member of the staff of the PHLS virus reference laboratory has ever been employed by or received payments from Burroughs Wellcome.

Cockroaches (Human Diseases)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the human diseases that are spread by cockroaches in the United States of America.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that although cockroaches may occasionally contaminate food, they are not "carriers" for any human disease. No specific information about the USA has been drawn to the Department's attention.

Resettlement Unit, Worsley

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is able to make an announcement concerning the future of the resettlement unit at Worsley, Manchester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: A review team consisting of representatives of voluntary and statutory organisations has recently submitted a package of proposals for the funding of schemes dealing with the resettlement of homeless people, to replace the services provided by the Worsley resettlement unit. The schemes would provide smaller facilities in Bury, Rochdale, Salford, Oldham, Tameside, Wigan, Leigh, Stockport, Bolton and Manchester. I have agreed these proposals, and detailed arrangements for local buildings and sites will now be considered. The resettlement unit will eventually close although no actual closure date has yet been arranged.

Health Authorities (Revenue)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes in revenue have been made in the Northern regional health authority and Sunderland district health authority during the last five years for which figures are available, both in cash and real terms and as percentages.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 31 March 1988]:* Following are the figures for total revenue expenditure and percentage changes over the latest available five-year period for the health authorities requested and the northern region as a whole:

Total revenue expenditure

	Per annual accounts	Percentage increase/(decrease)		At 1986-87 prices	Percentage increase/(decrease) at 1987-87 prices	
		On preceding year	On 1982-83		On preceding year	On 1982-83
	£000			£000		
Northern Regional Health Authority						
1982-83	18,694	—	—	22,364	—	—
1983-84	19,861	6·24	6·24	22,693	1·47	1·47

	Per annual accounts	Percentage increase/(decrease)		At 1986-87 prices	Percentage increase/(decrease) at 1987-87 prices	
		On preceding year	On 1982-83		On preceding year	On 1982-83
	£000			£000		
1984-85	20,834	4·90	11·45	22,798	0·46	1·94
1985-86	22,432	7·67	20·00	23,163	1·60	3·57
1986-87	22,735	1·35	21·62	22,735	(1·85)	1·66
Sunderland Health Authority						
1982-83	47,938	—	—	57,349	—	—
1983-84	51,432	7·29	7·29	58,767	2·47	2·47
1984-85	54,000	4·99	12·65	59,089	0·55	3·03
1985-86	57,580	6·63	20·11	59,457	0·62	3·68
1986-87	61,197	6·28	27·66	61,197	2·93	6·71
Northern Region[1]						
1982-83	520,838	—	—	623,084	—	—
1983-84	553,996	6·37	6·37	633,001	1·59	1·59
1984-85	586,852	5·93	12·67	642,163	1·45	3·06
1985-86	620,085	5·66	19·06	640,300	(0·29)	2·76
1986-87	664,666	7·19	27·61	664,666	3·81	6·67

[1] Includes the Northern Regional Health Authority, Sunderland and all other district health authorities comprising the Northern region.

Source
Annual financial accounts submitted to the Department by the health authorities concerned.

Notes to the table
1. The figures for the earlier years have been expressed at 1986-87 prices by the use of the gross domestic product deflator.
2. Capital expenditure and expenditure on family practitioner services is excluded. The latter expenditure is accounted for by family practitioner committees (FPCs) and cannot strictly be attributed to particular districts or regions. However, prior to 1 April 1985 the Sunderland health authority and eight other district health authorities within the northern region each had an associated FPC and those authorities' revenue expenditure for the years before that date includes elements in respect of the administrative expenses of FPCs which are not separately identifiable.

University Teaching Hospitals (Staff Salaries)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest available figure for the number of university teaching hospital medical and clinical staff whose salaries are not funded by the University Grants Committee; and what is the percentage change since 1980-81.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 4 May 1988]:* Figures are not available centrally which identify separately the numbers of clinical staff of universities attached to a teaching hospital whose salaries are not funded by the University Grants Committee. Those for part-time staff funded from all sources are aggregated, as also are the figures for whole-time staff whose posts are wholly or partially funded by other sources. Information published by the Universities Statistical Record indicates that in 1985-86 there were 1,387 whole-time clinical medical and dental staff of universities whose salaries were not wholly funded by universities, an increase of 109 per cent. since 1980-81.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many households *(a)* in total, *(b)* by tenure, and *(c)* by household type are expected to receive (i) more and (ii) less housing benefit by up to £1 a week, £1 to £2 a week, £2 to £3 a week, £3 to £4 a week, £4 to £5 a week and £5 plus a week as a result of the changes implemented on 4 April and amended on 28 April.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 6 May 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply given to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 7 June 1988 at column *561*.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of jobs to be created to administer the transitional protection scheme on housing benefit; whether those jobs will be temporary or permanent, and where they will be located.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 6 May 1988]:* The transitional payments unit will be located in Glasgow and the final number of staff required will be decided in the light of applications received. Appointments will be made on both a permanent and temporary and a limited period basis; the proportion of the latter has yet to be determined.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he will be taking regarding the letters sent to him by the hon. Member for Walsall, North regarding the cases of constituents who will be applying for the transitional payments over housing benefit increases; how soon the payments will be made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: In appropriate cases leaflet RR4—Housing Benefit New Rules—will be issued. This contains an application form for completion and return to the transitional payments unit in Glasgow. The first payments will be sent out in July when the unit becomes fully operational.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, of the 13 per cent. of his Department's staff who come from ethnic minority groups, which minority groups are represented and what levels of employment his Department's monitoring system shows them to have reached.

Mr. Stanley: The Northern Ireland Civil Service does not monitor the ethnic origins of its staff. It records details of the sex, religious affiliation and any disabilities of its staff. Details of the Northern Ireland Civil Service's composition in these terms are given in the second report of its equal opportunities unit, a copy of which is in the Library.

The figure of 13 per cent. relates to the Home Civil Service element of the Northern Ireland Office. This cadre is so small that the publication of information about ethnic monitoring groups which are represented and the grades they have reached would allow the ethnic origins of individuals to be identified. This would represent a breach of the confidentiality which is promised when the information is sought.

Fair Employment

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken to ensure that the monitoring system developed for his Department complies with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and of the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively.

Mr. Stanley: The remits of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission for Great Britain do not extend to Northern Ireland. However, the equal opportunities monitoring system set up by the Northern Ireland Civil Service was developed in full consultation with, and its introduction was welcomed by, the Fair Employment Agency and the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland.

As far as the Home Civil Service element of the Northern Ireland Office is concerned, the monitoring system developed complies with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission so far as is practicable with a group of only some 190 civil servants.

A survey to provide information on the ethnic origin of staff in the NIO was considered as part of a phased programme of ethnic surveys across the Civil Service, and the monitoring of recruits has continued since then. The Department also participates in annual surveys conducted across the Civil Service relating to the employment of women and of the disabled.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the number of civil servants employed *(a)* by the Northern Ireland Office and *(b)* by Northern Ireland Departments, and the total cost to public funds of each, in each year since 1974.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* Information for all of the years in question is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Available information is as follows:

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Northern Ireland Office							
Civil servants (thousands at 1 April each year)[1]	4·2	4·3	4·3	4·5	4·5	4·5	4·6
Total costs (£ million)[3]	70·5	76·6	80·3	89·5	98·1	109·1	120·2
Northern Ireland Departments							
Civil servants (thousands at 1 April each year)[2]	26·3	26·7	25·9	25·9	26·3	26·7	26·8
Total costs (£ million)[3]	190·0	205·4	213·8	229·1	249·9	267·5	282·0

[1] Includes industrial and non-industrial civil servants, casual staff, prison discipline staff and civilian search unit staff. Civil servants seconded to the Police Authority for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Probation Board are not included.

[2] Includes industrial and non-industrial civil servants and casual staff of Northern Ireland Departments, the Northern Ireland Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and Northern Ireland Commission for Complaints, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the former Northern Ireland Exchequer and Audit Department (now the Northern Ireland Audit Office).

[3] Total costs consist of pay costs and personnel overheads.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 22 June 1988

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Nicaragua

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid has been sent to Nicaragua by the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) on 20 June.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Expenditure

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table based on table 12.1 of the public expenditure White Paper, Cm. 288–II, with all figures converted to 1987-88 prices.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is set out in the table. The figures have been revalued using the Budget assumptions about movements in the GDP (market prices) deflator, which is assumed to rise by 5 per cent. in 1987-88, 4·5 per cent. in 1988-89, 4 per cent. in 1989-90 and 3·5 per cent. in 1990-91. All figures have been rounded to the nearest £1 million, so that the totals shown may not equal the sum of their rounded components.

£ million at 1987-88 prices

	1982-83 outturn	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*[1]1986-87 outturn*	*[2]1987-88 estimated outturn*	*1988-89 plans*	*1989-90 plans*	*1990-91 plans*
Schools	9.608	9,721	9,519	9,320	10,077	10,633	10,630	10,585	10,552
Higher and further education	4,970	4,999	4,987	4,790	4,823	4,904	4,866	4,828	4,760
Miscellaneous educational services research and administration	833	884	896	895	937	975	1,032	1,066	1,079
Research Councils and related bodies	594	608	617	623	639	657	669	672	649
Total Department of Education and Science	16,006	16,106	16,019	15,629	16,476	17,169	17,197	17,150	17,040
Central government									
Voted in Estimates									
Schools									
Building grants to voluntary and special schools	48	45	52	59	51	55	68	70	73
Music and ballet schools	5	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4
Assisted places scheme	11	18	26	32	40	49	53	54	54
City technology colleges	—	—	—	—	—	4	18	30	30
Higher and further education (including teacher training)									
Universities									
Capital	152	142	139	145	155	154	147	141	140
Current	1,580	1,567	1,540	1,490	1,485	1,562	1,614	1,613	1,594
Voluntary and direct grant institutions									
Capital	5	5	6	5	5	7	6	5	5
Current	108	106	97	93	92	95	93	89	89
Adult education	14	15	15	16	16	16	17	16	16
Postgraduate awards to humanities students and other student awards	8	5	5	4	5	6	5	5	5
Miscellaneous services, research and administration									
Youth service	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Research programme and other education services	19	23	24	25	24	27	45	68	74
Administration and inspection costs	41	54	55	56	57	58	65	63	62
Compensation payments	5	5	6	6	7	7	7	7	7
Research Councils etc.									
Capital	96	91	89	97	97	93	85	99	76
Current (including postgraduate science awards)	498	517	528	526	542	564	584	573	573
Total voted expenditure	2,594	2,601	2,589	2,562	2,582	2,703	2,812	2,841	2,806
Other central government Schools	−4	−5	−4	−4	0	0	0	0	0

	1982-83 outturn	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn	1985-86 outturn	[1]1986-87 outturn	[2]1987-88 estimated outturn	1988-89 plans	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans
Total central government	2,590	2,596	2,585	2,558	2,582	2,703	2,812	2,841	2,806
Of which: Total central government and capital expenditure	298	280	284	304	309	310	309	317	297

	1982-83 outturn	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn	1985-86 outturn	[1]1986-87 outturn	[2]1987-88 estimated outturn	1988-89 plans	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans
Local authorities									
Relevant current spending									
Schools									
Under fives	345	355	380	380	414	441	443	454	459
Primary schools	2,950	2,898	2,855	2,832	3,140	3,370	3,403	3,469	3,505
Secondary schools	4,452	4,482	4,434	4,283	4,678	4,957	4,895	4,796	4,751
Special schools	480	495	496	501	527	544	546	538	533
Meals and milk	516	511	492	472	475	469	431	414	400
Transport	232	235	229	226	221	213	205	203	203
Non-maintained school fees	144	141	139	127	125	125	123	118	113
Teachers' centres	29	28	32	34	37	39	42	42	41
Child guidance	35	34	35	38	41	45	45	45	44
Pupil support	32	32	37	38	38	38	38	38	37
Higher and further education									
Advanced further education	765	763	769	783	788	780	774	778	781
Non-advanced further education	1,103	1,117	1,147	1,062	1,108	1,098	1,104	1,078	1,035
Adult eduation	96	103	107	110	117	123	125	126	126
Discretionary students awards and support	152	158	163	164	177	189	200	199	198
Miscellaneous services, research and administration									
Youth service	122	131	134	136	144	150	160	162	160
Recreational services and research	58	65	67	63	67	68	75	75	74
Administration and inspection costs	547	572	578	583	615	642	664	674	685
Total relevant current spending	12,058	12,120	12,094	11,832	12,712	13,291	13,273	13,209	13,145

	1982-83 outturn	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn	1985-86 outturn	[1]1986-87 outturn	[2]1987-88 estimated outturn	1988-89 plans	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans
Local authorities									
Non-relevant current spending									
Mandatory student awards[3]	840	880	855	770	738	742	733	728	721
Local authority capital[4]									
Schools	335	341	314	300	286	281	316	309	306
Higher and further education	146	139	144	148	138	134	50	50	49
Miscellaneous education services									
Youth service	15	12	13	12	12	12	8	7	7
Other education services	22	18	15	10	7	7	6	6	5
Total local authority capital	518	509	486	469	444	434	379	372	368
Total local authorities	13,416	13,509	13,434	13,071	13,894	14,467	14,385	14,310	14,234
Total Department of Education and Science	16,006	16,106	16,019	15,629	16,476	17,169	17,197	17,150	17,040

[1] The 1986-87 figures incorporate a distribution by sector of total current spending by local authorities based on their provisional outturn expenditure on education.
[2] The 1987-88 figures incorporate a provisional distribution by sector of total current spending by local authorities based on their budgets.
[3] Includes payments to public sector higher education institutions as reimbursements of fees for European Community students.
[4] Local authority capital expenditure figures are net of receipts attributable to education. They include provision for the Urban Programme.

Medical Research Council (Pensions)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what account he took of the current relative level of contributions paid by men and women in the Medical Research Council's pension scheme and of the Government Actuary's calculations as to the cost of a widowers' pension within that scheme when issuing guidelines to the Medical Research Council indicating that widowers' pensions should be funded by increasing members' contributions in order that the cost be shared by employer and employees.

Mr. Jackson: The Government's policy on implementation of the Social Security Act 1986 is that the cost of

introducing additional benefits to existing public sector pension schemes must be shared by the employer and the employees. We are still discussing with the Medical Research Council and the Treasury the appropriate basis for applying this policy to the MRC scheme, taking account of all the relevant factors including the current level of contributions paid and the Government Actuary's calculations. A final decision has not yet been reached.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Anthony Cavendish

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General when he expects to be in a position to give the final outturn of costs incurred in relation to the proceedings on Mr. Anthony Cavendish's memoirs.

The Attorney-General: I will not be in a position to give the final figure for the costs of this case until after the conclusion of the proceedings, which are still at the interlocutory stage.

"The Friends: Britain's Post-war Secret Intelligence Operations"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General why Her Majesty's Government have not sought an injunction to restrain publication of the book written by the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) under the pseudonym of Nigel West entitled, "The Friends: Britain's Post-war Secret Intelligence Operations."

The Attorney-General: The Government deplore the publication of books of this nature, and especially when advice from the D Notice Committee secretary has to any extent been disregarded.

As regards legal action, this is not a case of an author who is or has been a Crown servant, and taking that fact into account, together with the contents of this particular book, the Government concluded that an application for an injunction to restrain the book's publication would be unlikely to succeed.

"Spycatcher"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General (1) for what reason the Treasury Solicitor approached Messrs Nilsson and Lamon regarding their circular to British booksellers about the book, "Spycatcher"; what form the approach took; what warnings it contained about the risk of criminal contempt on the part of Nilsson and Lamon and on the basis of what legal precedents; how the Treasury Solicitor became aware of the circular by Nilsson and Lamon; what is his general policy towards issuing warnings to organisations and individuals about the possible criminal nature of their actions or intended actions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the implications for Her Majesty's Government's obligations under the treaty of Rome and the European Convention on Human Rights of his attempts to prevent paperback editions of the book "Spycatcher" being distributed to British booksellers; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: These questions relate to a letter which is referred to in an affidavit before the Judicial Committee of the House of Lords, which is currently hearing the Government's appeal against *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and the *Sunday Times* newspapers. It would therefore not be appropriate for me to comment upon it while the proceedings continue.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Rolls-Royce

Mr. Millan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has received a request from Rolls-Royce for launch aid in respect of the development of the RB211-524L engine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have received an application from Rolls-Royce for launch aid under the Civil Aviation Act 1982 towards the development of the RB211 family of engines including the RB211-524L. This is being considered.

Furniture (Fire Safety)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many written representations he has so far received on the subject of furniture fire safety regulations.

Mr. Butcher: Some 275 representations have been received.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what video or film evidence he has so far received concerning the furniture fire safety regulations; and if he will list the film or video producers in each case;

(2) if he has made any representation to the British Rubber Manufacturers Association in relation to procedure used during the fire safety test contained in the video sent to him by the association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* The British Rubber Manufacturers Association video contains comparisons of the fires in a number of suites which were identical apart from the fillings. Rapid ignition was ensured, for experimental and video recording purposes, by the use of the small crib, ignition source 4 of the British standard, although the acrylic velvet generally ignites readily from a match. The test burn showing the cover burning off a substitute non-combustible mineral wool filling demonstrates very forcibly the contribution that a burning cover as part of the overall construction can make to the hazard of fire in furniture.

I have made no representations to BRMA in response to this video.

We have also received some short sales videos relating to fire blocking or barrier systems produced in-house by the manufacturers concerned.

Steel Industry

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the levy per tonne set each year since 1973 on steel production for the ECSC budget; and how much was raised each year by the levy on production from *(a)* British Steel Corporation works and *(b)* private steelmakers.

Mr. Atkins: The ECSC levy is raised on the average value of the production of coal and steel by enterprises falling under the treaty of Paris. Details of the levy rate are as follows:

	Percentage
1973-79	0·29
1980-	0·31

Separate figures on the amount raised each year by the levy on production from the British Steel Corporation and private sector steelmakers are not readily available.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications the Government have made since 1973 to the Commission of the European Communities under article 56.2.*(b)* of the treaty of Paris for workers in the steel industry; how many of their workers were employed in *(a)* British Steel Corporation works and *(b)* private steel works; and how much was received from the ECSC budget for each sector.

Mr. Atkins: Since 1973, the Government have applied for ECSC contributions towards aid to be given under the iron and steel employees readaptation benefits scheme in respect of some 129,000 projected redundancies in the steel industry. Of these, some 102,000 were in respect of employees of the British Steel Corporation, and some 27,000 in respect of employees of private sector steel companies. To date, 85,173 former employees of BSC and 23,112 former employees for private sector companies have registered to receive aid under the Scheme.

The ECSC contributes towards the cost of the scheme retrospectively, and to date the Government have received £158,255,862 towards aid paid to former steel employees. Of this, approximately 76 per cent. was in respect of former BSC employees, and approximately 24 per cent. in respect of former private sector employees.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been Britain's contribution each year since 1973 to the ECSC budget by way of the levy made on steel production.

Mr. Atkins: The ECSC annual financial report provides figures on the ECSC levy revenue, broken down by industry and member state, only since 1981. The latest available figures are for the year 1986. The figures are as follows:

Levy Revenue from the United Kingdom Steel Industry in ECU

	Number
1981	11,122,803
1982	9,515,579
1983	12,661,061
1984	13,199,907
1985	13,838,549
1986	13,961,944

Electrical Appliances (Plugs)

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimate he has made of the cost to manufacturers of household electrical equipment of requiring the fitting of electrical plugs to their products.

Mr. Butcher: The cost of fitting plugs to household electrical equipment is subject to many factors, the details of which will be known only to the manufacturers. No Government estimate has been made of such a proposal and were it to be done it would require a substantial input from the industry.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what regulations oblige the manufacturers of household electrical equipment to fit electric plugs as standard; what comparable regulations exist in other member states of the European Community; and what plans he has to ensure a standardisation of the regulations.

Mr. Butcher: Many manufacturers of electrical equipment are marketing equipment with a fitted plug and the number s growing but there is no statutory requirement which would oblige manufacturers of household electrical equipment to fit electric plugs prior to sale.

There are no plans to impose such a requirement. The current legal position in other member states of the European Community is not at present available. There is no Community initiative to harmonise the national legislation governing the fitting of plugs to equipment.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many mentally disordered offenders are presently in prison in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 30 September last year, the most recent date for which figures are available, 315 inmates of prison department establishments in England and Wales were, in the opinion of medical officers, suffering from mental disorder of a nature or degree with would satisfy the criteria in the Mental Health Act 1983 for detention in hospital for medical treatment.

Civil Defence

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to improve current arrangements for dealing with civil emergencies in the metropolis.

Mr. John Patten: Following recent major emergencies the Home Office is looking closely at the effectiveness of our present arrangements for responding to emergencies anywhere in the United Kingdom and at the possibilities for improvements. Officials will shortly be issuing a consultation paper to explore the issues with the emergency services and other interested parties, including local government associations; the Association of London Authorities and the London Boroughs Association will be included in this consultation process.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are used in the compiling of lists of approved contractors and tenderers for work on civil defence facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Companies seeking inclusion on lists of approved contractors must first satisfy the Department that they are technically, financially and commercially able to perform the contracts for which they apply. The

Property Services Agency, which manages civil defence building projects on behalf of the Home Office, applies similar criteria.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to utilise private sector expertise in the hardening against nuclear electro-magnetic pulse of civil defence communications systems in both local authority emergency centres and regional government headquarters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The private sector has provided assessments of equipment resilience and advice on protection measures; we expect to continue to draw on such expertise.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to ensure that the new PABX telephone switchboard systems to be fitted in local authority emergency centres will fully meet all the operational requirements of such systems, including hardening against nuclear electro-magnetic pulse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Operational requirements for these systems have been prepared in consultation with local authority users, and an assessment of resilience against the effects of electro-magnetic pulse will be a requirement of the equipment specification.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what involvement Rainford Secure Systems has had in the drawing up of specifications for the new PABX telephone switchboard systems to be installed in local authority emergency centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: None, although before specifications were prepared, and in accordance with normal practice, information was sought from communications equipment suppliers, including Rainford Secure Systems, in order to establish the range of equipment and facilities likely to be commercially available.

Library Facilities (Prisons)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those local authorities which receive a lump sum and additional rate support grant for library facilities that are required to be made available to prisoners in Her Majesty's prisons; and if he will calculate the amounts for each of the past five years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As the hon. Member will be aware, the question of rate support grants is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. As far as the system for funding prison libraries is concerned, I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his earlier question on 28 January at column *305*.

Bullwood Hall

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the numbers of planned hours of education, and the numbers of actual hours of education for inmates at Bullwood Hall prison and youth custody centre in each week since 1 April; what is the reason for any discrepancy; and what plans there are to ensure that education classes at this establishment take place as planned.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the nine weeks following Easter, only 43 class sessions were made available to inmates out of a total of 125 sessions planned for the period. The establishment is in dispute with the Prison Officers Association regarding the level of prison officer cover for education classes and it is not possible to state when the matter will be resolved. The loss of educational facilities for inmates at Bullwood Hall is very much regretted.

Crime Statistics

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish a table showing the number of crimes committed with violence per 1,000 population in each police authority area of the country for the latest convenient period;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the number of robberies per 1,000 population in each police authority area of the country for the latest convenient period.

Mr. John Patten: Because the numbers of offences are relatively small, numbers of offences are recorded per 100,000 population. Those for 1987 are given in the table. Figures in this form are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (table 2.6 of the issue for 1986, Cm. 233); the issue for 1987 will be published later this year. Copies of this publication are held in the Library.

Table 2.6

Certain notifiable offences recorded by the police per 100,000 population by police force area

England and Wales 1987 Number of offences per 100,000 population

Police force area	*Violence against the person*	*Sexual offences*	*Robbery*
Avon and Somerset	256	42	44
Bedfordshire	370	43	51
Cambridgeshire	246	48	18
Cheshire	232	37	16
Cleveland	400	60	21
Cumbria	281	31	13
Derbyshire	264	49	14
Devon and Cornwall	201	42	12
Dorset	187	26	12
Durham	339	59	14
Essex	228	36	20
Gloucestershire	188	40	18
Greater Manchester	289	50	83
Hampshire	205	66	16
Hertfordshire	199	43	17
Humberside	583	92	30
Kent	199	43	16
Lancashire	208	51	13
Leicestershire	268	42	30
Lincolnshire	259	56	13
London, City of	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Merseyside	340	40	116
Metropolitan Police[1]	312	53	250
Norfolk	194	34	12
Northamptonshire	349	53	26
Northumbria	319	49	37
North Yorkshire	201	34	9
Nottinghamshire	602	104	47
South Yorkshire	318	55	26
Staffordshire	395	49	17
Suffolk	241	49	13
Surrey	215	41	13
Sussex	175	49	24
Thames Valley	200	55	24

Police force area	Violence against the person	Sexual offences	Robbery
Warwickshire	188	27	10
West Mercia	229	42	8
West Midlands	291	52	110
West Yorkshire	334	64	37
Wiltshire	291	50	18
Dyfed-Powys	223	60	8
Gwent	367	73	8
North Wales	310	45	13
South Wales	271	33	17
England and Wales	282	50	65

[1] Including City of London
n.a. = not applicable.

Police (Statistics)

Sir Peter Horden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the number of police officers per 1,000 population in each area of the country, excluding the number of officers serving at Gatwick airport from the Sussex forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is as follows:

Force	Police Officers per 1,000 population[1]
Avon and Somerset	2·18
Bedfordshire	1·98
Cambridgeshire	1·86
Cheshire	1·96
Cleveland	2·64
Cumbria	2·35
Derbyshire	1·96
Devon and Cornwall	1·95
Dorset	1·94
Durham	2·26
Dyfed Powys	2·07
Essex	1·92
Gloucestershire	2·25
Greater Manchester	2·69
Gwent	2·25
Hampshire	1·89
Hertfordshire	1·94
Humberside	2·32
Kent	1·96
Lancashire	2·29
Leicestershire	1·98
Lincolnshire	2·09
Merseyside	3·19
Norfolk	1·84
Northamptonshire	2·00
Northumbria	2·42
North Wales	2·09
North Yorkshire	1·95
Nottinghamshire	2·28
South Wales	2·40
South Yorkshire	2·27
Staffordshire	2·12
Suffolk	1·89
Surrey	2·18
Sussex	1·89
Thames Valley	1·86
Warwickshire	2·04
West Mercia	1·87
West Midlands	2·57
West Yorkshire	2·55
Wiltshire	1·97
City of London	159·60
Metropolitan	3·88

[1] Latest Establishments and mid 1986 population figures.

The figures are in the form requested, but do not allow for extraction for airport duties from forces other than Sussex.

Satellite Television

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what form of Government monitoring and control there will be over the contents of programmes beamed at the United Kingdom by satellite television.

Mr. Renton: British Satellite Broadcasting Limited plans to launch a three channel direct broadcasting by satellite (DBS) service for the United Kingdom in autumn 1989. This service will be regulated by the Independent Broadcasting Authority under the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984. Existing non-DBS satellite services are virtually all transmitted for reception and distribution via cable systems; and they are therefore subject to regulation by the Cable Authority under the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984 in the same way as other cable services. We are considering introducing legislation to extend the authority's remit to all non-DBS services transmitted direct to the home whether or not relayed by cable. Services linked from Europe may be made subject to rules currently being discussed in the Council of Europe and the European Communities. Finally, the satellite television services will be subject to monitoring by the Broadcasting Standards Council.

In all cases, regulation and monitoring is or will be undertaken by independent bodies. The Government have no wish or any plans to control any television services themselves.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether satellite television now being made for schools programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I am not aware of any satellite television service in the United Kingdom which provides schools programmes.

Prisoners (Rule 43)

Mr. Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present number of prisoners subject to rule 43 in prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 1 January 1988, the most recent date for which information is available, 1,916 male sentenced and unsentenced prisoners were segregated under rule 43 in prisons in England and Wales. Figures are not kept centrally for female prisoners.

Mr. Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in England and Wales that take only rule 43 prisoners.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No prisons in England and Wales take only rule 43 prisoners.

Prisons (Education Services)

Mr. Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of staff employed full time on education services in the following prisons: Wandsworth, Wormwood Scrubs, Brixton, Pentonville and Holloway.

Mr. Dougas Hogg: At the present time, the complement of full-time teachers seconded by the Inner London education authority to the five prison establishments in central London is 24·5 posts.

Prisons (Category A Prisoners)

Mr. Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of category A prisoners at present held in prisons in England and Wales who are serving a life sentence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 16 June 1988, there were 252 confirmed and 11 provisional category A inmates in penal establishments serving sentences of life imprisonment. In addition there were 14 confirmed and two provisional category A inmates serving sentences of youth custody for life or detained during Her Majesty's pleasure.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if his Department has evidence of misuse on any of the benzodiazepines;

(2) if he or his officials have had discussions with the United Nations officials involved with the United Nations convention on psychotropic substances regarding the reports of misuse of benzodiazepines in other countries; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs has recommended adding benzodiazepines to the list of drugs controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is evidence that some benzodiazepine drugs, particularly temazepam, are subject to misuse. Neither my right hon. Friend nor I, or Home Office officials, have had recent discussions with United Nations officials about the misuse of benzodiazepines in other counties, but we are kept fully informed by them about world trends in drug abuse. On 1 April 1986, in preparation for the United Kingdom's ratification of the United Nations convention on psychotropic substances 1971 and following consultation with the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, 33 benzodiazepine drugs, including temazepam, were brought within the controls of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 as class C drugs. We are keeping this classification under review.

Election Returns

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, he will list the names and constituencies of those candidates in the 1979, 1983 and 1987 general elections who failed to submit a return within the statutory period allowed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is given in the return to an address on election expenses which is published after each general election (HCP426(87/88) for the 1987 election, HCP130(83/84) for 1983 and HCP374(79/80) for 1979). In the 1983 publication, the footnote reference indicating that a return of expense had not been received was omitted in error for the National Labour Party candidate in the Ashford constituency.

Staines Police Station

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to replace Staines police station; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will make it his policy that any new police station for Staines will be sited in the town centre.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that Staines is high on the priority list of police stations to be replaced, but that no firm date for doing so has yet been set. The location of the new station will be determined after a thorough assessment of operational requirements and available sites.

Police (Nottinghamshire)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any further requests from the Nottinghamshire police authority for more policemen.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest application from Nottinghamshire police authority was received in May 1987 for 173 posts to be recruited over three financial years. On 18 May this year my right hon. Friend announced that he had approved 35 posts with effect from 1 June. The authority has been informed that he will consider the remainder of its application when he takes decisions on the next tranche of posts to be approved under the programme which my right hon. Friend announced in May 1986.

Religious Broadcasts

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will extend the remit of the Broadcasting Standards Council to cover religious programming; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The main purpose of the Broadcasting Standards Council is to act as a focus for public concern about violence and sex on television. Consequently, religious programmes are not likely to receive much attention from the council.

Misuse of Drugs

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to implement the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs recommendation that the prison department give urgent consideration to means of providing confidential but easy access to evidence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) on 29 March at columns *452-54*.

Mrs. Nannete Goodman (Passport)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will inquire into the circumstances in which Mrs. Nannete Ida Goodman of 12 Avenue terrace, Southend on Sea and whose date of birth is 5 October 1907, has not received her renewal passport for which she applied to Petty France on 19 April, despite her having explained the urgency.

Mr. Renton: The application has been traced, and a replacement passport was posted to Mrs. Goodman yesterday. The application form indicated an intention to travel during June or July for holiday purposes, but no specific travel date or destination were shown, and no indication of urgency was given. The application was not therefore given priority at the Passport Office.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

90. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he next plans to meet representatives of local authorities to discuss the changes in housing benefit.

Mr. Portillo: Officials meet regularly representatives of the local authority associations through the housing benefits standing committee, and its sub-groups, to discuss housing benefit matters. The next meeting of the standing committee is on 21 July 1988.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he has taken to remedy past inequalities in employment practices in his Department, in compliance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has adopted a programme of action in support of its equal opportunity policy including the following measures to promote positive action to assist women and ethnic minority staff:

Monitoring of recruitment has been introduced and managers are encouraged to utilise all possible advertising outlets to attract in particular applicants from ethnic minority groups, for example, through use of ethnic minority press and radio, youth clubs and local ethnic employment groups.

The Department participates in the Civil Service Commission's advertising campaign which aims to recruit staff from ethnic minority groups; and in the commission's national schools liaison network, as well as a continued commitment to schools liaison at a local level.

Promotion board monitoring studies, to identify barriers to the success of women and those from ethnic minority groups, are being carried out.

Specific developmental training for women from HEO grade and above is provided. The Department is reviewing the development of equal opportunity training for all grades including the nature and delivery of the training.

Job sharing and part time working is encouraged and publicised in departmental training for women in management grades.

A "keeping in touch" scheme was introduced on 1 June 1988 which will enable officers to maintain regular contact with the Department whilst taking career breaks for domestic reasons and assist in their eventual return to work.

On the wider front, as part of our equal opportunities initiatives we commissioned Isobel Allen's research study on women doctors, "Doctors and their Careers" recently published by the Policy Studies Institute. This compares the career patterns of male and female doctors. We will be discussing the findings with the medical profession and others involved in the training and development of doctors at two seminars in July and November, and will take such further action as is indicated.

Acute and Elderly Patients

Mr. Nelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will list the 10 lowest spending and the 10 highest spending health authorities on in-patient servies for acute and elderly patients; and what are the amounts so spent per resident in the areas.

Mr. Newton: I regret that comprehensive information on each health authority's in-patient expenditure specifically on acute or elderly patients is not collected centrally. However, from financial year 1987-88, the annual financial returns of health authorities will include a district-based analysis of hospital expenditure over a range of separate specialties.

Supplementary Benefit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims have been received in *(a)* the Greenock office and *(b)* the Port Glasgow office of his Department from former British Shipbuilders Ltd. employees about 13 weeks arrears of supplementary benefit; how many of these claims have been accepted; what was the average payment; and what were the reasons for refusal in each case.

Mr. Portillo: Local offices are not required to keep statistics of this kind. Some information on claims from former employees of British Shipbuilders Ltd. is, however, available from local unofficial records:

	Greenock office	*Port Glasgow office*
Claims received to date	650	554
Claims processed	650	385
Claims paid and average amount (where known)	350 @ 350	not available

Reasons for refusal. In the main claims have been disallowed because income exceeds requirements or capital exceeds £3,000.

Low-income Families

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to publish the low income families statistics for 1987.

Mr. Portillo: No. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 29 March at column *448* and my subsequent reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) on 19 May at columns *563-64*.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of persons in low-income families in Scotland (i) on supplementary benefit, (ii) below 100 per cent. of supplementary benefit and (iii) below 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit for each of the years 1979, 1981, 1983 and 1985, as reported for Great Britain in the DHSS low-income families tables.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 27 May 1988 at columns *413-14*.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table, extrapolating from his

Department's paper, "Households Below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis", showing the proportion of individuals and children below various income thresholds held constant in real terms and analysed by family type and economic status both before and after housing costs.

Mr. Portillo: It is not possible to project "Households Below Average Income" tables forward to later years on a reliable basis.

Ethics Committees

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give those district health authorities that have ethics committees along with any information he has on the qualifications of such committees; and if he will make a statement;

(2) to whom ethics committees in district health authorities report; if these reports are published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: All health authorities are required to have a committee to advise them on the ethical aspects of clinical research. The objectives and composition of these local ethical committees are described in circular HSC(IS)153 of June 1975, a copy of which is in the Library. The reports are not normally published.

Ambulances

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any proposals to change the national criteria on the replacement of National Health Service ambulances.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 12 May at column *241*. The review of purchasing policy referred to in that reply is expected to be completed later this year.

Drugs (Limited List)

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what have been the annual savings as a result of the introduction of the limited list of drugs available on the National Health Service in 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on 22 January at column *895*.

Leicester Night Shelter

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why Leicester staff of his Department have discontinued their practice of visiting the Leicester night shelter to take fresh claims.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) on 16 June at column *288*.

Further Education Courses

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the prescribed period between YTS terminal date and eligibility to start a further education course of less than 21 hours per week for a claimant in receipt of income support or unemployment benefit; and if he has any plans to change this period.

Mr. Portillo: A person starting an education course of less than 21 hours a week could receive income support immediately if he or she had been: on a YTS course for the previous three months; or on a YTS course or receiving benefit for at least three months out of the last six months.

Otherwise, a person must receive unemployment benefit, sickness benefit, or income support, for three months before starting the course. There are no plans to change this period.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the 25 million prescriptions for benzodiazepines in 1986 were repeat prescriptions.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available. Repeat prescriptions are not separately identifiable.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are being taken to ensure that represcription of benzodiazepines is done under controlled conditions.

Mrs. Currie: General practitioners are free to decide how best to issue repeat prescriptions to suit the needs of the patient. Many general practitioners already operate control systems which ensure the patients are regularly reviewed. We have made it clear in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" that family practitioner committees will be expected to review prescribing patterns in future.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will undertake a sample survey of benzodiazepines prescribing so as to obtain a profile of the patients taking these drugs, relating numbers to the period of time for which the drugs have been taken.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has in the past supported research into prescriptions for minor tranquillisers and investigations into techniques for the cessation of tranquilliser consumption but has no plans to undertake a survey of benzodiazepine prescribing.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his estimate of the number of long-term chronic users of the benzodiazepines; and what is the source of the estimated figures;

(2) what estimate he can give of the proportion of the 25 million prescriptions for benzodiazepines in 1986 which was prescribed to patients who had been taking the drug for longer than two to four weeks.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussion he has had with relevant medical bodies regarding controls on the use of benzodiazepines; and what conclusions were reached.

Mrs. Currie: Representatives of the Committee on Safety of Medicines had useful and informal discussions

with the Royal College of Psychiatrists prior to the issue of "Current Problems" No. 21. However, in recognition of the current concern about benzodiazepines, issues about the prescribing of these drugs are soon to be the subject of discussions between professional organisations and the chief medical officer.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in which areas of the United Kingdom leaflets approved by the local drug and therapeutic committee and warning about the risk of benzodiazepine addiction are being circulated; and what action is being taken by his Department to encourage the wider circulation of such leaflets.

Mrs. Currie: Leaflets and other literature approved by local drug and therapeutic committees are issued on local initiative, and information about them is not collected centrally.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the money provided by his Department for drug services has gone to help those suffering from addiction to benzodiazepines; and what steps are being taken by his Department to direct money to this area.

Mrs. Currie: Under the central funding initiative set up to develop drug misuse services, grants totalling £339,000 were made to four projects specifically for those dependent on tranquillisers. Each year funds are allocated to regional health authorities (£6·5 million in 1988-89) specifically for the development of drug misuse services. It is for health authorities to allocate these funds to individual services, since they are best placed to determine local needs. Many of the services financed from these allocations, and the other 184 projects funded under the central funding initiative, provide help for those dependent on tranquillisers.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if there is evidence of a change in the prescribing of the benzodiazepines following the notice sent to doctors by the Committee on Safety of Medicines in January which recommended restricted prescribing of these drugs.

Mrs. Currie: Official statistics about prescribing of benzodiazepines for the period following January 1988 will not be available until the beginning of 1989 at the earliest.

Hospital Management (Public Inquiries)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many public inquiries he has authorised into the management of individual hospitals in each of the past 10 years and of these how many were concerned with the management of surgical divisions within hospitals.

Mr. Newton: None.

Consultants

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many consultants were suspended from employment by health authorities; how long was the average length of suspension; of those suspended how many were subsequently dismissed from their National Health Service employment and with what compensation in each of the past five years; and how many of those so dismissed have continued to work in private practice.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not routinely collected.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to change the disciplinary powers available to health authorities in relation to alleged clinical or other misconduct by consultants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We are expecting a report shortly from the joint working party established in March 1987, to review hospital and community doctors' and dentists' disciplinary procedures.

Hospital Complaints Procedure Act 1985

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to lay a commencement order in respect of the Hospital Complaints Procedure Act 1985.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Hospital Complaints Procedure Act 1985 is now in force at National Health Service hospitals.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 18 January 1988]:* Directions on the complaints procedures to be operated in respect of complaints by hospital patients have been made. A copy of the direction and covering circular has been issued to health authorities and is available in the Library. Health authorities will be required to ensure that the procedures are brought into effect not later than 29 July 1988.

NHS Staffing

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a functional breakdown, showing numbers in post and grades, of staff of his Department in London dealing with National Health Service management and policy, and showing the formal means of communication with regional and district health authorities.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 25 May 1988]:* The functional breakdown requested, showing numbers and grades of staff, is given in the table.

The Department communicates formally with regional and district health authorities by means of health circulars and health notices. NHS Management Board members regularly meet NHS regional general managers and their teams; and staff in the Department and health authorities communicate on a regular basis within their own spheres of responsibility.

Staff in post by grade at 1 April 1988

Function	Grades 1/1A	2	3	4	5	6	7	Executive	Clerical and support	Total
Chief Executive and Personnel Director NHS Management Board	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	2	7
NHS Operations (Liaison with Health Authorities on policy, accountability and programmes. Purchasing and supply. NHS buildings. Estate and property management		1	3	1	16	21	80	191	69	382
Property Adviser to NHS Management Board (ungraded)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
NHS Personnel	—	1	1	1	5	1	22	56	30	117
NHS Planning and Information Technology	—	1	—	—	3	1	9	35	14	63
NHS Finance (Health Authority financial management and control. Management consultancy services for the NHS)	—	1	2	—	3	1	12	49	23	91
Second Permanent Secretary	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	4
Health and Personal Social Services Policy[1]	—	1	5	—	17	4	50	141	79	297
Family Practitioner Services	—	1	2	—	7	4	32	77	49	172
Medical Groups[2]	1	3	7	8	48	1	9	19	58	154

[1] Policy relating to: health issues; primary care; community services; hospital services; mental, maternity and child health; child care.
[2] Advice on health issues relating to: prevention and health promotion; children, disablement, and nutrition; primary care; mental health and illness; hospital policies and services; management, planning and community medicine; medical manpower; scientific services, equipment building and supplies; cancer; maternity and the elderly.

Note:
Figures include: 1. Professional staff (shown under equivalent grading level).
2. Staff seconded to the Department.
3. Staff with significant duties concerned with NHS management and policy though many have other Departmental responsibilities.

Spending Power

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish tables using the assumptions in his answer to the then hon. Member for Kensington of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *737*, but using expenditure and benefit figures appropriate for families in Bradford for which he has sufficient data, and with an additional column showing the extent of the differences that will result from the changes in benefit in April.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* The information requested is set out in the tables. It should be noted that the results are essentially hypothetical. They compare the post-reform position in April 1988 not with the actual pre-reform cash situation but with a hypothetical position which they might have been in, had the previous structure continued and been uprated on the assumptions in "Impact of the Reform Structure of Income Related Benefits" (October 1987). Second, the comparisons are based on average local authority housing charges in Bradford but do not reflect the wide variety of rents and domestic rates that people actually pay. Finally, the comparisons do not take account of the transitional cash protection arrangements announced on the 27 April.

Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988
Bradford Local Authority
Married couple with two children aged four and six

Earnings head	Tax	NI	FIS	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Free school meals	Free welfare milk	Net weekly spending power
60·00	0·00	3·00	28·70	14·50	19·98	17·40	8·62	5·87	5·85	2·55	1·83	93·40
70·00	0·00	4·90	23·70	14·50	19·98	16·15	8·62	5·47	5·85	2·55	1·83	94·85
80·00	1·22	5·60	18·70	14·50	19·98	14·90	8·62	5·07	5·85	2·55	1·83	96·28
90·00	3·92	6·30	13·70	14·50	19·98	13·65	8·62	4·67	5·85	2·55	1·83	96·23
100·00	6·62	7·00	8·70	14·50	19·98	12·40	8·62	4·27	5·85	2·55	1·83	96·18
110·00	9·32	9·90	3·70	14·50	19·98	10·88	8·62	3·70	5·85	2·55	1·83	93·49
120·00	12·02	10·80	0·00	14·50	19·98	8·80	8·62	2·89	5·85	2·55	0·00	91·47
130·00	14·72	11·70	0·00	14·50	19·98	5·50	8·62	1·59	5·85	2·55	0·00	93·27
140·00	17·42	12·60	0·00	14·50	19·98	2·20	8·62	0·00	5·85	2·55	0·00	94·78
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	14·50	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	96·43
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	14·50	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	102·83
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	14·50	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	109·23

New benefit system from April 1988
Bradford local authority
Married couple with 2 children aged 4 and 6

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
60·00	0·00	3·00	40·32	14·50	19·98	5·22	8·62	0·98	5·85	83·57	−9·83
70·00	0·00	4·90	34·65	14·50	19·98	3·64	8·62	0·00	5·85	83·44	−11·41

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
80·00	1·22	5·60	28·99	14·50	19·98	2·06	8·62	0·00	5·85	84·28	−12·00
90·00	3·92	6·30	24·37	14·50	19·98	0·77	8·62	0·00	5·85	84·97	−11·26
100·00	6·62	7·00	19·75	14·50	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	86·18	−10·00
110·00	9·32	9·90	16·67	14·50	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	87·50	−5·99
120·00	12·02	10·80	12·19	14·50	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	89·42	−2·05
130·00	14·72	11·70	7·71	14·50	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	91·34	−1·93
140·00	17·42	12·60	3·23	14·50	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	93·26	−1·52
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	14·50	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	93·26	0·00
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	14·50	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	102·83	0·00
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	14·50	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	109·23	0·00

Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988
Bradford Local Authority
Married couple with 3 children aged 3, 8 and 11

Earnings head	Tax	NI	FIS	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Free school meals	Free welfare milk	Net weekly spending power
60·00	0·00	3·00	32·90	21·75	19·98	18·44	8·62	6·20	5·85	5·10	1·83	108·77
70·00	0·00	4·90	30·50	21·75	19·98	16·54	8·62	5·60	5·85	5·10	1·83	111·97
80·00	1·22	5·60	25·50	21·75	19·98	15·29	8·62	5·20	5·85	5·10	1·83	113·40
90·00	3·92	6·30	20·50	21·75	19·98	14·04	8·62	4·80	5·85	5·10	1·83	113·35
100·00	6·62	7·00	15·50	21·75	19·98	12·79	8·62	4·40	5·85	5·10	1·83	113·30
110·00	9·32	9·90	10·50	21·75	19·98	11·39	8·62	3·91	5·85	5·10	1·83	110·81
120·00	12·02	10·80	5·50	21·75	19·98	9·74	8·62	3·26	5·85	5·10	1·83	109·91
130·00	14·72	11·70	0·50	21·75	19·98	8·09	8·62	2·61	5·85	5·10	1·83	109·01
140·00	17·42	12·60	0·00	21·75	19·98	4·96	8·62	1·37	5·85	5·10	0·00	108·71
150·00	20·12	13·50	0·00	21·75	19·98	1·66	8·62	0·00	5·85	5·10	0·00	110·44
160·00	22·82	14·40	0·00	21·75	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	2·55	0·00	112·63
170·00	25·52	15·30	0·00	21·75	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	0·00	0·00	116·48

New benefit system from April 1988
Bradford Local Authority
Married couple with 3 children aged 3, 8 and 11

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
60·00	0·00	3·00	51·72	21·75	19·98	3·56	8·62	0·00	5·85	99·58	−9·19
70·00	0·00	4·90	46·05	21·75	19·98	1·98	8·62	0·00	5·85	100·43	−11·54
80·00	1·22	5·60	40·39	21·75	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	100·87	−12·53
90·00	3·92	6·30	35·77	21·75	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	102·85	−10·50
100·00	6·62	7·00	31·15	21·75	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	104·83	−8·47
110·00	9·32	9·90	28·07	21·75	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	106·15	−4·66
120·00	12·02	10·80	23·59	21·75	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	108·07	−1·84
130·00	14·72	11·70	19·11	21·75	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	109·99	+0·98
140·00	17·42	12·60	14·63	21·75	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	111·91	+3·20
150·00	20·12	13·50	10·15	21·75	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	113·83	+3·39
160·00	22·82	14·40	5·67	21·75	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	115·75	+3·12
170·00	25·52	15·30	1·19	21·75	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	117·67	+1·19

Old benefit system at hypothetical rates April 1988
Bradford Local Authority
Single Person with 2 children aged 4 and 6

Earnings head	Tax	NI	FIS	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Free school meals	Free welfare milk	Net weekly spending power
60·00	0·00	3·00	28·70	19·40	19·98	16·18	8·62	5·48	5·85	2·55	1·83	96·69
70·00	0·00	4.90	23·70	19·40	19·98	14·93	8·62	5·08	5·85	2·55	1·83	98·14
80·00	1·22	5·60	18·70	19·40	19·98	13·68	8·62	4·68	5·85	2·55	1·83	99·57
90·00	3·92	6·30	13·70	19·40	19·98	12·43	8·62	4·28	5·85	2·55	1·83	99·52
100·00	6·62	7·00	8·70	19·40	19·98	10·92	8·62	3·72	5·85	2·55	1·83	99·05
110·00	9·32	9·90	3·70	19·40	19·98	9·27	8·62	3·07	5·85	2·55	1·83	96·15
120·00	12·02	10·80	0·00	19·40	19·98	7·19	8·62	2·25	5·85	2·55	0·00	94·12

New benefit system from April 1988
Bradford Local Authority
Single person with 2 children aged 4 and 6

Earnings head	Tax	NI	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebate	Fares to work	Net weekly spending power	Difference between systems
60·00	0·00	3·00	40·32	19·40	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	82·27	−14·42
70·00	0·00	4·90	34·65	19·40	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	84·70	−13·44
80·00	1·22	5·60	28·99	19·40	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	87·12	−12·45
90·00	3·92	6·30	24·37	19·40	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	89·10	−10·42
100·00	6·62	7·00	19·75	19·40	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	91·08	−7·97
110·00	9·32	9·90	16·67	19·40	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	92·40	−3·75
120·00	12·02	10·80	12·19	19·40	19·98	0·00	8·62	0·00	5·85	94·32	+0·20

Old tax and benefit system—assuming average local authority rent and rates for Bradford and a simple rescaling of April 1987 benefits to April 1988.
Lone mother with 2 children aged 4 and 6.

	a. Not working-after one year on benefit	b. Working part-time earning £20	c. Working part-time earning £40
Supplementary Benefit	45·93	30·89	14·35
Earnings	—	20·00	40·00
Tax	—	0·00	0·00
Nat. insurance	—	0·00	2·00
Fares to work	—	2·92	2·92
Rent	19·98	19·98	19·98
Rates	8·62	8·62	8·62
Housing benefit	26·88	26·88	26·88
CHB	19·40	19·40	19·40
FSM	2·55	2·55	2·55
FWM	1·83	1·83	1·83
Net weekly spending power	67·99	70·03	71·49

Benefit system from April 1988
Assumptions as in "Impact of reformed structure of income related benefits" October 1987
Average local authority rent and rates for Bradford
Lone mother with two children aged 4 and 6

(a) Not working after one year on benefit	£
Income support	45·35
Rent	19·98
Rates	8·62
Housing benefit	25·50
CHB	19·40
FSM	2·55
FWM	1·83
Net weekly spending power	66·03
Difference between systems	−1·96

	b. Working part time—earning £20	c. Working part time—earning £40
Income Support	40·35	20·35
Earnings	20·00	40·00
Tax	0·00	0·00
NI	0·00	0·00
Fares to work	2·92	2·92
Rent	19·98	19·98
Rates	8·62	8·62
Housing Benefit	25·50	25·50
CHB	19·40	19·40
FSM	2·55	2·55
FWM	1·83	1·83
Net weekly spending power	78·11	78·11
Difference between systems	+8·08	+8·08

AIDS

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in respect of tests of the efficacy of the Karpas AIDS cell test kit conducted by members of the public health laboratory service on 3 and 4 June 1987, what test slides, laboratory notes, and serum samples used in the test slides have been preserved; and where this material is now retained.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* I understand that the test slides were destroyed as is the usual practice. Laboratory notes transcribed to computer records, and serum samples, have been maintained at the Central Public Health Laboratory.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) why the report of the PHLS and DHSS evaluation of commercial anti-HIV test kits conducted by the virus reference laboratory displays at table C(3) results as to the efficacy of the Karpas AIDS cell test kit which differs in substantive detail from the signed interim report of the same evaluation, dated 8 June 1987 with regard to the description of an HIV seropositive serum sample testing as equivocal and a seronegative serum sample testing as positive; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what procedures in respect of the report of the PHLS and DHSS evaluation of five commercial anti-HIV test kits conducted by the virus reference laboratory resulted in the alteration of the data reported in the signed interim report of the evaluation, dated 8 June 1987, as compared with that displayed at table C(3) of the draft final report; and what the consequences of this alteration were in terms of the reported sensitivity and specificity of the Karpas AIDS cell test.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* The interim report was a summary which did not evaluate the findings in detail. The draft final report rested on the same data obtained at evaluation, but gave a fuller interpretation of it. A further evaluation has been offered.

Departmental Leaflets

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average length of time for supplying leaflets to inquirers at the leaflets unit in Stanmore; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* The average length of time for supplying leaflets is currently 10 weeks. Additional staff have been recruited in order to reduce the backlog.

Benefits

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update his answer of 14 July 1987, *Official Report*, columns *459-60*, on the value of the short and long-term rates of supplementary benefit for single non-householders, householders and married couples as a proportion of average net earnings for all males and manual males.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Scale rates as a percentage of average earnings of all males[1]

Uprating date	*Single non-householder*		*Single householder*		*Couple*	
	Ordinary rate	*Long-term rate*	*Ordinary rate*	*Long-term rate*	*Ordinary rate*	*Long-term rate*
November 1978	19·0	24·4	23·8	30·4	36·6	45·8
November 1979	18·3	23·7	22·9	29·7	35·5	45·0
November 1980	18·3	23·2	22·8	29·1	35·4	44·4
November 1981	18·4	23·4	23·0	29·3	35·8	44·9
November 1982	19·1	24·3	23·9	30·4	37·1	46·5
November 1983	18·6	23·6	23·2	29·5	35·9	45·0
November 1984	17·8	22·7	22·3	28·4	34·4	43·1
November 1985	17·6	22·3	21·9	27·9	33·8	42·4
July 1986	16·6	21·2	20·8	26·4	32·1	40·2
April 1987	15·6	19·9	19·5	24·8	30·3	37·9

Scale rates as a percentage of average earnings of manual males[1]

Uprating date	*Single non-householder*		*Single householder*		*Couple*	
	Ordinary rate	*Long-term rate*	*Ordinary rate*	*Long-term rate*	*Ordinary rate*	*Long-term rate*
November 1978	20·6	26·5	25·8	33·0	39·6	49·5
November 1979	20·0	25·9	25·0	32·4	38·6	48·9
November 1980	20·6	26·2	25·7	32·8	39·6	49·7
November 1981	21·0	26·7	26·3	33·4	40·6	50·9
November 1982	21·9	27·9	27·4	34·9	42·2	52·9
November 1983	21·4	27·1	26·7	34·0	41·0	51·4
November 1984	20·6	26·2	25·8	32·8	39·4	49·4
November 1985	20·4	26·0	25·5	32·4	39·0	48·9
July 1986	19·5	24·8	24·4	31·0	37·3	46·8
April 1987	18·5	23·6	23·2	29·4	35·7	44·7

[1] Net average earnings are gross average earnings less tax and national insurance contributions at the non-contracted out rate.

SCOTLAND

Community Charge Register

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce the procedures or restrictions that will be associated with the sale of names and addresses from the community charge register.

Mr. Lang: This matter is currently under consideration. I expect that an announcement will be made shortly.

Cervical Smear Tests

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions he has given to Lothian health board concerning its system of providing its general practitioners with postage to notify results of cervical smear tests to their patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Lothian health board has written to my right hon. and learned Friend's Department seeking guidance on the payment of postage costs incurred by general medical practitioners in notifying results of cervical smear tests to their patients. This matter is under active consideration.

Violent Crime (Knives)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will call for a report from chief constables on the use of Stanley knives or similar tools in crimes of violence; and if he will consider taking action to control the sale of such tools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. Restrictions on the sale of such articles could not be effectively enforced without due interference with their legitimate use by all kinds of people in all walks of life. It is already an offence to carry them in a public place with intent to cause injury.

Further Education (College Principals)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received since the publication of circular FE/65 as it relates to the defined working week and annual leave allocated to principals of Scottish further education colleges; and whether any of these supported the new conditions of service which will be implemented on 1 September.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations on behalf of three college principals and one deputy principal. Several representations have also been made by or on behalf of the Association of Principals of Colleges. None of these has expressed support for the new conditions of service relating to the contractual working week or annual leave entitlement.

Rating Reform

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in 1989-90 in any situation, any person

in a household will be responsible for the payment of the community charge which any other person in that household is liable to pay.

Mr. Lang: Under section 8(7) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 people who are married to each other and live together or, a man and woman who live together as if they were husband and wife, will be jointly and severally liable for their personal community charges. An amendment has also been made to the Local Government Finance Bill to make it clear that in the case of the standard and collective community charges where two or more people are liable, as would arise in the case of joint owners or tenants, they should be jointly and severally liable to pay the charges.

Hospital Management (Public Inquiries)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public inquiries he has authorised into the management of individual hospitals in each of the past 10 years; and of these how many were concerned with the management of surgical divisions within hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Consultants

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many consultants were suspended from employment by health boards; how long was the average length of suspension; of those suspended how many were subsequently dismissed from their National Health Service employment; with what compensation during each of the past five years; and how many of those so dismissed have continued to work in private practice.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on suspensions is not held centrally. The Scottish Home and Health Department is only informed of decisions to dismiss consultants where the individual concerned decides to appeal to the Secretary of State against dismissal. There has been only one such case in the past five years involving a consultant and in that case the appeal was upheld. A doctor dismissed by a health board, or any other NHS employer, is still permitted to undertake medical practice so long as he remains registered by the General Medical Council.

Electricity

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average domestic consumption of electricity *(a)* per head and *(b)* per household in (i) Scotland, (ii) the Strathclyde region and (iii) in Greater Glasgow for each year since 1974.

Mr. Lang: The figures requested for Scotland are set out in the table. Information on average consumption in Strathclyde region and Greater Glasgow is not available.

Average Domestic Consumption of Electricity in Scotland

Financial year	*Units (kWh) per head of population*	*Units (kWh) per household*
1974-75	2,216	6,676
1975-76	2,043	6,105
1976-77	2,060	6,102
1977-78	2,082	6,098
1978-79	2,146	6,213
1979-80	2,093	5,996
1980-81	1,986	5,632
1981-82	2,014	5,628
1982-83	1,936	5,366
1983-84	2,001	5,489
1984-85	1,944	5,265
1985-86	2,116	5,679
1986-87	2,134	5,652

Drug Abuse

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for dealing with problems relating to drug abuse in prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A range of security measures is used aimed at stopping drugs being smuggled into prisons. For dealing with drug abuse in prisons, medical examination on reception should identify drug abusers. They are counselled and educated as to the dangers of abuse, and physical or mental symptoms of withdrawal are treated as necessary.

Community Programme

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions have taken place between his officials and those of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations about the continued funding of present community programme projects in the community care fields; and what is the outcome of their discussions.

Mr. Lang: No such discussions have been held, but I am to meet a delegation including representatives from the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations today to discuss employment training, which will replace the community programme.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Manpower Services Commission community programme projects there are in Scotland which provide community care; how many people they employ; and what are the running costs of these projects.

Mr. Lang: This information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much Manpower Services Commission community programme money went into Scottish voluntary organisations during 1987-88.

Mr. Lang: £57·1 million (estimated).

Bail Hostels

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any proposals from local authorities to establish bail hostels in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No such proposals have been received. In October last year I commissioned from the Scottish Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders a study of the options which might exist for the provision of bail accommodation. The report of that study is now under consideration.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he established his programme of voluntary ethnic monitoring; what steps have been taken to progress that programme; what results were obtained from that programme; and why and when the programme is being updated.

Mr. Eggar: The diplomatic and aid wings participated in the Civil Servicewide survey on ethnic origins covering London, the south-east and East Anglia which took place between April 1986 and March 1987.

In the diplomatic wing, 77 per cent. of staff have responded to the survey. Some 2 per cent. of respondents have classified themselves as coming from an ethnic minority. A further 5 per cent. declined to classify themselves.

The response rate in the aid wing was 79 per cent. (84·8 per cent.) in the London and East Anglia survey) of which 5 per cent. classified themselves as coming from an ethnic minority.

The databases in both wings are updated regularly with details of new entrants, promotions, resignations and retirements.

The updated programmes will allow us to monitor recruitment, training, promotions etc. to ensure that we are meeting our obligations as a equal opportunity employer.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by what methods he monitors recruitment and training; and what have been the results of such monitoring.

Mr. Eggar: The diplomatic wing monitors the following aspects in the grades for which it has delegated authority to recruit directly:—

Gender
Ethnic origins
Geographic origins
Educational backgrounds (state or public school, university, college or polytechnic)
Educational qualifications
Effectiveness of recruitment publicity

Relevant details are drawn from application forms and ethnic monitoring questionnaires completed by individual applicants. Results in 1987 showed, for example, that of all recruits into the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in that year some 60 per cent. were women and 2 per cent. were from ethnic minorities.

The diplomatic wing monitors the quality and effectiveness of training by means of examinations and assessments of subsequent performance. Participation of officers in training courses is monitored according to age, grade, gender and ethnic origin by means of voluntary self-classification forms. Results have shown, for example, that in the financial year 1987-88 a total of 31 per cent. of participants in training courses were women.

The development wing monitors recruitment into those grades for which it has delegated authority to recruit directly on the basis of gender and ethnic origins. Relevant details are again drawn from application forms and ethnic monitoring questionnaires completed by individual applicants. Results have shown, for example, that the ethnic minority success rate in the majority of 1987 recruitment exercises were higher than the percentage of ethnic minorities in the working population. The recruitment of women has been monitored only since July 1987. In the second half of that year 79 per cent. of all recruits were women.

Participation of development wing officers in training courses is monitored according to gender only. Results have shown that in 1987 a total of 39 per cent. of participants were women.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which of the ethnic minority press he has advertised; and with what results.

Mr. Eggar: In 1988 clerical vacancies in the diplomatic wing have been advertised in "The Voice". This produced 78 out of a total 811 inquiries. Applications from this competition are still being processed. We also advertise in other newspapers with a large ethnic minority readership.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Eggar: As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State told the hon. and learned Gentleman in the reply given to him on 26 May we appointed equal opportunity officers in the diplomatic and aid wings in 1984. This month we appointed a new equal opportunity officer in the diplomatic wing who will deal exclusively with equal opportunity issues.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many, and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department, are women and from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Eggar: The table for the diplomatic and aid wings show the number of staff in post (counting part-time staff as whole units) broken down into five grade bands. The table also shows in each band the number of women and the number of staff who have identified themselves as coming from an ethnic minority.

Diplomatic Wing

Grade[1]	*Staff in post*[2]	*Women per cent.*	*Ethnic minorities per cent.*
DS 1-5	1,119	73 (6·5)	1 (0·1)
DS6-7	1,464	198 (13·5)	9 (0·6)
DS9	1,477	483 (32·7)	8 (0·5)
DS10 & below	2,260	1,300 (57·5)	66 (2·9)
Industrial	114	41 (36)	4 (3·5)
Totals	6,434	2,095 (32·6)	88 (1·4)

Aid Wing

Grade	*Staff in post*[2]	*Women per cent.*	*Ethnic minorities per cent.*
HCS 1-7	258	20 (7·8)	3 (1·2)
SEO/HEO	364	90 (24·7)	11 (3)
EO	255	102 (40)	14 (5·5)
AO & below	684	440 (64·3)	52 (7·6)
Industrial	—	— (—)	—(—)
Totals	1,561	652 (41·8)	80 (5·1)

[1] Includes Home Civil Service equivalent grades in the FCO.
[2] Includes staff at home and overseas at 1 May 1988.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to

improve equality of opportunity for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades of his Department, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

Mr. Eggar: As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State told the hon. and learned Gentleman on 26 May, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is pursuing the 1984 programme of action for women in the Civil Service.

As an equal opportunity employer we recruit nationally and from all sections of society. We shall continue to monitor the proportion of women members of ethnic minorities amongst those who apply to, and join the diplomatic service.

We provide training where appropriate for all members of the diplomatic service irrespective or gender of ethnic origin. We monitor participation on training courses by gender and grade.

We promote those members of the diplomatic service who have shown the ability to do the work of a higher grade irrespective of gender or origin. We shall monitor the promotion of women and officers from ethnic minorities.

The aid wing has similar arrangements.

Cyprus and Turkey

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to seek to arrange a joint meeting of the Foreign Ministers for Cyprus and Turkey and himself to discuss matters of common interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have no plans to seek to arrange such a meeting. The United Nations Secretary-General is working towards an early meeting under his auspices between President Vassiliou of Cyprus and Mr. Denktash, the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, as a prelude to the resumption of intercommunal negotiations. We support the Secretary-General's efforts to arrange this meeting.

Hong Kong Cattle Depot

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what steps are being taken to relocate the Hong Kong cattle holding depot as a matter of urgency in the light of the overcrowding and health hazards;

(2) what measures are being taken by the Hong Kong agriculture and fisheries department to improve the state of the buildings in the cattle holding depot;

(3) what steps are being taken to improve conditions at the agriculture and fisheries department cattle holding depot in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

(4) if he will make a statement on the conditions prevailing in the agriculture and fisheries department cattle holding depot in Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: Conditions at the agriculture and fisheries department holding depot at Ma Tau Kok are adequate. But the buildings which comprise the depot are old and the Hong Kong Government have begun renovative work which should be completed later this year. The depot is not overcrowded.

Average occupancy in the past year has been well within capacity. The cattle-holding areas are washed down twice a day. There is no evidence that the depot is a health hazard.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what records are kept of animals arriving and leaving the Hong Kong agriculture and fisheries department cattle holding depot.

Mr. Eggar: The Hong Kong Government agriculture and fisheries department maintain daily records of the animals arriving at and leaving the cattle depot.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the average charges to dealers using the Hong Kong agriculture and fisheries department cattle holding depot; and whether this covers provision of bedding and water.

Mr. Eggar: No charge is made if the cattle are to be slaughtered in a public abattoir. A flat charge of one Hong Kong dollar per head is made if they are to be slaughtered in a private abattoir. Because of the climate in Hong Kong there is no requirement for bedding. Water is provided as necessary.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make it his policy to impose full quarantine restrictions together with disease control and veterinary services, in the event of the Hong Kong cattle holding depot being an official agriculture and fisheries department quarantine station; and if he will make a statement;

(2) for how long animals have to stay at the Hong Kong agriculture and fisheries department cattle holding depot in order for quarantine to have the desired disease control effect; and who enforces this;

(3) if he will make a statement on the extent of veterinary services covering the Hong Kong agriculture and fisheries department cattle holding depot;

(4) whether he will make a statement on the reasons for, and the timing of, the declaration by the agriculture and fisheries department of Hong Kong of the cattle holding depot to be a quarantine station.

Mr. Eggar: Regulations governing the use of the cattle depot as a cattle quarantine station date from 1956. All cattle imported into Hong Kong for slaughter are segregated from local animals from the time of their arrival until their slaughter. While regulations allow imported cattle to be held in quarantine for up to 21 days their average stay, over the past 12 months, has been 4·4 days. Care of the cattle in the depot is under the supervision of trained staff and this is supplemented by regular inspections by a Hong Kong Government veterinary officer.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ensure that RSPCA inspectors will in future be able regularly to attend the Hong Kong agriculture and fisheries department cattle holding depot.

Mr. Eggar: The depot is managed and operated under the close supervision of a qualified veterinary surgeon. Routine visits by RSPCA staff are not required.

Mr. Alex Zelichenok

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last raised the case of the Jewish refusenik Alex Zelichenok of Leningrad with the Soviet authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Zelichenok's case has been raised by us on several occasions in the past. His name was included in a list of refuseniks about whom we are particularly concerned which was handed to the Soviet authorities last December. We shall be raising it again during Anglo-Soviet talks on human rights on 23 June in Moscow, when we shall be pressing for all Soviet citizens who wish to emigrate to be allowed to do so.

El Salvador

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the ambassador of El Salvador.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the ambassador of El Salvador informally on 15 June. I last met him on 21 June.

Hong Kong (Camps)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy not to keep any person for more than five years in a closed camp in Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: As part of their new policy towards Vietnamese boat people arriving in the territory, the Hong Kong Government intend over the next six to 12 months to liberalise the regime in the centres which will house all those accorded refugee status. Those arriving after 16 June who are not accorded refugee status will be detailed in closed centres without access to resettlement, pending their return to Vietnam as soon as internationally acceptable conditions for this are established.

Immigration Fees

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy, in the light of entry clearance fees being non-refundable, that where an applicant successfully appeals against refusal to grant a visa, the applicant will not be required to pay any additional fee.

Mr. Eggar: This is already current practice.

WALES

Homelessness

89. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give figures for the number of households accepted as homeless in Wales in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1987; and when he expects the number of households accepted as homeless in Wales to fall below the level recorded for 1979.

Mr. Grist: The number of cases accepted as homeless in Wales in 1979 and 1987 was 4,676 and 5,294 respectively. The 1987 figure represents an 11 per cent. decrease over 1986. It is impossible to predict when the number of cases accepted as homeless will reach the 1979 level. This will depend on social behaviour as well as availability of housing. I welcome the decrease in 1987 and hope that it will continue and I note that the 1987 figure was lower than the one for 1980.

Cancer Treatment Services

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish and give details of the proposals concerning the comprehensive study of all cancer treatment services, including the possibility of establishing a satellite radiotherapy centre in north Wales, by management consultants; when the health authorities will discuss and decide upon their proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: We propose to initiate a review of cancer treatment services provided for north Wales patients by north Wales health authorities and neighbouring English regional health authorities. When the review report is available we will consider it and take appropriate action.

Corporation Management Programme (Health Service)

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the draft corporate management programme for the Health Service in Wales following the consultation exercise in 1987.

Mr. Grist: As a result of the consultation exercise which my hon. Friend has mentioned, the corporate management programme for the Health Service in Wales is to be issued today. It details the work which must be undertaken by a whole range of interests to enable the health care services in Wales to adapt constructively to changes in the environment, so as to ensure the highest standards of care and value for money. The programme paves the way for more patients in Wales to receive the health care they need, when they need it and for that care to be of the highest quality. There is further evidence of our commitment to ensuring that the people of Wales receive first-rate health services for the years to come. A copy of the document is available in the Library of the House.

Regional Development Grants

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the monthly regional development grant applications on which he based his 15 month total quoted in his statement on the Valleys Initiative.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* The following numbers of applications are assessed to derive from the valleys programme area:

Date	*Number of applications*
1987	
January	45
February	51
March	70
April	48
May	50
June	43
July	58
August	42
September	36
October	62
November	50
December	98
1988	
January	117
February	91
March	472
	1,333

The review of the first quarter of 1988 serves to validate what I said at Welsh Grand Committee on 2 December 1987. Our regional policy will expand not contract.

Earnings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the proportion of full-time employees earning less than (i) £130 a week and (ii) £140 a week, when overtime earnings are excluded, for men and women separately, in each county in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* There are no figures available since April 1987. The figures both including and excluding overtime for April 1987 are as follows:

Full-time employees[1]

County	*Males*		*Females*	
	Percentage earning less than £130 per week	*Percentage earning less than £140 per week*	*Percentage earning less than £130 per week*	*Percentage earning less than £140 per week*
Clwyd	22·2	29·6	n/a	n/a
Dyfed (excluding Llanelli)	31·7	38·5	59·3	63·0
Powys	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Gwent	22·8	30·8	50·6	58·2
Gwynedd	35·5	42·4	62·8	68·1
Mid Glamorgan	24·6	30·8	58·4	64·1
South Glamorgan	24·8	33·1	54·1	60·5
West Glamorgan (including Llanelli)	21·8	29·8	54·4	64·9
Wales	25·4	33·0	56·1	62·6

Source: New Earnings Survey.
[1] Data are based on the pay (excluding the effects of overtime) of full-time male employees, and full-time female employees, on adult rates, whose pay for the survey pay-period was not affected by absence.

Full-Time Employees[1]

County	*Males*		*Females*	
	Percentage earning less than £130 per week	*Percentage earning less than £140 per week*	*Percentage earning less than £130 per week*	*Percentage earning less than £140 per week*
Clwyd	15·3	20·1	n/a	n/a
Dyfed (ex Llanelli)	24·0	31·7	57·8	61·5
Powys	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Gwent	16·7	20·2	49·0	55·8
Gwynedd	26·4	31·5	58·4	64·6
Mid Glamorgan	18·6	23·0	54·8	60·1
South Glamorgan	19·0	26·0	51·2	59·1
West Glamorgan (inc Llanelli)	16·4	21·8	52·9	62·2
Wales	18·9	24·2	53·4	60·1

Source: New Earnings Survey.
[1] Data are based on the pay (including the effects of overtime) of full-time employees on adult rates, whose pay for the survey pay-period was not affected by absence.

DEFENCE

House Sales

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the sale of surplus married quarters to service men through the discount scheme.

Mr. Freeman: The scheme for the sale of surplus married quarters at discounted prices to service personnel began on 1 December 1983. As at 26 May 1988, 1,430 married quarters sales had been completed, with a further 547 potential sales in the process of completion.

Strategic Defence Initiative (Polytechnics)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many contracts have been awarded to polytechnics in the United Kingdom by the United States Department of Defense for research in support of the strategic defence initiative; how many subcontracts have been awarded to polytechnics in the United Kingdom by existing strategic defence initiative contractors in the United Kingdom or abroad; and if he will list all polytechnics which are or have been involved in strategic defence initiative research and state the value of each contract.

Mr. Sainsbury: One polytechnic in the United Kingdom has been awarded an SDI research contract. It would be for that polytechnic concerned to decide whether to divulge publicly any information related to that contract.

RAF Leuchars

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to visit RAF Leuchars.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend has no such plans at present.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be in a position to make a statement on his policy toward ethnic monitoring exercises within the Army, the Navy and the Royal Air Force, respectively.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. and learned Member to my right hon. Friend's evidence to the Defence

Committee. The Committee's report (HC391) was published on 25 April, and we shall be responding to it shortly.

Search and Rescue Operations

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force pilots were assigned to flying duties in operational search and rescue helicopter squadrons in each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: It is not our practice to reveal numbers of aircrew assigned to specific operational roles. However, I can confirm that the search and rescue force is manned to requirement.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force helicopter pilots were under training for the search and rescue role in each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The information is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1979-80	14
1980-81	11
1981-82	19
1982-83	20
1983-84	13
1984-85	14
1985-86	18
1986-87	17
1987-88	13

RAF Prestwick

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the function of the air defence notification centre at RAF Prestwick; and what plans there are to change its role and manning.

Mr. Freeman: The air defence notification centre at RAF Prestwick co-ordinates civil and military flight plans in the Scottish air traffic region.

There are no plans to change its role or level of manning.

Short-range Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further discussions he has had with his European North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts about the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend last met his NATO European colleagues at the Eurogroup and Defence Planning Committee ministerial meetings in Brussels in May. I have nothing to add to the communiqués issued after those meetings, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Service Personnel (Discipline)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many members of the British armed forces have, since 1969, been convicted of murder or manslaughter while serving in Northern Ireland; and if he will give the name and date in each case;

(2) how many members of the British armed forces have been charged, since 1969, with murder or manslaughter while serving in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 February 1988]:* Since 1969, 23 members of the armed forces serving in Northern Ireland, including the UDR, have been convicted of murder. Five of these cases are currently the subject of appeals. A further 22 service men have been convicted of manslaughter. These figures cover offences involving negligent discharges of weapons where the victims were other soliders. It is not our policy to disclose details of individual cases.

Figures are not kept for cases where charges did not result in conviction.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many serving British soldiers have, since 1969, been convicted of indictable offences while serving in Northern Ireland, giving the name and date in each case.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 29 February 1988]:* Records of numbers of service men convicted of all indictable offences in Northern Ireland since 1969 are not available. The table shows the number of offences for which service men have been convicted between 1982 and April this year.

Northern Ireland
Offences—Service men found guilty after prosecution

Offences	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988 (to 30 April)*
Murder	1	—	1	1	6	1	—
Manslaughter	3	1	1	—	—	2	—
Assault/Wounding	64	44	27	37	51	54	20
Theft/Burglary/Robbery/Forgery/Fraud/Handling	54	44	75	47	25	53	14
Criminal/Malicious Damage	7	8	7	10	11	19	6
Firearms Offences	5	6	5	11	22	46	1
Disorderly/Riotous Behaviour	21	17	11	15	22	28	14
Possession of an Offensive Weapon	—	2	2	—	3	1	2
Wearing Paramilitary Clothing	—	—	—	—	4	—	—
Wasting Police Time	—	—	1	—	2	—	—
Blackmail	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Unlawful Carnal Knowledge	—	—	2	2	1	—	—
Kidnapping	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Offences Involving Animals	—	—	—	—	6	—	—
Unlawful Imprisonment	3	—	—	—	1	—	1
Indecent Assault/Behaviour/Exposure	3	2	3	3	1	5	1
Making a False Declaration	—	—	—	—	1	—	—

Offences	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988 (to 30 April)*
Drunken Driving/Excess Alcohol	61	54	47	41	60	56	16
Causing Death by Reckless Driving	1	2	—	2	1	1	1
Obstruction	2	7	—	1	3	—	—
Furious Driving	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Shoplifting	—	8	—	2	—	—	—
Misuse of Drugs	—	—	7	1	—	—	1
Obscene Phone Calls	—	—	—	5	—	—	—
Failing to Give Information	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Manufacturing Petrol Bombs	—	—	1	1	—	14	—
Collecting Information	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Member of a Proscribed Organisation	—	—	—	1	—	4	—

Offences	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Hoax bomb	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Gross indecency	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Diverting electricity illegally	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Going equipped for stealing	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Arson	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Hijacking	1	1	—	—	—	1	—
Resisting arrest	2	1	—	—	—	—	—
No television licence	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Rape	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Breach of Exclusion Order	—	—	—	—	—	5	—
Offences against Domestic Proceedings Act	—	—	—	—	—	2	—
Miscellaneous non-criminal offences	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Totals—offences for which service men convicted[1]	230	200	191	182	223	294	81
Service men convicted of above offences	—	—	110	106	147	161	61
Service men convicted of traffic offences	—	—	213	218	225	243	84
Total number of service men convicted	—	—	323	324	372	404	145

[1] Less traffic offences.

Nuclear Test Site (Maralinga)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the cost of decontaminating the area around the Maralinga nuclear test site in Australia; if Her Majesty's Government will contribute to the cost of this decontamination; if Her Majesty's Government will compensate victims of the nuclear tests at Maralinga in 1963; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 26 May 1988]:* Responsibility for the test sites has been a matter for the Australian Government since the 1968 clean-up operation. However, the two Governments continue to liaise closely on the future of the sites. No United Kingdom atmospheric nuclear tests were undertaken after 1958. The Government do not accept that the health of participants has been affected by the ionising radiation generated by these tests or the experimental programmes which continued until 1963. Compensation other than that already provided by the war pension scheme administered by the DHSS cannot therefore be justified.

Nuclear Weapons (Tests)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement as to what action the Government propose to take in the light of the recent House of Lords judgment on the applicability of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 in the context of radiation exposure and its somatic and genetic effects on soldiers participant in United Kingdom atmospheric nuclear weapons tests conducted by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 23 May 1988]:* The recent House of Lords judgment in the case of Mr. Melvyn Bruce Pearce was sought to resolve an important, but preliminary, legal point, and was to the effect that section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 does not constitute a bar to an action for personal injury damages in the particular circumstances of the case under consideration. Mr. Pearce is therefore free to proceed with a claim for damages through the courts. The decision whether or not to proceed with such an action is for Mr. Pearce to take in consultation with his own legal advisers. The Government, in the meantime, remain of the view that the radiological protection measures adopted during the United Kingdom's overseas nuclear weapons test and experimental programmes were effective.

Radiation Exposure

69. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to discuss possible

compensation with trade unions or representatives of those allegedly exposed to radiation during the course of their duties.

73. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to discuss possible compensation with trade unions or representatives of those allegedly exposed to radiation during the course of their duties.

78. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to discuss possible compensation with trade unions or representatives of those allegedly exposed to radiation during the course of their duties.

83. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to discuss possible compensation with trade unions or representatives of those allegedly exposed to radiation during the course of their duties.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 24 May 1988]:* My right hon. Friend has no current plans for any such discussions.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Agents

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what training he proposes to give to training agents to assist them in making assessments and drawing up appropriate personal action plans.

Mr. Nicholls: The Training Commission is funding a full range of provision to help training agents provide training for their own staff where this is appropriate. The training will follow the planned approach for employment training itself, with staff being helped to assess their own training needs, prepare a personal training plan and to take training leading towards vocational qualifications. As part of this commitment a series of special training events for training agents has been arranged over the next few months.

Child Care Facilities

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what will be the provisions for the development of supervised child care facilities for single parents participating in the Government's employment training programme.

Mr. Nicholls: The Training Commission will meet costs of up to £50 per week, per child if lone parents make arrangements for the care of their children with a childminder, nursery or creche which is registered with a local authority.

All travel costs over £5 a week incurred by the trainee including the cost of travel to the childminder, will also be reimbursed.

I expect most child care to be provided through existing facilities. However, training managers and providers will be able to set up arrangements for the children of parents training with them, providing the facilities are appropriately registered with the local authority.

Radiation Limits

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the terms of reference of the working group of the Health and Safety Commission, established to consider radiation dose limits in the United Kingdom; who are the members of the group; and when he expects it to report.

Mr. Nicholls: The terms of reference for the Health and Safety Commission's working group on ionising radiations are:

"To consider all matters concerning the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 and related radiation protection matters that are referred to it by the Health and Safety Executive or the Commission, and to advise the Commission."

The working group is due to report to the commission by the end of the year. However, it will send detailed reports to the commission on specific matters in the interim.

The members of the working group are:

Mr. E. A. Ryder—Chairman (Health and Safety Executive)
Ms. B. Bernard—National Union of Public Employees
Dr. R. Berry—British Nuclear Fuels plc
Professor K. Boddy—Newcastle General Hospital
Dr. R. Clarke—National Radiological Protection Board
Mr. A. Cunningham—Electrical Electronic Telecommunications and Plumbing Union
Dr. J. Gittus—United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Mr. B. Godfrey—Department of Health and Social Security
Dr. J. Hill—Ministry of Defence
Mr. F. Howell—Transport and General Workers Union
Dr. P. Roberts—Queen Elizabeth Medical Centre, Birmingham
Mr. G. Shaw—Lancaster City Council
Professor E. R. Davies—University of Bristol
Mr. W. L. Ross—Royal College of Radiologists
Professor J. Walker—University of Birmingham
Dr. J. K. Wright—Central Electricity Generating Board

Opencast Coal Mining

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, in the light of recent medical evidence about the effects of opencast coal mining operations on the health of local populations, the Health and Safety Executive proposes to exercise its powers to prosecute under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, section 3(1), in relation to the duty owed by employers in such undertakings to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that persons not in their employment who may be affected by their operations are not exposed to risks to their health; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The suggestion that opencast coal mining operations may have a significant effect on the health of local populations could only be tested by long term systematic epidemiological study. In the absence of medical evidence that there has been such a significant effect, no proposals have been put to me that regulations under section 3(3) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 are called for.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, in the light of recent medical evidence about the effects of opencast coal mining operations on the health of local populations, he will prescribe under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, section 3(3) the cases, circumstances and manner in which it shall be the duty of any employer operating an opencast coal mining undertaking to give to persons not in

his employment, who may be affected by the way in which he conducts his undertaking, prescribed information about such aspects of the way in which he conducts his undertaking as might affect their health; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive's mines and quarries inspectors carry out tests at selected opencast sites for the presence of airborne respirable dust which might affect the health of those on site and of the local population. These samples are then analysed to determine the presence of any respirable silica. The tests do not cater for the collection and analysis of non-respirable airborne dust. The procedure for such sampling was determined in close conjunction with the medical profession and is regularly reviewed. Inspectors consider each case to see what, if any, enforcement action is required under their statutory power.

Quota Working Group

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment to what extent the recommendations of the quota working group 1985 have been fulfilled.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in 1985 that he proposed to defer action on the working group's proposals relating to the administration of the scheme pending research suggested by the group into the disabled working population and its characteristics.

Research into employers' attitudes towards the quota scheme has been completed and the results will be published as soon as possible. Consideration is being given to the commissioning of a research project into the numbers and characteristics of people with disabilities in the working population in the light of a feasibility study completed last year.

My officials continue to promote awareness of the scheme through the employment service's disablement advisory service and its network of jobcentres.

Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Act

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to seek to amend the Sex Discrimination Acts and Equal Pay Acts.

Mr. Nicholls: We have already announced our intention to amend section 51 of the Sex Discrimination Act. We plan to introduce legislation as soon as parliamentary time permits.

The Equal Opportunities Commission has also put forward recommendations to amend the law. Its proposals are under consideration by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in consultation with colleagues.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applicants to industrial tribunals in *(a)* 1986 and *(b)* 1987 proceeded to a full hearing from a pre-hearing assessment.

Mr. Nicholls: The numbers are as follows:

	Number
12 months ended 31 March 1987	350
12 months ended 31 March 1988[1]	303

[1] Provisional figure.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applicants to industrial tribunals in *(a)* 1986 and *(b)* 1987 were warned by the chairman at a pre-hearing assessment that costs might be awarded against them.

Mr. Nicholls: The numbers are as follows:

	Number
12 months ended 31 March 1987	515
12 months ended 31 March 1988[1]	341

[1] Provisional figure.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applicants to industrial tribunals in *(a)* 1986 and *(b)* 1987 proceeded to a full hearing despite being warned by the chairman at a pre-hearing assessment that costs might be awarded against them.

Mr. Nicholls: The numbers are as follows:

	Number
12 months ended 31 March 1987	97
12 months ended 31 March 1988[1]	75

[1] Provisional figure.

Household Expenditure Statistics

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a table showing total housing costs, and separate sub-totals for rent, rates, water rates and other costs, for all households included in the income groups £100 to £125 a week and £325 to £375 a week, as reported in the 1986 family expenditure survey, table 5, included in expenditure items 1 to 4.

Mr. Lee: I am sending the hon. Member the information he requested. I am also sending a copy to the Library.

Disposable Incomes

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what was the aggregate disposable income in 1979, showing the median, the lowest and highest deciles, and the lower and upper quartiles for *(a)* all households in the United Kingdom and *(b)* for Greater London, in an adjusted form on the current basis, as if the housing benefit scheme had applied at that date, as provided for 1983 in the answer in the *Official Report*, 22 July 1987, columns *211-12*;

(2) what was the aggregate disposable income in 1979 and 1981, showing the median, the lowest and highest deciles, and the lower and upper quartiles, for *(a)* all households in the United Kingdom and *(b)* for Greater London, in an adjusted form on the current basis, as if the housing benefit scheme had applied at that date, as provided for 1983 in the answer in the *Official Report*, 22 July 1987, columns *211-12*.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to produce estimates from the 1979 or 1981 family expenditure survey on the same basis as those provided for 1983, in the *Official Report*, 22 July 1987, at columns *211-212*.

Agricultural and Factory Inspectors

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his statement on 2 December 1987 at column 1007 that there will be 40 additional agricultural and factory inspectors in place before April 1989, whether he will state the number of inspectors in each of these two inspectorates on 1 December 1987, 1 May 1988 and 1 June 1988; by what date the 40 inspectors are expected to be in place; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of inspectors in each inspectorate on the dates mentioned are as follows:

	Factory Inspectorate	*Agricultural Inspectorate*
1 December 1987	558	150
1 May 1988	541·5	150
1 June 1988	542·5	150

Some 30 successful candidates from a recent recruitment competition should be joining the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorates shortly and further recruitment of inspectors to both inspectorates is currently under way.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspectors had *(a)* resigned, *(b)* retired and *(c)* otherwise left the agricultural and factories Inspectorates since 1 December 1987 by (i) 1 May and (ii) 1 June; and how many additional inspectors had been recruited in the same period.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is as follows:

Factory and agricultural inspector	*1 December 1987-1 May 1988*		*1 December 1987-1 June 1988*	
	FI	*AI*	*FI*	*AI*
(a) resignations	13	0	19	0
(b) retirements	4	0	6	0
(c) otherwise left	1	0	1	0
(d) recruits	2	0	7	0

Note: Figures do not include inspectors returning from secondment or special leave, etc, those regraded or those transferring internally in HSE to and from the Inspectorates.

TRANSPORT

Lorries (Hazardous Chemicals and Waste)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for inspecting lorries carrying hazardous chemicals or hazardous waste to see that they are maintained and equipped up to British standards.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 as amended in 1987 and the Road Traffic (Carriage of Dangerous Substances in Packages etc.) Regulations 1986 are enforced by the police and the Health and Safety Executive.

Roll-on/Roll-off Ferries

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information he has about the minimum time it would take for a roll-on/roll-off ferry to capsize:

(2) what information he has about the expected time in which a roll-on/roll-off ferry would capsize in the event of collision.

Mr. David Mitchell: If a roll-on/roll-off ferry is loaded correctly, operated in a safe and competent manner, and does not receive structural damage in excess of that assumed in the internationally agreed standards, there is no reason why it should capsize.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the number of collisions in which roll-on/roll-off ferries have been involved for each year since 1983.

Mr. David Mitchell: The number of collisions in which United Kingdom roll-on/roll-off ferries have been involved for each year since 1983 is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1983	4
1984	4
1985	2
1986	3
1987	3
1988	0

In addition, since 1983, there have been seven incidents involving non-United Kingdom roll-on/roll-off ferries in collision with United Kingdom ships of other types.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration was given to the vulnerability of roll-on roll-off ferries to rapid capsize in determining the maximum evacuation time of 30 minutes under the passenger ship safety regulations.

Mr. David Mitchell: The 30-minute period prescribed to evacuate a passenger ship was first introduced by the 1960 international safety of life at sea convention, and has been repeated by successive conventions. The primary aim was to set a realistic target time in which to evacuate all the persons on board any passenger ship.

London Airports (Traffic Distribution)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to review his traffic distribution policy for airports serving the London area; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I have today written to the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority formally seeking the authority's advice on traffic distribution policy for airports serving the London area. A copy of my letter has been placed in the Library. With that advice pending, it would be inappropriate for me to consider introducing either of the existing deferred rules, covering frequency capping at Heathrow and peak hour priority for scheduled services at Gatwick. I expect to receive the authority's formal advice by July next year.

Ferries

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those recommendations of the

formal investigation into the Herald of Free Enterprise which *(a)* he has implemented, *(b)* he plans to implement, *(c)* on which he is still undecided and *(d)* over which he has no control.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 21 March]:* I have placed in the Library a list of the recommendations in the report of the court indicating the action that has been taken or is in hand.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Empty Dwellings

86. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the number of Government-owned empty houses and flats.

87. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a list of all Government Departments which own empty houses and flats and the length of time they have been empty.

88. **Mr. Fachett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any proposals for the use of empty Government-owned houses and flats.

Mr. Major: The Government are concerned to reduce the number of empty dwellings in its possession to the minimum necessary for operational requirements. Departments, therefore, are encouraged to sell the empty dwellings that are surplus to those requirements. According to annual returns made by departments to the Treasury, in 1987 there were 18,426 empty dwellings owned by Government Departments. The Departments owning these were the Ministry of Defence, Home Office, Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland departments, PSA, Scottish Office, Forestry Commission, Department of Transport, and the Welsh Office. Information on the length of vacancy of each dwelling would incur a disproportionate cost.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will not make it his policy to publish the upper and lower numerical levels in pounds sterling and the reference limits within which the Treasury and the Bank of England are seeking to operate in relation to other currencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Policy towards the exchange rate was set out in my right hon. Friend's Budget speech. The Government do not discuss the tactics they pursue in the foreign exchange markets.

Government Data Network

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether the Government data network will have spare communications capacity when it first becomes operational;

(2) whether, during the planning of future expansion of the Government data network, consideration will be given to developing opportunities for use of the Network's facilities by the private sector;

(3) whether, when the Government data network becomes operational, Government Departments will still be allowed to consider competing offers of services alternative to Government data network in order to meet their telecommunications needs;

(4) whether any spare capacity of the Government data network will be made available on a commercial basis to other Government Departments or with appropriate security safeguards to private concerns.

Mr. Brooke: The Government data network takes account of the current planned needs of the four initial users. However, because of the size of the Inland Revenue and DHSS applications, and the wide geographical spread of all four users, the network will be designed from the outset to facilitate rapid and easy growth and increased geographical coverage. Private concerns are not expected to become users of GDN.

Racal Data Networks Ltd. has to guarantee service levels and offer the GDN service at a lower cost than comparable public services. Departments will be free to compare alternatives to GDN to ensure best value for money. The GDN could be used to carry value-added services if Departments require these. The procurement of these services will normally be on a competitive basis.

ENERGY

Coal Workers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many applications the Government have made since 1973 to the Commission of the European Communities under article 56.2.*(b)* of the treaty of Paris for workers in the coal industry; how many of these workers were employed in *(a)* British Coal NCB deep mines, *(b)* opencast sites and *(c)* licensed mines; and how much was received from the ECSC budget for each sector.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A total of 13 applications have been made, one covering the years 1973 and 1974, and one for each subsequent year up to 1986. An application for the period 1 January to 28 March 1987 is expected to be made shortly. All the redundancies included in previous applications have arisen from the closure, partial closure or merger of British Coal deep mines. However it would involve disproportionate cost to calculate the number of workers included in the applications who were actually employed at British Coal deep mines, as opposed to the number employed at other British Coal units such as area services. No workers employed at opencast sites or licensed mines have been included in the applications.

Redundant Mineworkers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many former employees of British Coal who were employed at opencast sites have received payments made under the Redundant Mineworkers and Concessionary Coal (Payments Scheme) Order 1973 and 1978 and amending orders; what were the dates on which such payments were made; and what were the opencast sites at which such persons were employed giving their occupations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None.

Coal-fired Power Stations

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what applications or approaches he has had from

companies based in the United Kingdom or overseas for permission to build small, purpose-built coal-fired power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None. The consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is not required for the building of private coal-fired power stations.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to stipulate that any new small purpose-built coal-fired power stations must have advanced fluidised bed combustion techniques; if he will seek to ensure that any prefabricated parts in such stations are built in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is a matter for the generating organisations concerned whether they wish to utilise advance fluidised bed combustion techniques. All new coal-fired power stations must meet the requirements of HMIP for emission control.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Set-aside Scheme

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he intends to take to exclude the use of land for opencast coal mining from the terms of his set-aside policy.

Mr. MacGregor: Land used for opencast coalmining will not be eligible for set-aside payments under draft regulations shortly to be put to Parliament.

Whale Conservation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will press for measures within the European Community similar to those adopted by the United States of America which provide for trade sanctions against countries which ignore whale conservation measures.

Mr. Gummer: It has been widely recognised that the United Kingdom Government have taken a strong lead on the conservation of whales. We shall continue to do that and hope to have continued success working through the International Whaling Commission.

Pigmeat MCAs

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made with regard to the abolition of monetary compensatory amounts for pigmeat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The proposal is to remove 3·2 percentage points of the United Kingdom pigmeat MCA, leaving it at 1·7 per cent. and making it our lowest MCA. I have agreed this in principle, provided that the package remains as it was in Luxembourg.

Plant Testing and Seed Certification

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations have taken place with the potato seed trade in Scotland about the possible transfer of potato variety testing for distinctness, uniformity and stability from Edinburgh to Cambridge.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on Thursday 16 June, at column *231*, to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). At the meeting with representatives from the Scottish Crop Research Institute and Caithness Potato Breeders Ltd. on 28 July 1987, there was no disagreement that potato variety testing for distinctness, uniformity and stability should remain at Edinburgh. The report on plant variety testing and certification in the United Kingdom recommends the same.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what account was taken in calculating the saving of £42,000 of overheads to be achieved by transferring vegetable variety tests to Cambridge as against Edinburgh.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In 1987-88 the costs, including overheads, of vegetable variety testing for distinctness, uniformity and stability were estimated as £222,000 at Cambridge and £76,000 for the smaller number of species tested at Edinburgh. It was estimated that the extra cost of transferring all the work to Cambridge would be just under £35,000—a net saving of about £42,000.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library copies of the detailed calculations by which the review on plant testing and seed certification systems arrived at its cost estimate for work which it is proposed to transfer from Edinburgh to Cambridge, showing, in particular, any assumptions about productivity or efficiency gains.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the replies given to him on Monday 20 June, Tuesday 21 June and today. The calculations were based on information provided by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the National Institute of Agricultural Botany.

Colorado Beetle

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the frequency, and dangers from the accidental import, of the Colorado beetle.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* Up to 100 or so Colorado beetles are found in the United Kingdom each year. The beetles enter the country in a wide variety of ways. Most are found on fruit and vegetables imported from the continent but others occasionally arrive on timber, vehicles and other materials. Thanks to the vigilance of the public in alerting the police or my officials when beetles are found we have managed to prevent this pest being established in our potato crops, where it could do substantial damage. It is very important that this vigilance continues.

Poisonous Algae

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he is investigating the effect of the poisonous algae on the marine ecosystem of the North sea and its effect on fish stocks; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he is investigating the causes of the presence of the poisonous algae found in the North sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* The algal blooms to which I believe the hon. Member is referring occurred off Scandinavian coasts and in the eastern North sea. The causes and effects of this phenomenon are being investigated by the responsible authorities in the countries concerned. We are keeping closely in touch with the progress of this work.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will increase research funds to be made available for investigating the cause and effect of the poisonous algae in the North sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* As indicated in my earlier reply the algal blooms which have occurred recently have not affected British waters. A substantial amount of research work on inputs into the North sea and their effects is already undertaken and there is no requirement for additional work on algal blooms to be given priority over other research activities related to the marine environment. The United Kingdom is contributing fully to the work of the scientific task force which is being established to enhance our knowledge and understanding of the North sea.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with Ministers of other Nordic countries about dealing with the poisonous algae in the North sea; what was discussed; whether any agreements were reached; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* An international scientific symposium has been convened by the Federal Republic of Germany to consider the growth of algae in the North sea and Baltic sea. This will take place on 23-24 June and representatives of the Governments concerned have been asked to participate; these are Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. The United Kingdom is not directly involved, but we are sending an observer to this symposium and will be following the proceedings with interest and concern.

Vegetable, Plant and Animal Matter (Imports)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the restrictions placed on the import of vegetable, plant and animal matter *(a)* into the United States of America from the United Kingdom and *(b)* into the United Kingdom from the United States of America.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* The United Kingdom has a wide range of controls on imports of plant matter made under the Plant Health (Great Britain) Order 1987, and on imports of animal matter in orders made under the Animal Health Act 1981, which are aimed at protecting this country against serious plant pests and plant and animal diseases being introduced from the United States and elsewhere.

Similarly the United States has a wide range of controls on imports of plant and animal matter, including those from the United Kingdom, made principally under the United States Code of Federal Regulations.

PRIME MINISTER

Chlorofluorocarbon-related Products

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will designate a Minister to take interdepartmental responsibility for policy towards the use and taxation of chlorofluorocarbon-related products in respect of the protection of the ozone layer, the needs of developing countries, ecosystem conservation requirements, and export potential.

Mr. Ridley: I have been asked to reply.

I have overall responsibility for policy on chlorofluorocarbons in consultation with other colleagues involved.

ENVIRONMENT

"London Under Stress"

15. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action his Department proposes to take in response to the report from the London Boroughs Association entitled "London Under Stress", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: It is for the London boroughs grants committee, for whom the report was prepared, and the individual London boroughs to decide what action to take.

Urban Programme

16. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public money is estimated to have been spent on the urban programme in England since 1979.

Mr. Trippier: Estimated public spending on the urban programme between April 1979 and March 1988 is £2,477 million, cash.

New Towns (Asset Sales)

18. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of the Commission for New Towns in disposing of the former assets of the new town development corporations.

Mr. Ridley: The Commission for the New Towns is conducting an extremely successful programme of asset sales which in 1987-88 yielded receipts in excess of £200 million. I expect asset sales in the current financial year to be higher than this. The success of the asset sales programme is a clear indication of the confidence which private investors have in the future of the new towns.

Sport

19. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to involve active or recently retired sportsmen and women in the administration of British sport.

Mr. Moynihan: On 16 May I hosted the first ever conference for sportsmen and women which enabled over 100 active participants in sport to have their say on a wide range of issues affecting the future of sport. A number of

top-level sportsmen and women are directly involved in three particularly important initiatives—first Steve Ovett, Clive Lloyd and Jeoff Thompson are members of my review group looking at sport and recreation provision in inner cities; secondly, Duncan Goodhew and Tessa Sanderson are working with me on my reveiw of sport for people with disabilities; and thirdly, Sebastian Coe and I have worked closely together on efforts to stamp out drug abuse in sport. Earlier this year I invited Chris Bailieu to be a member of the United Kingdom's delegation at the Council of Europe's sports committee.

35. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the levels of private sector sponsorship in sport over the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Between 1981 and 1987, the level of private sector sponsorship of sport rose from about £50 million to £170 million per year, a real terms increase of 150%. Over the same period, the number of companies involved in sponsorship rose from 700 to 1,000. Comparable figures are not available for the period 1978-81. I welcome this growth in the sponsorship of sport. It brings substantial benefits to sport at all levels.

Housing

20. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further measures he proposes to increase the availability of low cost housing for local people in rural areas.

Mr. Ridley: The Housing Corporation is aiming to double the present level of provision by housing associations in rural areas, and I have agreed that the Rural Development Commission should increase its funding of the National Agricultural Centre rural trust for its work in support of rural housing associations. We shall be making a full statement shortly.

21. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any fresh proposals to help reduce local authority housing waiting lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: It is for each local authority to decide the criteria for its waiting list. The findings of the study "Queuing for Housing", a report published by my Department in March this year showed that nearly half of those on current waiting lists no longer required local authority housing. It is clearly important, therefore, for authorities to review their lists and procedures regularly.

31. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what targets he is currently developing for housing starts in the north and midlands.

Mrs. Roe: My right hon. Friend does not have targets for housing starts. This is best left to the market. The Department's revised household projections for the period to 2001 were published on 15 February. I expect local planning authorities to consider these figures carefully in reviewing and extending their development plans.

34. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received calling for the construction of more new houses in the south-east.

Mrs. Roe: Records are not kept in a form which directly answers my hon. Friend's question. Whilst many representations have expressed concern at the pressures for development in the south-east, there is also concern about housing shortages in some areas.

50. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further action the Government are taking in order to ensure an adequate supply of low-cost housing in rural areas.

58. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further steps he will take to assist the provision of modestly priced rural housing.

Mrs. Roe: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer given today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key).

57. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to bring into use for housing purposes privately-owned empty properties in England and Wales.

Mrs. Roe: Our proposals in the Housing Bill for the deregulation of new lettings will enable private owners to let their property at market rents. This will encourage owners of empty private houses and flats to let them.

62. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy towards the provision of housing in the borough of Basingstoke and Deane under the north-east Hampshire structure plan, in relation to the demands of local commerce and industry.

Mr. Waldegrave: Hampshire county council's strategy towards the provision of housing in the borough of Basingstoke and Deane in relation to the demands of local commerce and industry was an issue raised at the examination in public held in November 1987 into aspects of the second alteration to the north-east Hampshire structure plan. My right hon. Friend will need to consider the report of the panel which conducted the examination in public before deciding whether to propose any modifications to the housing or employment provisions for the Basinstoke and Deane borough.

Smith Houses (Leicester)

22. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the reasons for the refusal of his Department to grant Leicester city council the extra money for the repurchase of Smith houses.

Mr. Ridley: For 1988-89, £20 million was reserved from the total available for housing investment programme allocations to assist authorities with particularly heavy obligations under the housing defects legislation. Leicester city council's bid for extra resouces was considered carefully but the needs of certain other authorities in the east midlands were considered to be greater.

Planning Law

23. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had any representations about the case of re-examining the presumption in favour of development in planning law.

Mr. Trippier: Yes.

Football (Crowd Behaviour)

24. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet representatives from the Football Association and the Football League to discuss the implementation of future measures to combat hooliganism and disorder.

59. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next intends to meet the Football League and Football Association; and whether he will be discussing new measures to combat football hooliganism for the forthcoming domestic season.

Mr. Moynihan: I shall discuss progress on existing measures and the possibility of further measures with the football authorities, on 5 July.

76. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will authorise progress on the February 1987 joint Government and Football Authority agreement on measures to combat football hooliganism; and if he will make a statement.

46. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the latest initiatives by his Department to improve crowd behaviour at English football grounds.

Mr. Moynihan: In February 1987 the Government and the football authorities reached agreement on a package of measures aimed at combating hooliganism at Football League grounds. Progress on some elements of the package has been good, particularly on the introduction of local plans for dealing with home and away supporters. But I regret that some clubs still have to put CCTV in place and the progress on the introduction of membership areas has been slow. I will be discussing progress with the football authorities on 5 July.

Urban Development Grant

25. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public funding has been devoted to urban development grant in each year since it was introduced.

Mr. Trippier: Expenditure on urban development grants was as follows:—

	£ million
1983-84	7
1984-85	15
1985-86	22
1986-87	22

Expenditure in 1987-88 is estimated to have been £23 million.

38. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications have been received from Liverpool city council for assistance under the urban development grant scheme since its launch; and how many of those applications have been accepted by his Department.

Mr. Trippier: Since 1982 my Department has received seven applications for urban development grant assistance from Liverpool city council. One scheme has been approved.

42. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has been spent in total on the urban regeneration grants since its launch.

Mr. Trippier: Eight urban regeneration grants totalling £40·7 million have been approved by my Department. Further approvals are expected to flow from applications received before the beginning of May. In each case payment of grant will be spread over the period in which the development is carried out.

51. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many schemes were approved over the lifetime of urban development grants and urban regeneration grants; and at what cost to public funds.

Mr. Trippier: A total of 289 urban development grants and eight urban regeneration grants have been approved at a total cost of £175 million. Further approvals are expected to flow from applications made by the beginning of May.

Improvement Grant Work

26. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the recommendations of the committee appointed by the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), as Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, regarding the financing of improvement grant work and preventing low-quality builders being involved in such work.

Mr. Trippier: The report of the working party is under consideration.

Environmental Monitoring

27. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it is intended to make any further changes in environmental monitoring procedures, and in particular of radioactivity in the environment, in the light of post-Chernobyl experiences.

Mr. Moynihan: The national response plan to cater for the consequences of nuclear accidents abroad incorporates new radiation monitoring arrangements. Details are set out in the HMSO booklet "The National Response Plan and Radioactive Incident Monitoring Network (RIMNET): A Statement of Proposals" published earlier this year, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Bail Hostels

28. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations on class C1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes Order) 1987 regarding change of use to bail hostels and similar residences for offenders.

Mr. Ridley: We have received one letter about bail hostels and the use classes order, from an area probation service, and I am aware of my hon. Friend's concerns about a proposed hostel in his constituency.

Cluttons Ltd.

29. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the directors of Cluttons Ltd; and what matters of mutual interest were discussed.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has had no meeting with the directors of Cluttons. I met the senior partner approximately 18 months ago when we discussed the management of PSA district works offices.

Development (Density)

30. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines he gives to planning authorities and planning inspectors on density of development.

Mr. Ridley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle).

49. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has, in the light of the overdevelopment of the south-east, to introduce a new planning circular.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle).

Pollution

32. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline new proposals for steps being taken to reduce pollution from motor vehicles, in the light of the recent report on increasing air pollution in London.

Mr. Moynihan: I outlined the Government's proposals for further measures to reduce motor vehicle pollution in my reply of 7 December 1987 to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington), at column 20-21. We expect these measures to achieve reductions in air pollution, despite predicted increases in traffic.

European Football

33. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will next meet the chairman of the Football Association to discuss the future of English participation in European football.

Mr. Moynihan: As I told the hon. Member in my answer on 18 May at column *941*, I met the chairman of the Football Association on 14 May together with the president of UEFA and the president of the Football League. I have presented to UEFA my report on the 1987-88 domestic season and the preparations for the European Championship finals. UEFA will now take its decision on whether English clubs should be re-admitted to European competitions at its congress on 24 June.

Homelessness

36. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of single people *(a)* under 18 years and *(b)* under 25 years who are homeless (i) in London and (ii) in England; and if he will introduce legislation to amend the Housing Act 1985 to include people under the age of 18 years within the category of homeless people who are in priority need and entitled to be housed by their local authority.

Mrs. Roe: Information about the ages of homeless single people is not available. Section 59 of the Housing Act 1985 does not specify any age limit for those who may be treated as in priority need for accommodation, and local authorities are therefore already able to house young people under 18 under the homelessness legislation when they judge them to be at risk.

37. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in England and Wales.

Mrs. Roe: The latest number of households temporarily placed in bed and breakfast accommodation by English local authorities, appears in table 4(A) of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England, Statistics for the first quarter 1988", which is available in the Library. For Welsh figures I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

39. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many young single homeless people there are *(a)* in London and *(b)* in England and Wales.

Mrs. Roe: The information is not available.

Urban Development

40. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much private money in total is estimated to have been attracted as a result of public funding for urban development and regeneration in the Merseyside and London Dockland development corporations; and what level of leverage that represents.

Mr. Trippier: Estimated private sector investment committed by the end of March 1988 to the London Docklands development corporation's area was £4 billion and to the Merseyside development corporation's area was £63 million. Total grant-in-aid paid to the two corporations over the same period was £564 million. This represents a leverage (defined as the ratio of grant-in-aid received to private sector investment committed) of 1:7.

60. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* jobs have been provided, *(b)* homes have been provided and *(c)* areas of inner-city derelict land have been reclaimed, as a result of awards under the urban development and urban regeneration grants during their lifetime.

Mr. Trippier: Urban development grants and urban regeneration grants approved to date will result in the provision of 30,800 jobs and 8,500 homes as well as bringing 1,380 acres of land back into use. Further approvals are expected to flow from applications received by early May.

44. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has been spent in total on the urban development corporation budget in each of the last three years.

Mr. Trippier: Urban development corporation grant-in-aid in the last three years was:

1985-86 outturn £ million	*1986-87 outturn £ million*	*1987-88 provision £ million*
82	89	133

Planning Control

41. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he is considering for changes in the local authority planning control system.

Mr. Waldegrave: At any time we have a number of improvements to the planning system under consideration. In particular, revised rules governing planning inquiries have just been made; we have laid regulations to give effect by 3 July to the European Community's environmental assessment directive; we published on 15 June a draft planning policy guidance note on local plans; and we shall be laying a revised and consolidated general development order later this year.

River Pollution

43. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what directions he has given to the chairman of the National Rivers Authority advisory committee with regard to the maintenance of river pollution standards subsequent to the introduction of the National Rivers Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: None. The privatisation legislation will put the existing system of quality objectives and standards on a statutory basis, and allow my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, to set such objectives in the light of recommendations from the National Rivers Authority. These arrangements cannot be brought into operation until the NRA has been established and the relevant pollution control functions have been transferred to it. Until then, such matters remain the responsibility of the regional water authorities.

Ozone Layer (Protection)

45. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last discussed the question of the protection of the ozone layer with his European Economic Community counterparts; and what was the content of the discussion.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 20 June 1988.

66. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take, in the light of the report from the Environment Committee, published on 15 June, in so far as it relates to damage to the ozone layer caused by chlorofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 14 June at columns *143-44*.

Development (South-West)

47. **Sir Peter Emery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what approaches and how many letters he has received from people and organisations concerned about the increased incursion of inappropriate modern buildings into the countryside of the south-west region of England; and what specific steps he proposes to take to preserve the rural heritage in this region.

Mr. Moynihan: In the year to 31 March the Department's south-west regional office received over 300 letters about planning matters in the region. Some would have referred to the subject raised by my hon. Friend. The Government's policy for the countryside is aimed to encourage growth and diversification in the rural economy in ways that will enhance the quality of life in rural communities and conserve the nation's countryside heritage.

Planning Appeals

48. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department currently provides to inspectors appointed to conduct planning appeals to assist them in carrying out their duties.

Mr. Waldegrave: Like local planning authorities, inspectors must have regard to guidance on planning policy published by my right hon. Friend, so far as it is material to the particular case. The Department also arranges training for inspectors on all aspects of their work.

63. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals he has allowed from developers every year for the last five years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The number of planning appeals allowed in each of the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Appeals allowed*
1983	3,633
1984	3,773
1985	5,477
1985-86	5,581
1986-87	6,208
1987-88	6,955

Local Government Finance Bill

52. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people and how many organisations have now made representations to him in favour of the Local Government Finance Bill.

Mr. Howard: A summary of the 1,271 responses received by 31 October 1986, when the consultation period on the Green Paper ended, was placed in the Library on 15 December 1986. Since June 1987, my Department has received some 10,400 letters, the majority of which are from private individuals. The letters contain a variety of comments on specific aspects of our proposals, or requests for further information, and for this reason do not readily lend themselves to an analysis of correspondents' views.

London Docklands Development Corporation

53. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much private finance has been attracted to the London Docklands development corporation as a result of Government urban regeneration and development funding; and what level of public/private sector leverage this represents.

Mr. Trippier: Estimated private sector investment committed by the end of March 1988 to the London Docklands development corporation's area was £4 billion. The grant-in-aid paid to LDDC over the same period was £396 million. This represents a leverage (defined as the ratio of grant-in-aid received to private sector investment committed) of 1:10.

Olympic Games, Seoul

54. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations about the safety of United Kingdom sportsmen and women competing in the summer Olympic Games in Seoul.

Mr. Moynihan: I replied to a question on the safety of competitors at the Olympic Games from the hon. Member on 25 January at column *51*, and I refer the hon. Member to the answer given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox). I have not received any letters on the subject.

83. **Sir Marcus Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the security arrangements being made for the British Olympic team in South Korea.

Mr. Moynihan: Security for the Olympic Games is primarily the responsibility of the South Korean Authorities. They are taking extensive precautions and both I and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs are confident they are giving this matter very careful consideration. We will continue to monitor the situation between now and the start of the games.

Litter Act 1983

55. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to review the effectiveness of the Litter Act 1983.

Mr. Moynihan: No, but we shall be monitoring the effectiveness of the City of Westminster Act which introduces a fixed penalty of £10 as an alternative to being prosecuted for an offence, to establish whether the concept is suitable for wider application.

Urban Development Grant (Brent)

56. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public funding has been awarded to Brent under the Government's urban development grant scheme since 1984; and how much private funding has been attracted as a result.

Mr. Trippier: Since 1984 two urban development grant schemes have been approved in Brent generating £2,125,000 of Government funding. These projects are expected to encourage private sector investment in excess of £7 million.

County Precepts

61. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which counties in England have *(a)* the highest and *(b)* the lowest county precept.

Mr. Howard: In 1988-89 Derbyshire has the highest county precept (297·5p) and Hereford and Worcester the lowest (185·0p).

Housing Investment Programme Allocation (Cherwell)

64. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Cherwell district council concerning its housing investment programme allocation.

Mrs. Roe: None.

Water Pollution

65. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to reduce pollution levels in the waters around the United Kingdom coastline; and what information he has about pollution levels in other European Economic Community countries with coastal waters in relation to the levels in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: The ministerial declaration of the second international conference on the protection of the North sea, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State chaired last November, contains a number of agreed proposals for reducing pollution of the North sea. The Department has since published a guidance note setting out the action the Government believe is necessary to implement the declaration. Discussions are in progress with water authorities and other interested parties with a view to drawing up an action plan for reducing inputs of dangerous substances via rivers and estuaries, and this will be reviewed at the third international conference to be held in the Netherlands in early 1990.

The Government have stated that actions implied by the declaration will be applied consistently throughout the United Kingdom and not just to North sea waters.

The North sea quality status report, prepared for last year's conference, provides the best assessment of the current state of the North sea. Copies of the ministerial declaration of the second conference, the Department's guidance note and the quality status report have all been placed in the Library of the House.

Rents

67. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what procedures he intends to bring forward to co-ordinate the work of his own Department and of other Government agencies with regard to rent levels in the event of the Housing Bill becoming law.

Mr. Waldegrave: We do not consider that there will be any need to alter arrangements for co-ordination as a result of the Housing Bill.

Consortium Developments plc

68. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he plans to meet the chairman of Consortium Developments plc to discuss his policy on housing development.

Mrs. Roe: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present for such a meeting.

House Sales (Basildon)

69. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many New Town Commission houses and council houses have been sold in Basildon up to the present time.

Mrs. Roe: At 31 March 1988 11,083 new town houses and 1,685 council houses had been sold in Basildon.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent advice he has received from public water authorities about the current state of nitrate pollution of public water supplies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Water authorities and water companies have advised me of 49 public water supplies currently containing nitrate which regularly exceeds a concentration of 50 milligrams per litre.

Planning Applications

70. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications for planning permission that fell outside county council structure plans he received in 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: Local planning authorities are required to notify my right hon. Friend of any planning application which would materially conflict with or prejudice the implementation of any of the policies or general proposals of the structure plan but which they intend to approve. Some 342 such applications were referred to him in 1987.

75. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications for 3,000 houses or more have been called in by him within the last 12 months or are now under consideration by him with a view to calling in; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: One such application was called in; and another is currently unde consideration for call-in.

Construction Industry

71. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the most recent set of construction figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Provisional figures for the first quarter 1988 are given in the table.

Construction activity in Great Britain—1st Quarter 1988
£m 1980 prices—seasonally adjusted

	Output[1]	*New orders*[2]
Housing		
Private	1,086	1,040
Public	177	152
TOTAL	1,263	1,192
Other New Work		
Private industrial	752	659
Private commercial	1,214	1,879
Public non-housing	837	1,090
All other new work	2,803	3,628
TOTAL New Work	4,066	4,820
Repair Maintenance and Improvements[3],[4]		
Housing R M and I		
Private	856	
Public	561	
Private Non-housing R and M	552	
Public Non-housing R and M	695	
TOTAL R M and I	2,664	
TOTAL All Work	6,730	

[1] Includes DLOs of LA's and PAs
[2] Private Contractors only.
[3] Includes housing refurbishment but non-housing refurbishment is included with new work.
[4] Orders for R and M are not collected.

These total output figures of £673 million are the best for 15 years and represent a 10 per cent. increase over the same period a year earlier. It has been largely achieved by the dominant influence of work for the private sector reflecting the success of the Government's economic policies.

The high level of contractors' new orders confirms that the healthy state of the industry will be maintained during 1988.

Arpley Meadows Dumping Site

72. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to meet representatives of Cheshire county council to discuss the future of the Arpley meadows dumping site.

Mr. Moynihan: I am arranging to meet representatives of Cheshire county council shortly.

Rating Reform

73. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were his estimates in June 1987 and in December 1987 of the total number of people who will be exempt from paying the poll tax; and what is the latest equivalent estimate.

Mr. Howard: In June 1987 we estimated that about half a million people would be exempt from the community charge. We estimate that decisions taken since then will result in exemptions for about an additional 25,000 people.

84. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning exemption from the community charge of full-time residential community volunteer carers, including community service volunteers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Government have received a number of such representations, which are currently under consideration.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning his proposals, announced on 17 November 1987 and 25 April to require 10 London boroughs to operate residual domestic rating for four years in addition to the community charge after 25 April.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* I have received representations from the London Boroughs Association, the Association of London Authorities, the City of London and from members and officers of a number of the boroughs affected.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date the Price Waterhouse report on administering the community charge was received; when he proposes to publish the report; what arrangements will be made for disseminating its findings; and if he will publish the cost of commissioning the report.

Mr. Ridley: The date on which both volumes of the final report were available was 16 June. I shall make both volumes available shortly and will distribute volume 2 of the report widely to local authorities as soon as this has been discussed with the local authority associations. The report is expected to cost £60,000.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if mature students paying the 20 per cent.

community charge with a non-student spouse, will be jointly and severally liable for their spouse's community charge at a rate of 100 per cent.

Mr. Ridley: All married and unmarried couples will be jointly and severally liable for the full amount of each other's community charge during the period that they live together.

Air Pollution

74. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department is monitoring the build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Mr. Moynihan: Although the Department does not monitor carbon dioxide concentrations directly, we keep in close touch with the United States National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration laboratories which maintains the definitive long-term records such as that at Mauna, Loa, Hawaii. The Department does monitor concentrations of many other important greenhouse gases (eg Methane, CFCs) in co-operation with NASA and University college, Galway, at a clean site in Western Ireland, which has been established with the co-operation of the Department of the Environment of the Republic of Ireland.

"The Way Forward"

77. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received following the publication of the document entitled "The Way Forward" by United Kingdom Nirex Ltd.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about Nirex's discussion document "The Way Forward". We have advised all respondents to make their views known to Nirex.

Housebuilders Federation

78. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of the Housebuilders Federation; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning, last met representatives of the Housebuilders Federation at their conference on 24 March, when a wide range of issues of interest to the federation were raised. Ministers keep in regular touch with the federation.

Housing Defects Act

79. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the working of the Housing Defects Act.

Mrs. Roe: We have recently modified the rules of the scheme to enable local authorities more readily to give appropriate help to owners of houses designated as defective. We have also increased the cost limits up to which grants for repairs are available, and we have allocated a further £20 million to local authorities with the heaviest obligations to help house owners.

Local authorities are now generally making good progress in implementing the legislation, but we are continuing to monitor the scheme closely, and to examine the scope for further streamlining.

Right to Buy

80. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will seek to extend the right to buy granted to council tenants to include tenants of privately rented properties without resident landlords.

Mrs. Roe: No.

Planning Inquiries

81. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to improve and make more cost-effective planning inquiries, particularly major planning inquiries; and if he will seek to introduce a power for inspectors at such inquiries to commission independent expert research not requested by parties to the inquiry.

Mr. Waldegrave: New procedure rules for planning inquiries were laid before both Houses on 16 June. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) on that date at columns *247-48*. A major objective of the new rules is to speed up decision times by introducing time tabling provisions for the service of pre-inquiry statements and for the date by which the inquiry should open. There are also now provisions for the exchange of evidence before the start of the inquiry. The rules are supplemented by a code of practice giving additional guidance on the action required from the various participants in preparing for a major inquiry.

The rules do not give inspectors a specific power to commission independent research, but there is nothing to prevent them from inviting submissions on a particular issue. In general, however, it is for the parties to an inquiry to decide the scope and content of their evidence.

Sport (Drug Abuse)

82. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will outline the national and international steps taken to implement the proposals outlined in the Government's report on drug abuse in sport.

Mr. Moynihan: Nationally, the Sports Council began implementation on 1 April of a new drug-testing regime which provides for:

(i) Testing to be undertaken by independent sampling officers
(ii) Random selection of competitors
(iii) Testing out of competition
(iv) Publication of adverse findings and action taken by governing bodies of sport.

Under this new regime, for which the Government allocated an additional £180,000 to the council's budget this year, testing has already taken place at over 100 events and 56 out-of-competition tests have been taken.

Internationally, I proposed to Council of Europe Sports Ministers in Athens on 2 June that a European convention should be drawn up. Such a convention would be legally binding on the states which ratified it. Among other things, it would reflect international agreement to the principles of an independent testing regime set out in the report which Sebastian Coe and myself produced last summer. I am pleased that my European colleagues accepted my proposal. Additionally, the Council of Europe's working group on effective anti-doping measures is considering amendments to the existing European

charter which will take account of the proposals set out in our report; the first permanent world conference on anti-doping in Ottowa on 26-29 June will bring sports organisations together to consider a worldwide charter in line with the proposals in our report; and the European sports conference which includes eastern bloc countries and which meets in Sweden in October will consider the adoption and promotion of out-of-competition testing.

Urban Development (Hull)

85. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public money has been given to Hull under urban regeneration and urban development grants since 1983.

Mr. Trippier: Since 1983 a total of £22 million of urban development and urban regeneration grants have been approved in schemes for Hull. In each case payment of the grant is spread over the development period of the project.

Council Properties (Wandsworth)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of empty council properties in the London borough of Wandsworth on 1 June.

Mrs. Roe: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 25 January 1988 at column *39*.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for licensing importers, transporters and disposers of hazardous waste.

Mr. Moynihan: Disposal of controlled waste is subject to licensing under the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Proposals for the registration of waste handlers were included in a consultation paper issued in September 1986. We expect to announce our conclusions very shortly.

Glanville Fritillary

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further plans he has for protecting the Glanville fritillary.

Mr. Moynihan: I cannot at present add anything to the answer I gave my hon. Friend on 7 December 1987 at column 16. I will, however, write to my hon. Friend to explain the present position.

Waste Imports

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement summarising the guidelines issued by his Department to local authorities on the subject of the import of hazardous and domestic waste from abroad.

Mr. Moynihan: Guidance on waste mangagement in respect of all controlled waste disposed of in this country is given in waste management papers issued by my Department. The guidance applies equally to imported wastes and wastes generated in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the policy of his Department on commercial agreements entered into by local authorities with companies allowing them to import waste from abroad to landfill sites in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: Local authorities may enter into contracts to dispose of waste provided the disposal complies with all conditions necessary to ensure the protection of public health, water supply and local amenity.

Planning Circular

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to introduce a new planning circular.

Mr. Ridley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar.

Inner-City Sport

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in the Government's review of inner-city sport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Since its official launch in March, the review group has had one full day's meeting and has undertaken a two-day visit to the west midlands region. During that visit the group looked at existing sport and recreation schemes and held discussions with business men, community groups and voluntary groups. Further meetings and visits are being arranged for the coming months.

Lead-free Petrol

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to ensure that petrol companies are doing enough to advertise the availability of lead-free petrol.

Mr. Moynihan: Petrol companies which have installed equipment to sell unleaded petrol already have a strong incentive to advertise its availability. The additional duty differential introduced in the Budget makes the new fuel highly attractive at about 6p per gallon cheaper than leaded 4-star. The work of the various organisations interested in the smooth transition to unleaded petrol is co-ordinated by the unleaded petrol group, which I chair.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the third report of the hazardous waste inspectorate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: On behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, I welcome the third report of the hazardous waste inspectorate which has been published today. Copies of the report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses, and are publicly available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

The report is concerned with standards of waste management for the year ending 31 March 1987. From

that time, the hazardous waste inspectorate has been incorporated in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the new title of HMIP: Wastes. HMIP will in future publish reports on its activities as a whole including those of HMIP: Wastes. The present arrangements are being maintained in Scotland for the time being.

While it is encouraging to note that the inspectorate found significant improvements in standards of waste management by comparison with its earlier findings, it is apparent that much remains to be done. The report particularly highlights the need for greater professionalism and training in the industry.

The Government have already initiated a number of measures intended to ensure that the progress so far made is maintained and that waste management practice will continue to improve. On 11 May regulations were laid before Parliament which will inter alia clarify the application of the disposal licensing system in England and Wales; they do, for example, require the licensing of oil and solvent recovery operations as recommended in chapter 5 of the report. A separate review of the licensing provisions for waste disposal in Scotland is at present in hand, with a view to making new regulations. The provisions of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 on waste will not, however, be affected. Regulations are planned to be laid before the summer recess to implement the EC directives on transfrontier shipment of hazardous wastes; the regulations will apply to special wastes and will ensure that waste disposal authorities for the areas covering both port of entry and disposal site receive prior notification of such shipments from overseas. This will provide valuable assistance to waste disposal authorities in carrying out their enforcement duties.

A revised version of waste management paper No. 4, which provides advice on the terms and conditions which should be applied to disposal licences will be published in September. Full publicity will be given to this up-to-date guidance, which the Government expect to be followed by both authorities and the waste disposal industry. Strict adherence to the guidance will avoid many of the unsatisfactory practices which the Inspectorate has found.

The problem of landfill gas discussed in chapter 6 of the report is currently being reviewed by the inspectorate and the Secretary of State will consider urgently with the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland any recommendations for improving control of gas generation at landfill sites.

We are also concerned by the inspectorate's comments in chapter 8 about waste management practice in some of the former metropolitan county areas, and we await the considered views of the inspectorate in the light of the comprehensive review they are conducting.

So far as concerns waste disposal plans required under section 2 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, the Department has written to all waste disposal authorities in England asking them to expedite their plans with the aim of completing them by October 1989.

The Secretaries of State for Social Services and Wales share our concern about the inspectorate's comments on hospital incinerators. Health authorities no longer have Crown immunity from the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and it is intended that the new controls on incinerator emissions associated with the proposed new air pollution legislation (see chapter 11) will apply to health authorities as to all other operators. Health authorities intending to dispose of waste by incineration will, as they upgrade their installations to meet these new emission controls, also be required to obtain and comply with the requirements of waste disposal licences, in accordance with the provisions of the new collection and disposal of waste regulations.

Work has commenced on the review of the special waste regulations for which we plan to issue a consultation paper in the autumn.

Finally the inspectorate draws attention to the proposals for primary legislation to improve the framework of control for waste management on which a consultation paper was issued in September 1986. Very careful consideration has been given to the responses to the consultation and we expect to be able to announce our conclusions later this month. Following similar consultations in Scotland in 1987, consideration is being given to equivalent action there.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* Information on the types of schools attended by senior staff is not available.

Local Government Finance Bill

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Government amendments to the Local Government Finance Bill were tabled during *(a)* Committee stage in the Commons, *(b)* Report stage in the Commons and *(c)* Committee stage in the House of Lords.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* The Government have tabled amendments to the Local Government Finance Bill as follows:

Commons Committee—218 amendments.
Commons Report—135 amendments.
Lords Committee—196 amendments.

These totals include consequential amendments.

Free Aluminium

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies are being conducted into the levels of free aluminium to be found in soil in the United Kingdom, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* Studies on the mobilisation of aluminium in United Kingdom soils and freshwaters are being conducted by water authorities and a number of research contractors on behalf of the Natural Environment Research Council and this Department.

Aluminium tends to be mobilised mainly in soils which have low or no acid neutralising capacity. Waters from these areas have higher aluminium contents than waters from calcareous areas but the contribution they make to the total aluminium content of public drinking water supplies is quite small.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Legislation

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the Northern Ireland legislation passed since the abolition of the Northern Ireland Parliament *(a)* in the form of an Act of Parliament applying to the Province alone and *(b)* as part of a statute applying to the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Stanley: As far as the first part of my hon. Friend's question is concerned, all, or most, of the provisions of the following Acts, passed since the abolition of the Northern Ireland Parliament in 1973, extend only to Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973
Northern Ireland (Young Persons) Act 1974
Social Security (Northern Ireland) Act 1975
Industrial Injuries and Diseases (Northern Ireland Old Cases) Act 1975
Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) (Amendment) Act 1975
Statute Law Revision (Northern Ireland) Act 1976
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) (Amendment) Act 1977
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978
Education (Northern Ireland) Act 1978
Judicature (Northern Ireland) Act 1978
Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978
Criminal Appeal (Northern Ireland) Act 1980
Statute Law Revision (Northern Ireland) Act 1980
Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) (Amendment) Act 1987

The list does not include certain Acts (such as the Northern Ireland Constitution and Constitution (Amendment) Acts 1973, the Northern Ireland Acts 1974 and 1982, and the Northern Ireland Loans Acts 1975 and 1985) which are of United Kingdom-wide extent, notwithstanding that they are principally concerned with Northern Ireland.

As far as the second part of the question is concerned, there are more than 500 Acts of Parliament that have been passed since 1973 that have application throughout the United Kingdom. Complete lists of such Acts are published in the annual volume of Northern Ireland statutes as table IV or V according to year.

Social Workers

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of whole-time equivalent social workers in Northern Ireland in each year from 1976-77.

Mr. Needham: The number of whole-time equivalent social workers (fieldwork and management staff) in Northern Ireland in each year from 1979 is as follows:

	Number
1979	582·54
1980	675·40
1981	747·38
1982	808·78
1983	827·45
1984	850·48
1985	874·02
1986	896·30
1987	927·91

The information is not available for earlier years.

Schools (Joint Projects)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Catholic and Protestant schools have applied during the last six months for grants for specific joint projects; how many have been accepted; how many rejected; on what grounds these rejections have been made; how many are still awaiting consideration; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since the introduction of the cross-community contact scheme in September last year, 103 school-based projects have applied for grant support, involving 242 schools drawn equally from the two communities. Of the 103 applications, 79 have been accepted, 12 rejected and 12 await a final decision.

Projects have been rejected for a variety of reasons: a number included proposals for capital expenditure which is not eligible for assistance under the scheme; others lacked a sufficient programme of ongoing contact.

I am greatly encouraged that the scheme has succeeded in stimulating and encouraging cross-community activities not only in schools but also in youth and community organisations.

Limavady

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether persons who made objections to the public inquiry into the Limavady area plan will be given an opportunity to comment upon the inspector's report before it is made public.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* No.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the inspector's report of the public inquiry into the Limavady area plan to be published.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* The inspector's report is likely to be published by the end of September 1988.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what planning applications have been *(a)* received and *(b)* approved for the construction of dwellings on land which is not presently approved for such development in the area surrounding Limavady town; and whether any such development works are presently underway on land which is not presently approved but was shown for such development on the area plan presently under consideration.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* Five planning applications have been received in accordance with article 17 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. Outline approval has issued for one site and detailed approval has been given for the construction of two dwellings. Development works are under way on one site.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what comments have been made by the Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland, in respect of the inspector's report following the public inquiry into the Limavady area plan;

(2) under what powers the Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland, acted in making

comment on an inspector's report following a public inquiry into the Limavady area plan before publication of the inspector's report.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* The Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) has not made any official comment on the inspector's report following the public inquiry into the Limavady area plan.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether Limavady district council will be given an opportunity to comment on the inspector's report which was made as a result of the public inquiry into the Limavady area plan before publication of the report.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* No. There is no statutory provision in the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 for such comment to be made.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Staff Recruitment

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will set out, for each Department of the House and for the service of the House generally, the procedure and responsibility for the recruitment of staff; and what interviewing procedure is followed to establish *(a)* the physical and *(b)* the mental capabilities of those applying to work.

Mr. Beith: The provisions of the House of Commons (Administration) Act 1978 require that, as far as is consistent with the needs of the House, the conditions of service of staff are kept broadly in line with those of the Home Civil Service. Recruitment procedures therefore follow those laid down for the Civil Service, selection being on merit and on the basis of fair and open competition.

In general, administrative responsibility lies with the Establishments Office acting on the instruction of Departments. Every candidate is required to complete a confidential health and character declaration form which is only made available to an interview panel when appropriate. Every applicant is notified of the Commission's policy on employment of disabled persons and the fact that it is an equal opportunities employer.

Interview panels usually consist of three or four staff of the appropriate grades, whose chairman is responsible for reporting to the appropriate departmental head with whom resides responsibility for appointments. Each panel member is advised of the need to avoid discrimination on the grounds of sex and race when interviewing and assessing the suitability of candidates.

Variations to this general procedure, which accommodate the usual health and character inquiries, include the following:

(a) Clerk's Department and Library

Assistant Clerks and Assistant Library Clerks are recruited through the Civil Service Commission. The respective Departments are represented on the interview panel and the recommendation is subject to the agreement of the respective head of Department in the normal way.

(b) Serjeant's Department

Doorkeepers are recruited from men and women who have completed a period of regular service in one of Her Majesty's forces. These required qualifications were endorsed by the Select Committee on House of Commons Accommodation etc. in its report of 1954.

(c) Refreshment Department

Vacancies for industrial staff of the Refreshment Department are notified to the specialist hotel and catering branch of the jobcentre located at Denmark hill and those interested are asked to complete an application form. Suitable applicants are interviewed by the personnel administrator and other staff as appropriate in that Department.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how many staff have been recruited by the Commission in each of the past five years.

Mr. Beith: The information requested is set out in the following table, each 12-month period running from June to the following May.

	Staff
1983-84	76
1984-85	141
1985-86	106
1986-87	122
1987-88	141

The figures include temporary staff and those recruited by way of the Civil Service Commission.

Staff (Insurance)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what insurance cover is provided for employees of the Commission.

Mr. Beith: In line with practice in the Civil Service the House of Commons Commission acts as its own insurers in respect of its staff and meets its liabilities from the House of Commons Administration Vote.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 23 June 1988

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Driving Offences

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General how many defendants in motoring cases have been acquitted during the last year due to legal technicalities; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The great majority of motoring cases are disposed of in the magistrates courts. As a general rule, magistrates are not required to give their reasons for acquitting defendants, and do not do so. The information that the hon. Member requires is therefore not available.

Debtors

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Attorney-General if he will give the latest figures for the numbers of county court actions against debtors.

The Attorney-General: In 1987 a total of 2·2 million claims for money only—default actions—were issued in county courts in England and Wales. Of these the great majority were claims in respect of alleged debt.

Wild Birds (Shooting)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General what action he is taking under section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, in connection with *(a)* the recent shooting of a goshawk in South Yorkshire, *(b)* the recent shooting of a peregrine falcon in the Yorkshire Dales national park and *(c)* the recent shooting of a goosander in the Yorkshire Dales national park; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No papers have been referred to the Crown Prosecution Service in this matter. If the hon. Member will write to me I shall endeavour to make inquiries and provide a more detailed reply.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Kampuchea

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the level of aid to Kampuchea in the current year.

Mr. Chris Patten: We do not give aid to Cambodia. We do, however, contribute to international programmes for the relief of Cambodian refugees in Thailand. In 1987, our contribution amounted to almost £1·5 million.

TRANSPORT

Disabled People (Station Platform Access)

Mr. Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will raise with the chairman of British Rail the case for improvements in the access to station platforms for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have no plans to raise this specific matter with the chairman. British Rail has its own special adviser on facilities for the disabled traveller.

British Airways (Transatlantic Air Route)

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority in relation to the Gatwick-Manchester-New York air route, operated by British Airways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I have no immediate plans to meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss the Gatwick-Manchester-New York air route. However, there have been complaints about the quality of service offered on this route, which I understand British Airways have undertaken to improve. Over the next few months the Civil Aviation Authority will be monitoring aspects of the performance of this service.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has carried out monitoring exercises in compliance with the code for the Commission of Racial Equality and Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what positive measures his Department has taken in accordance with the codes for the Commission of Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively, other than those specified in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West on 26 May, *Official Report,* column *281.*

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have encouraged women members of staff to become members of promotion and recruitment boards; provided (jointly with our trade unions) an experimental child-care scheme at a residential training centre, and a holiday playscheme.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. He serves both the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment other than the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by whom and when measures were taken to reduce under-representation of women in the higher grades and of black and Asian staff throughout his Department; and with what results.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The measures have been taken in accordance with Government policy, mainly within the

last three years, by the staff responsible for action in the areas concerned. There has been an increase in the number of women in the executive grades. It is too early to judge results in relation to ethnic minority members of staff.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what promotion and monitoring projects have been carried out by his Department, and when and with what results.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have been monitoring recruitment, part-time working and job-sharing, and special leave since 1987. The results so far are being analysed to see if discrimination might be occurring. We intend to monitor a series of promotion boards this year.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are women and from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Numbers and percentages of women are as follows, as at 31 May 1988:

Grade band	*Number*	*Per cent.*
1–4	1	—
5	6	7
6	3	3
7	34	5
8 and 9	196	10
10	756	18
11 and 12	5,630	73
Total	6,626	45

Numbers and percentages of ethnic minority staff are available, as at 31 March 1988, only for those staff who have responded to the voluntary monitoring surveys. Figures are as follows:

Grade band	*Number*	*Per cent.*
1–6	3	1½
7	9	2
8	32	5
9	27	3
10	46	2
11	121	6
12	97	3
Total	335	3

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to improve equality of opportunity for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades of his Department, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

Mr Peter Bottomley: Yes. The policy of equal opportunities is well established. Plans for improvements include proposals for expanding part-time working and job-sharing; setting up a keeping-in-touch scheme for people who have left for domestic reasons; reviewing training; participating in promotion and other monitoring projects to investigate possible areas of discrimination; and taking appropriate follow-up measures.

A3 (Hindhead)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to announce his proposals for the A3 at Hindhead.

Mr Peter Bottomley: Shortly.

Thornbridge Viaduct, M6

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the contract for repair of the Thornbridge viaduct on the M6 midland link motorway to be completed.

Mr Peter Bottomley: Middle of August 1988.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the daily contracted hours of work of his contractor working on the Thornbridge viaduct of the M6 motorway.

Mr Peter Bottomley: Twenty-four.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if any noise pollution measurements have been taken of the effect of early morning and late evening working of his contractor for the Thornbridge viaduct of the M6 motorway.

Mr Peter Bottomley: No.

Steam Railways

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has held with any of the officers of the preserved standard gauge steam railways in the United Kingdom during 1986, 1987 and 1988; and if he will list the occasions and the subjects discussed.

Mr. David Mitchell: I attended the annual conference of the Association of Railway Preservation Societies and I attended functions on various preserved railways by invitation. Officials of the Department of Transport have had various consultations with officers of preserved steam railways mainly about safety. A list could be prepared only at disproportionate cost.

Settle-Carlisle Railway

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has made any calculations of journey times for a return trip, including station stops for the operation of the Settle-Carlisle section of British Rail under a light railway order with a 25 mph speed limit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. It is for any potential new operator of this line to decide what service to offer and what form of statutory operating authority to seek for it. Operating the line as a light railway is only one of a number of options.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has held with the railways inspectorate regarding any safety criteria for the private and separate operation of the Settle-Carlisle section of British Rail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: There has been no need for consultations with the railway inspectorate. The safety criteria which would be applied if the Settle to Carlisle railway were to be privately and separately operated are those which are applied to any statutory railway in this country.

Rail Freight

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total proportion of freight traffic moved by rail as a percentage of the whole for each year from 1970; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The latest available figures are published in "Transport Statistics for Great Britain 1976-86", a copy of which is in the Library.

Road Vehicles

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what decisions were taken at his meeting with European transport ministers on 21 and 22 June in regard to proposed changes to European regulations concerning weights and dimensions of certain road vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State insisted that the existing derogation on drive axle weights should cover other vehicles. No decisions were made on this or other weights and dimensions issues.

Transport Problems (London)

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that consultants for the London assessment studies discuss with the boroughs participating in the studies any options they are considering for dealing with transport problems in the areas and that relevant papers are placed in the Library.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes.

Motor Vehicles (Safety)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he has any plans to review the fire resistance standards for car upholstery set out in BS AU 169 1978-1985 to meet criteria parallel to the new regulations for domestic household furniture which has to be introduced as of 1989-90;

(2) if he will extend more stringent regulations, to apply to roof linings, carpeting and sound insulating material in motor vehicles;

(3) if he will introduce, as a compulsory requirement for motor vehicles sold in the United Kingdom, the fitting of impact inertia switches to the electrical pumps of the fuel system;

(4) what recent Government representations have been made to car manufacturers with regard to the reduction of the risk of accidental fire;

(5) what recent attempts have been made by the Government to reduce risk of accidental fire in motor vehicles; and, in particular, what attempts have been made with regard to *(a)* redesign of fuse ratings and electrical circuits to incorparate low-powered equipment on separate low-rated fuse circuits and heavier high-powered equipment on separate high-rated fuse circuits, *(b)* redesign and strengthening of impact zones, *(c)* greater use of fire resistant plastic laminates in body construction, and *(d)* incorporation in motor vehicles of automatic fire fighting systems.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 26 June 1988]:* Over the past two years we have made representations to the manufacturers about the instances of vehicle fires. The response has generally been constructive. Manufacturers are currently examining information from Home Office reports complied from fire brigade data. They have also provided information about fusing methods and given assurances that existing fuel cut-off devices on vehicles fitted with high-pressure fuel injection systems are sufficient to prevent fire risk from this source. They are considering how best to obtain further information on under-bonnet car fires. Given the information and assurances provided by the manufactures on cut-off devices fitted to prevent fuel leakage from pressurised fuel systems, we have no plans to make the fitting of inpact inertia switches to such fuel systems compulsory.

The transport and road research laboratory is about to commission a short research programme investigating car electrical systems. This will include fusing arrangements and will identify low fire risk wiring methods. Any future action will depend on the findings of this research.

There are no plans to extend the strength of impact zones in relation to fire risks. The performance of cars is monitored through our accident investigation study. Shortcomings in the design of individual models are taken up with the manufacturer to rectify the problem in question. The fitting of automatic fire extinguishers could not be justified.

BS AU 169 is a test method to establish the burning rate of materials and does not differentiate between good and bad materials. The inflammability of car trim and upholstery is not a major cause for concern as the occupants of a car can escape quickly except in major crashes where the vehicle structure is severely distorted. In those instances, the slight delay in the spread of any resultant fire afforded by current fire resistant trim materials would make no difference to the occupants. We have no plans to ask BSI to review the test method or to introduce requirements for fire resistant materials in cars.

In the case of coaches, however, there is a risk as escape is not so straightforward if a fire has taken hold. For that reason, we have taken the initiative in getting provisional agreement on inflammability requirements for the interior of coaches included in an EEC directive. We will be making the new requirements mandatory at the earliest opportunity. The plastic laminates used in coach interiors will have to meet the fire resistance requirements laid down in the standard.

New Road Schemes

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Waveney on 14 June, he will consider adding *(a)* seasonal tourist use and *(b)* growth in population to the list of criteria for cost benefit analysis in new road schemes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* The Department's computer program for cost-benefit analysis of new trunk road schemes, COBA9, incorporates factors for seasonal tourist use, where appropriate. The Department has recently reviewed this issue, and its report, "Tourism, Leisure and Roads", published in October 1987, confirms that the special characteristics relating to the tourism and leisure industry are fully taken into account in reaching decisions on road schemes. Local population growth is taken into account in the preparation of local traffic forecasts used in COBA9.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

GCSE

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide a breakdown of the distribution to individual local education authorities of the additional resources for GCSE-related expenditure of *(a)* the sum for secondary school libraries and *(b)* the general allocation.

Mrs. Rumbold: The table gives the amount allocated to each local education authority within the education support grant for 1986-87 for the additional costs of books and equipment associated with the introduction of the GCSE. The subsequent distribution of these resources is the responsibility of the individual authorities. These amounts do not include provision within the LEA training grants scheme in 1988-89 of £15 million for in-service training related to the assessment of achievement including GCSE; nor do they include the additions to rate support grant in respect of GCSE-related expenditure, of £90 million in 1987-88 and £77 million in 1988-89.

Category XIII—E.S.G. paid 1986/87

GCSE		*Grant paid* £
301	Barking	30,100
302	Barnet	45,491
303	Bexley	48,160
304	Brent	34,523
305	Bromley	50,250
306	Croydon	60,760
307	Ealing	42,350
308	Enfield	51,653
309	Haringey	26,877
310	Harrow	33,110
311	Havering	53,900
312	Hillingdon	45,010
313	Hounslow	38,290
314	Kingston-Upon-Thames	24,500
315	Merton	27,025
316	Newham	36,346
317	Redbridge	40,530
318	Richmond-Upon-Thames	21,700
319	Sutton	34,553
320	Waltham Forest	48,160
427	ILEA	351,610
330	Birmingham	234,850
331	Coventry	65,170
332	Dudley	69,860
333	Sandwell	70,000
334	Solihull	50,820
335	Walsall	67,410
336	Wolverhampton	57,343
340	Knowsley	40,040
341	Liverpool	20,700
342	St. Helens	45,500
344	Wirral	71,890

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has carried out any monitoring exercises in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively, other than by using ethnic monitoring in sample recruitment surveys; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Yes. All staff on our training courses are now asked to complete an ethnic monitoring questionnaire on a voluntary basis.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the sample recruitment surveys were carried out to measure the number of white and ethnic minority applicants and to identify significant variations in their success rates throughout the competition; and with what results.

Mrs. Rumbold: We began to monitor our recruitment in July 1987. We do this continuously, not on a sample basis. It is planned to compile and analyse the information on an annual basis.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is using sex monitoring in sample recruitment surveys to measure the number of women applicants and to identify significant variations in their success rates throughout the competition; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: We do not use sex monitoring in sample recruitment surveys and have no plans to do so.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) when his Department last reviewed its range of employment practices in the light of Civil Service policies on equal opportunities; and what that review revealed concerning past inequalities in employment practices in his Department;

(2) how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades of his Department, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department keeps its employment practices under continuing review in the light of developing Civil Service policies on equal opportunities. The numbers and proportion of women in the Department at 1 May 1988 were

		Percentage
Grades 1 to 7	156	23
Higher and Senior Executive Officer	135	39
Executive Officer	203	53
Administrative Officer and below	881	78
Overall	1,375	54

The proportion of women in posts in DES compares favourably with the Civil Service as a whole; we have sought to improve their position further by measures such as the introduction of "keeping in touch" arrangements to provide reinstatement opportunities for staff in all grades who resign for domestic or associated health reasons and wish to return to work within five years. We have also provided equal opportunities training, including women-only development courses. The Department's Darlington office has had a flexible working hours system since 1976.

The Department does not hold information on the ethnic origin of all its staff. Of those who had responded to a recent ethnic origins survey by 1 May 1988, those from ethnic minorities were

Grades	*Number*	*Per cent.*
1 to 7	10	[1]1·7
HEO and SEO	7	[2]2·6
Executive Officer	21	6·9
AO and below	118	15·1
Overall	156	8·1

[1] of respondents in those grades.
[2] of respondents.

The Department monitors the recruitment of ethnic minority staff in direct recruitment grades (administrative officer and below). Applicants who do not have the minimum academic qualifications can take a short answer test.

A number of in-house training courses aimed specifically at women are available, including assertiveness training and management training for women. There are also courses in equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunity sessions on other courses. Staff on training courses are now asked to complete an ethnic monitoring questionnaire on a voluntary basis. An anti-racism training film package is used as part of induction courses for all new staff.

Guidance on equal opportunity matters is included in training courses for members of promotion boards. Where possible, boards are constituted so as to include women members. Over the next year, a sample DES promotion board will be monitored for the purpose of identifying the progress of ethnic minority candidates.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Yes. An equal opportunities officer for the Department was first appointed in 1984. A separate equal opportunities officer for our Darlington branch was appointed in 1986.

Health Education

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision will be made for health education within the GCSE curriculum, in particular warning against solvent abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: GCSE syllabuses are determined by the GCSE examining groups in accordance with the GCSE general criteria and with the subject-specific national criteria, where appropriate. GCSE criteria and syllabuses will be revised to reflect the 16-plus attainment targets and programmes of study for the national curriculum subjects, including any relating to health education which is a cross-curricular theme to be covered within the core and other foundation subjects.

Rugby League

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answers of 14 and 16 June to the hon. Member for Wakefield, if he will give the reasons why he will not take steps to encourage the greater availability of rugby league as part of the content of physical education courses at teacher training colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend considers that the precise range of sports included within courses of physical education at initial teacher training institutions is a matter for the institutions themselves.

PRIME MINISTER

Bradford

Q1. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to Bradford.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Pinner

Q101. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister when she expects to make an official visit to Pinner in the county of Middlesex.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Hind: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I returned from Canada. I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today including one with the President of West Germany.

Rover Group (Takeover)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* the text of her letter to Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission, concerning the proposed takeover of Rover; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It is not my usual practice to publish correspondence of this kind.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Fireworks

87. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce legislation to control the sale and use of fireworks.

Mr. Butcher: I have no present intention to do so.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to what extent the adoption of policies on race relations and equal opportunities for women, agreed with his departmental trade unions in 1984, included monitoring in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and of the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively.

Mr. Butcher: The policies agreed with our departmental trades unions in 1984 and in subsequent years made provision for monitoring ethnic origin (which is now in hand, or proposed) in the following areas:

Recruitment
Promotion
Career development
Training

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has carried out monitoring exercises in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and of the Equal Opportunities Commission respectively.

Mr. Butcher: Yes. The DTI has contributed towards the following reports published by the Cabinet Office:

"Ethnic Origin Surveys. Non-industrial staff in the Civil Service: London and the South East of England" 1987.
"Report on a Trial Recruitment Survey" 1987.
"Equal Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service: Progress Report 1984-1987" April 1988.

Copies of these have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the ethnic monitoring survey of all staff was undertaken; and what that survey revealed concerning past effects of employment practices in his Department.

Mr. Butcher: An ethnic monitoring survey of DTI staff was completed in April 1988. The information obtained is now being prepared for analysis to see what indications it gives.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what positive action he has taken in order to remove the effects of past inequalities in employment in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and of the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively;

(2) how and when he has made all departmental staff aware of their personal responsibility to ensure equality of opportunity; and whether he has taken any steps to ensure equality of opportunity in his Department.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. and learned Member to my answer to his question given in the *Official Report* for 27 May at column *370*.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans to improve equality of opportunity for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades of his Department, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

Mr. Butcher: Information on equal opportunities has been and is being collected and will be analysed to see whether any further action is necessary.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether his Department provides specific language or other courses for black personnel.

Mr. Butcher: No. All training opportunities are available to black personnel as to other staff in the DTI.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Butcher: Yes. An equal opportunity officer was appointed in this Department in 1984.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are women and from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Butcher: The figures for non-industrial staff as at 1 June 1988, and by groups of grades, are as follows:

	Female	
	Number	*Percentage*
Grades 1-7	132	9·5
SEO-EO and similar (other than* below)	1,029	33·3
AO and AA	2,341	59·4
*Technical and scientific	245	15·1
Typing and Secretarial	1,089	98·6
*Insolvency and Patents grades	199	18·9
Office support	736	69·7
TOTAL	5,771	43·5

Ethnic origin of staff who contributed to the DTI's ethnic classification monitoring survey (as at June 1988)

	Other	*Percentage*
Grades 1-7	21	1·7
SEO and similar (other than* below)	152	5·6
AO and AA	559	17·0
*Technical and scientific	86	6·5
Typing and secretarial	147	15·4
*Insolvency and Patents grades	58	6·2
Office support	31	3·5
TOTAL	1,054	9·3

Note: These figures represent 85·5 per cent. of DTI staff. Staff not included are those who did not respond to the survey, declined to participate, were employed on a casual basis, or who were employed outside the Department.

Girobank

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if his Department made any assessment of consumer opinion regarding privatisation of Girobank among its customers before his statement in the House on 7 June;

(2) how many customers of Girobank wrote to him urging its privatisation before his statement in the House on 7 June.

Mr. Butcher: Privatisation should strengthen Girobank and allow it to provide more services. Customers should welcome this. None wrote to support it before the announcement. They will have seen no need to urge the Government to make a proposal consistent with their own policies.

Plugs and Sockets

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has for the harmonisation of plugs and sockets for use with domestic supplies of mains electricity.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the latest figure for the United Kingdom balance of trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: The current account for the period January to April 1988 is estimated to have been in deficit by about £3·5 billion.

Mergers

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many mergers were referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in each year from *(a)* 1974 to 1979 and *(b)* 1979 to 1988.

Mr. Maude: The number of mergers referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for the years in question is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1974-1979	
1974	5
1975	5
1976	4
1977	8
1978	2
1979	2
1979-1988	
1979	2
1980	5
1981	7
1982	9
1983	8
1984	4
1985	6
1986	13
1987	6
1988	3

These figures do not include references of mergers involving newspapers made under section 59 of the Fair Trading Act 1973.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether, as part of his Department's inquiry into the activities of Barlow Clowes he will also examine the activities of Brookwood Asset Management and Woodhill Developments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The inspectors have wide powers under the Companies Act 1985 and the Financial Services Act 1986 to investigate dealings between companies in the James Ferguson Group (including Barlow Clowes, Gilt Managers Ltd) and other persons. If my hon. Friend has any information pointing to the need for separate investigation of Brookwood Asset Management and Woodhill Development I would be grateful to receive it.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by what date Sir Godfray Le Quesne QC will complete his report into his Department's handling of Barlow Clowes.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects the report of the investigation into his Department's handling of matters relating to the Barlow Clowes group to be completed and made available.

Mr. Maude: Sir Godfray Le Quesne has been asked by my right hon. and noble Friend to report to him as soon as possible.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if his Department has any evidence that Barlow Clowes and Partners in England transferred money to Barlow Clowes International in Gibraltar after October 1987.

Mr. Maude: I have appointed inspectors under section 432 of the Companies Act to look into James Ferguson Holdings plc which will enable the affairs of all that company's subsidiaries to be investigated. It will be open to the inspectors to look into the nature and extent of any transactions between those companies. It would be inappropriate for me to comment in advance of receiving the inspectors' report.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if the findings of the inspectors appointed under section 432 of the Companies Act 1985 to examine the affairs of James Ferguson Holdings plc will be made public, and when he expects the inspectors to complete their investigations.

Mr. Maude: It is the practice to publish reports of inspectors appointed under section 432 Companies Act 1985 into public companies unless there are strong reasons to the contrary.

I am unable to say how long the investigations will last. The inspectors and I are anxious that their investigation should be concluded as quickly as possible.

Rover Group plc

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his recent meeting in Strasbourg with the European Commissioners for competition, concerning the proposed takeover by British Aerospace of Rover.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The meeting between my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the European Commissioner with special responsibility for competition policy in Strasbourg on 15 June was one of a series of discussions concerning the state aid aspects of the proposed sale of the Government shareholding in Rover Group to BAe. Such meetings are arranged as necessary to facilitate a full understanding of the United Kingdom case for the aid in order that the Commission can complete its examination as expeditiously as possible.

Insurance Companies Act

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will take steps to reduce the cost of compliance with his Department's regulations under the Insurance Companies Act.

Mr. Maude: I am setting up a review of the regulation of non-life insurance business, excluding Lloyd's, with a view to improving the cost effectiveness of regulation and improving the presentation of the related returns required by insurance companies legislation. Lessons from this review will be taken into account in considering the returns required for life insurance business. The review will be carried out by Mr. Geoffrey Hunt, who has been seconded to the DTI from a senior position in the insurance industry.

Post Office Counter Services

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the counter services provided by the Post Office at Crown offices will be published.

Mr. Maude: The commission noted that in the short time since it was established counters had found many ways of reducing the costs of operating its network. These included the closing of some Crown offices, regrading others as sub-offices or franchised offices, closing some urban sub-offices and introducing community offices in rural areas; in its plans counters had assumed that the Crown network would be reduced from 1,500 to 750 offices by the conversion of 750 offices to sub-offices or franchises. The commission decided that a major conversion of Crown offices into sub or franchised offices would reduce counters costs yet maintain similar services. Its report therefore commended the action taken so far by the counters business but recommended that counters should compare the costs and contributions of Crown and sub or franchised offices and consider regrading an even greater number of Crown offices.

The commission found that there had been some improvement in the quality of performance attained by Crown offices. It commended the Post Office's efforts to reduce queueing time by, for example, installing new types of stamp vending machines and selling stamps through retailers.

Two automation projects being developed by the counters business were considered. The first project is a major scheme, which will incur further costs of some £360 million over the next 15 years. This will introduce electronic equipment in some 3,000 Crown and sub-offices out of a total of 21,500. The second scheme involves the introduction of electronic cash registers (ECCO) at all Crown offices. The commission has serious doubts about the financial justification for both the automation and ECCO schemes and concluded that the automation scheme, which would affect only 15 per cent. of counters business, is not financially justifiable at present. Approval of any further roll-out of the automation scheme should not, in the commission's view, be given until the planned pilot scheme had been properly tested.

Some working practices and clerical procedures were found to be outdated and inefficient and staff in Crown offices could be more effectively employed. The commission has therefore recommended that counters should carry out a detailed organisation and methods study in respect of the work of the counters offices; it considers that savings from the productivity recommendations could amount to some £10 million per annum.

The commission also concluded that the staffing of the central and territorial headquarters of the counters business appeared to be excessive for the management of

a network where day-to-day management has been decentralised to 32 district managers. Recommendations that the territorial level of management should be abolished with resulting savings of about £5 million per annum are included in the report.

In an overall assessment of the counters business, the commission found that the management, in the relatively short time that it had been responsible for it, had put in hand many changes to improve efficiency. It concluded that the Post Office was not, in relation to the counters business, pursuing a course of conduct which operated against the public interest.

The Post Office will be producing a preliminary response to the commission's findings within three to four months, in the light of which a further statement will be made.

Dragonby (Subsidence Damage)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster what measures will be taken following the proposed privatisation of the British Steel Corporation to ensure that the people of Dragonby, near Scunthorpe, and the county council as the highway authority will receive adequate compensation from any subsidence damage to either homes or roads arising from former deep-level iron-stone mines in the ownership of the British Steel Corporation in the vicinity.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* Under the terms of the British Steel Bill, currently before Parliament, all the property, rights and liabilities of the British Steel Corporation will be transferred to a public limited company nominated by the Secretary of State. Any potential liability of BSC in respect of the matters referred to will therefore become the responsibility of the successor company and will be unaffected by the privatisation process.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Parliamentary Printing

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many copies of Votes and Proceedings and Notices of Motions are printed daily; and what is the approximate average daily cost.

Mr. Brooke: On average 2,080 copies of Votes and Proceedings and 1,980 copies of Notices of Motions are printed daily. The approximate average daily production cost is £7,000 which HMSO recovers through revenue from sales.

Nationalised Industries and Public Corporations (Borrowing)

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer why no statements of guarantee on borrowing by nationalised industries and public corporations have been laid by the Treasury recently.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that due to failure in our clerical procedures a number of statements of guarantees given by the Treasury over the past year have not been laid in the House. Some relate to temporary borrowing and have now expired. Statements for those which are still current are being laid today, along with statements for the batch of guarantees normally issued at the start of the financial year.

VAT (Non-Domestic Construction)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a further statement, pursuant to that by the Economic Secretary, *Official Report*, 21 June, column *957*, about the timing of the imposition of value added tax on contracts for non-domestic construction.

Mr. Lilley: All non-domestic construction work will continue to be zero-rated until 1 April 1989. VAT at the standard rate will then be payable only in respect of work done and paid for on or after 1 April 1989. Any contract entered into prior to 21 June 1988 will continue to be zero-rated for the life of the contract. I should make it quite clear that no VAT will be payable in respect of any construction work done before 1 April 1989.

Provisions to levy VAT at the standard rate from 1 April 1989 will be subject to the House of Commons passing the necessary Budget Ways and Means resolutions, which will be laid before the House in the normal way at the time of the Budget statement. These provisions will also be subject to the enactment of the subsequent Finance Bill in the normal way.

Company Cars

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the scale charges in relation to the taxation of company cars are calculated; what are the independent studies he was referring to in his Budget speech; and what was the detailed basis of his calculation that an employee with a typical company car may be taxed on only about a quarter of its true value.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer, 21 June 1988]:* The scale charges introduced in 1976 have been increased each year on a percentage basis. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer takes a number of factors into account in deciding the appropriate level of increase for any year. One of these is the value of the benefit to the employee. Various independent studies appear annually quantifying the benefit of having a company car available for private use. They use a variety of methods to estimate the benefit and some—for example, Income Data Services top pay unit report and the PA Personnel Services annual fringe benefits report—base their calculations on figures of motoring costs collected by the AA. Although the results naturally vary in detail, the broad picture emerging from such studies was consistent with the Government's own view that the 1987-88 car scales represented only about a quarter of the value of the benefit.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* None of the names of schools attended by civil servants grade 3 and above in my Department are recorded on personal files.

Vehicle Imports

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the limit on the number of personal car imports imposed on an individual per year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* No limit is imposed.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* motorcars, *(b)* vans, and *(c)* other motor vehicles, imported as new vehicles from the Irish Republic, have been processed through the Vehicle Inspection Branch, Balmoral road, Belfast, in each of the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* Vehicle inspection branch processes only those cases of imported private cars where there is doubt about their compliance with type approval requirements. Type approval does not apply to vans and other motor vehicles. The number of private cars referred to vehicle inspection branch is set out in the following table.

	No.
June 1987	0
July 1987	0
August 1987	0
September 1987	1
October 1987	1
November 1987	1
December 1987	0
January 1988	3
February 1988	0
March 1988	2
April 1988	1
May 1988	1

Fair Employment Agency

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table to show *(a)* the investigation reports published by the Fair Employment Agency in each of the last three years, *(b)* for each of those reports the percentage of Roman Catholics employed, on the basis of the information obtained by the Fair Employment Agency, *(c)* the percentage which the Fair Employment Agency considered to reflect that fair employment procedures were being followed, *(d)* the percentage of Roman Catholic employees which the employers believed to be in the work force and *(e)* by what means the Fair Employment Agency determined the number and percentage of Roman Catholics and what methods they used to check the accuracy of their figures.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 22 June 1988]:* The table lists reports of investigations by the Fair Employment Agency over the past three years indicating the percentage of Roman Catholics identified by the agency in each work force and indicating those organisations where the agency found that equality of opportunity had been afforded. Copies of these reports are available in the Library. Apart from two employers highlighted in the table no others were aware of the religious composition of their work forces prior to the agency's investigation.

The agency assesses perceived religion from questionnaires issued to employees, from original applications for employment or from personnel records. Personal details taken into account, include name, address, school attended, subjects studied, names of referees and leisure interests.

Reports published	*Per cent*[4]
October 1985—Northern Ireland Housing Executive	[1]36·5
November 1985—Northern Ireland Ambulance Service	24·0
March 1986—Southern Health and Social Services Board	47·0
March 1986—Ulster Museum	16·0
March 1986—Building Societies in Northern Ireland	
—Halifax	9·0
—Woolwich	17·0
—Abbey National	14·0
—Gateway	11·0
—Nationwide	16·0
—Leicester	[1]46·0
—Leeds Permanent	8·0
—Anglia	[1]46·0
—Progressive	4·0
March 1986—Banks	
—Trustee Savings Bank	20·0
—Northern Bank	16·0
—Allied Bank	72·0
—Ulster Bank	23·0
—Bank of Ireland	58·0
November 1986—Insurance Companies	
—Prudential	22·3
—Pearl	[1]33·3
—Commercial Union	11·0
—General Accident	7·5
—Britannic	50·0
—Refuge	63·6
—United Friendly	55·8
—Royal	11·5
September 1987—Derry City Council	[1]69·0
November 1987—Hyster (NI) Limited	[1]36·0
March 1988—Northern Ireland Railways	[2]21·0
May 1988—AVX Limited	[1]25·4
May 1988—Irish News	86·0
May 1988—Century Newspapers	[3]11·0

[1] In these cases the Fair Employment Agency was of the opinion that equality of opportunity was afforded.
[2] Northern Ireland Railways challenged the Agency's assessed percentage of Roman Catholic workers but the final figure was mutually agreed.
[3] Century Newspapers assessed percentage of Catholic workers was confirmed by the Agency's investigation.
[4] FEA Assessment of pereentage of Catholics employed.

ENERGY

Connah's Quay Power Station

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) when he proposes to announce his decision on the bids to purchase Connah's Quay power station; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to allow Alyn and Deeside district council to acquire Connah's Quay power station site for economic, environmental and social development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The disposal of Connah's Quay power station is a commercial matter for the CEGB.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the maximum weight of aircraft and speed of impact provided for in the design of nuclear power stations to withstand the impact of aircraft crashes.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The hazards associated with aircraft crashing on to nuclear power stations are assessed by the Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate. An assessment of the hazard at each site shows that the risk of an impact is sufficiently low to support the judgment that no specific features need to be incorporated into the design of the stations to take account of aircraft impacts.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy which advertisements relating to equal opportunities in his Department have been placed with which selected newspapers from the ethnic minority press; and when and with what results.

Mr. Parkinson: In the Department's current recruitment campaign, advertisements were placed in the week beginning 6 June 1988 with the *Daily Jang* and *The Voice*, as well as with the *South London Press*. To date, three inquiries have been received from people citing the *Daily Jang* as their source, and 54 from applicants citing *The Voice*. So far eight application forms have been returned from these inquiries.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Parkinson: Yes.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any plans to improve equality of opportunity for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades of his Department, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

Mr. Parkinson: The good practice which underpins the employment policies that operate within my Department ensures equality of opportunity for employment, training and promotion for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has taken any positive action, pursuant to the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively, other than those measures specified in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West on 27 May, *Official Report*, columns *398-99*.

Mr. Parkinson: Yes. Career managers encourage women, as well as employees from ethnic minority groups, to apply for promotion; for staff who are directly recruited, jobcentres in areas where ethnic minority groups are concentrated are regularly asked to advertise vacancies; applications from both sexes for leave to undertake domestic responsibilities are sympathetically considered whenever possible; and arrangements for residential training courses are made well in advance so as to enable staff with young children to make appropriate childcare arrangements.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are women and from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Parkinson: Based on staff in post on 1 June 1988, the table sets out the numbers and percentage of women employed in each grade in my Department. Information on the numbers and percentage of staff from ethnic minorities is not yet available.

Grade	*Total staff in post (at 1.6.88)*	*Female staff in post*	*Per cent. Female staff in grade*
1	1	—	—
2	2	—	—
3	11	—	—
4	1	—	—
5	39	3	7·7
6	20	1	5
7	132	15	13·7
SEO	38·5	2·5	6·5
HEO/HEO (D)	91·5	13	14·2
EO/AT	124	45	36·3
AO	124·5	68	54·6
AA	57	30·5	53·5
Chief Typing Manager	1	1	100
Typing Manager	4	4	100
Senior Personal Secretary	10	10	100
Personal Secretary	49	47	95·9
Typists	37·5	35·5	94·7
Office Keeper	1	1	100
Senior Paperkeeper	1	—	—
Paperkeeper	9	9	100
Senior Messenger	4	4	100
Messenger	19	11	57·9
Security Officer	8	2	25
Cleaner	1	—	—
SPTO/SSO (Senior Professional) and Technology Officer/Senior Scientific Officer)	18	—	—
HPTO/HSO (Higher)	9	—	—
PTO/SO	4	1	25
ASO	1	—	—
Reservoir Evaluation Specialist I	1	—	—
Res II	2	—	—
Res III	9	—	—
Res IV/V	20·5	8·5	41·5
Petroleum Specialist I	1	—	—
PS II	2	—	—
PS III	8	—	—
PS IV	21	—	—
PS V	1	—	—
Senior Engineering Inspector	3	—	—
Engineering Inspector	—	—	—
Chief Electricity Meter Examiner	1	—	—
Deputy Chief EME	1	—	—
Assistance EME	8	—	—
EME	10	—	—
Chief Gas Examiner	—	—	—
Area Gas Examiner	3	—	—
Gas Examiner	5	1	20
Chief Gas Meter Examiner	1	—	—
Assistance Chief GME	1	—	—
Gas Meter Examiner I	2	—	—
GME II	10	—	—
GME II	10	—	—

Grade	Total staff in post (at 1.6.88)	Female staff in post	Per cent. Female staff in grade
Higher Mapping/Charting Officer	1	—	—
Mapping/Charting Officer	6·5	1·5	23
Chief Reprographic Officer	1	—	—
Assistance CRO	1	—	—
RO I	1	1	100
RO II	2	2	100
Senior Economic Assistant/Economic Assistant	3	1	33·3
Senior Assistant Statistician/Assistant Statistician	3	3	100
Senior Information Officer	9	1	11·1
IO	4	1	25
AIO	7	3	42·8
Senior Librarian	1	1	100
Librarian	1	—	—
Assistant Librarian	3	2	66·7
Inspector Factories IB	1	—	—
Telex Operator	1	—	—
Storekeeper	1	—	—
Industrials	4	—	—
Total	991	33·5	33·3

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has carried out monitoring exercises in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively.

Mr. Parkinson: My Department monitors its direct recruitment to determine the success of its equal opportunities policies for women and for people from ethnic minority groups. My Department also monitors its promoting processes to determine progress towards equal opportunities for women. Because of difficulties in obtaining reliable data, monitoring the ethnic origin of staff in promotion processes is not yet undertaken.

Acid Rain

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimate he has made of the likely increase in the price of electricity in consequence of the decision of the Council of Ministers on 17 June in relation to curbing acid rain emissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CEGB was already planning to fit flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) equipment to 6000MW of existing capacity, the equivalent of three large coal-fired power stations, and to fit new coal-fired power stations with this equipment. The recent decision of the Council of Ministers could require the retrofit of a further three existing coal-fired stations. Much uncertainty surrounds the costing of FGD technology which has not been used before in the United Kingdom on the scale now contemplated. The CEGB estimated the effect of its original programme of FGD retrofits as possibly requiring an increase in electricity prices of around 1·5 per cent. by the year 2000. My Department estimates, on the basis of present knowledge, that the effect of the further work needed to fulfil the Council decision should be broadly similar.

WALES

Impounded Water

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the levels of impounded water in the counties of Gwent, Mid and South Glamorgan; and if levels are sufficient to avoid restrictions on use during the next three months.

Mr. Grist: Present levels of impounded water in the three counties are typical of those to be expected at this time of year. The water resources position currently gives no cause for concern and there are no plans to introduce restrictions on use. The situation will, of course, be subject to review as the summer progresses.

Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress being made by the Welsh Health Common Services Authority in relation to the disputes arising from design and construction faults in the buildings of Ysbytv Gwynedd, Bangor.

Mr. Grist: I am pleased to be able to report to the House that an out-of-court settlement has been reached between the Welsh Health Common Services Authority and the Hospital Design Consortium in the main dispute over the cost of rectifying design faults in the hospital building. Under the terms of the settlement, the Hospital Design Consortium has paid damages of almost £5·3 million and has waived outstanding fees due on the main hospital and residential building contracts currently estimated at £600,000. Judgment in the Welsh Health Common Services Authority's action against Haden Young Ltd. claiming £190,000 for fire damage alleged to have been caused by the negligence of the defendant employees was given in favour of Haden Young Ltd. However a proportion of this claim was met under the main settlement with the Hospital Design Consortium.

The dispute with IDC Ltd. remains unresolved. The Welsh Health Common Services Authority has withheld £130,000 from IDC to pay for remedial work to windows and cavities. Further remedial work may be needed to repair defective wall ties in the residential buildings and to modify some staircase balustrades. Under the terms of the main settlement, the defendants now agree to assist the Welsh Health Common Services Authority in the action necessary to bring these matters to a conclusion.

Radiotherapy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will convene and chair a conference of north Wales and north-west England health authorities to discuss the terms of reference for a comprehensive study of all cancer treatment services in north Wales including the possibility of a satellite radiotherapy centre in north Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The terms of reference of a review of cancer treatment services to north Wales patients have already been the subject of consultation with appropriate health authorities in Wales and England.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take urgent steps to set up a satellite radiotherapy cancer centre in Clwyd, north Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The feasibility of a satellite radiotherapy centre in north Wales will be addressed in a review of cancer treatment services for north Wales patients.

Maternity Units

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioner maternity units have been closed in Wales since 1979.

Mr. Grist: Since January 1979, nine general practitioners maternity units have closed and two have opened in Wales.

Slurry Tank (Dyfed)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the circumstances surrounding the application for the siting of a 200,000-gallon slurry tank on Ciliau Moor Common, Dyfed.

Mr. Grist: During the course of construction of a collection chamber and slurry tank in the area of Ciliau Moor, it became apparent that the consent of the Secretary of State was required for these works because the site chosen was found to be within the boundary of Ciliau Moor Common. The necessary statutory procedures were subsequently followed and after due consideration of all the relevant factors the necessary consent was given on 5 May 1988.

Mink Farm (Dyfed)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has made a decision concerning the application for a licence for the operation of a mink farm at Curtnewydd, Danybydder, Dyfed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I expect a view to be reached on the application shortly and I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Local Development Projects

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what local development projects have been undertaken in Wales; and what are their costs.

Mr. Peter Walker: The table gives details of local development projects since the initiative began in Wales in November 1986:

Contractor	*Description*	*Cost ('000)*
1. British Coal Enterprise, Cardiff	Small Firms' Training Needs	18
2. Cambrian Manpower Development Unit, Aberystwyth	Environmental Training Needs in Industry in Wales	5
3. Cardiff Bay Development Corporation	Training Study of South Glamorgan Labour Market	18·775
4. Cardiff Chamber of Commerce	Cardiff Training Development Project	25
5. Carmarthen College of Technology and Art	Organic Farming	46·7
6. Nature Conservancy Council	Environmental Manpower Project	12
7. People and Work Unit, Newport	Small Businesses	30
8. Swansea College of Further Education	Learning Skills for Adults	20
9. Swansea College of Further Education	Learning Skills for the Unemployed	25·224

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Israeli Diplomat (Expulsion)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent expulsion of an Israeli diplomat, giving the reasons, and the text of any letters relevant to that expulsion.

Mr. Eggar: Following the trial and conviction of Ismail Sowan the Israeli ambassador was informed on 17 June that a member of his diplomatic staff must leave the country by the end of the month. It is not the practice to publish details of confidential exchanges between Governments.

Diplomats

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list, for each of the last 10 years *(a)* those countries whose diplomats have been expelled from the United Kingdom and *(b)* which of those countries are in breach of UN resolutions according to the votes of Her Majesty's Government's representatives there.

Mr. Eggar: As the information is not readily available, I will write to my hon. Friend when it is to hand.

Provisional IRA (Document)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will withdraw the document, "The Provisional IRA: International Contacts Outside the United States", on account of the errors acknowledged by his Department.

Mr. Eggar: No. Any further copies will be amended to take account of the objections raised.

EEC Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what moneys the European Economic Community and its institutions have spent under the European Economic Community budget for purposes which are not provided for under the treaty of Rome, in the last available annual period.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

I assume that the hon. Member has in mind the category of expenditure defined in article 203 of the treaty as spending which does not necessarily result from the treaty or from acts adopted in accordance with it. This is generally known as non-obligatory expenditure. Provision for such expenditure in the 1988 budget is 11·6 becu (£8 billion) in commitments and 10·1 becu (£7 billion) in payments.

SCOTLAND

Cervical Smear Tests

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will advise health authorities to notify results of cervical smear tests simultaneously to patients and general practitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I announced on 10 December 1987 that the Government had accepted the main recommendations of the report of the working group on cervical cytology in Scotland. The report contained detailed recommendations on notifying the results of the test to the woman concerned; to the clinician who took the smear; and, if the clinician concerned was not her general practitioner, to that general practitioner, unless the woman specifically requests otherwise. It is for health boards to decide how the results should be conveyed to patients but the detailed guidance issued to them on the provision of the cervical screening service stressed the need to institute the "fail-safe" arrangements set out in the report to ensure that action is taken to follow up positive or doubtful smears.

Dentists

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there are any plans to change the contract of employment of dentists operating in health centres within the Greater Glasgow health board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what were the results of the survey of the ethnic origins of staff in the Scottish Office and associated Departments, recently completed by his Department;

(2) what new action he has decided to take, having reviewed the results of the survey of the ethnic origins of staff, which his Department recently completed.

Mr. Rifkind: In the voluntary survey of the ethnic origins of staff 99·6 per cent. of respondents classified themselves as 'white', 0·3 per cent. as 'asian' and 0·1 per cent. as 'black'. The survey achieved a response rate of 88 per cent. The results of the survey are presently being evaluated and will be borne in mind by my Department in future action on equal opportunities.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he carries out ethnic monitoring of applicants for posts, in accordance with the codes of the Equal Opportunities Commission and of the Commission for Racial Equality respectively.

Mr. Rifkind: Most of my Department's recruitment is undertaken on its behalf by the Civil Service Commission and the Board of Inland Revenue, both of which have introduced ethnic monitoring as part of their recruitment procedure. For recruitment carried out by the Department itself, ethnic monitoring will be introduced in the autumn.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has carried out a survey of women in his Department in accordance with the code of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Rifkind: No. My Department already maintains statistics which enable it to conduct the kind of monitoring recommended by the Equal Opportunities Commission's code of practice.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: An equal opportunities officer was appointed in 1984. All staff were informed of the appointment by means of an office notice and each new entrant is given updated information.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Rifkind: Figures for each of the very large number of grades in the Department could be given only at disproportionate cost. However, the figures for the numbers and percentage of women in each of the main grades are as set out. Figures for the number and percentage of people from ethnic minorities cannot be given without risking the identification of individual members of staff since the numbers in individual grades are very small.

Number of women	*Women*	*Percentage*
Unified Grade 1	—	0·00
Unified Grade 2	—	0·00
Unified Grade 3	1	4·17
Unified Grade 4	—	0·00
Unified Grade 5	8	6·96
Unified Grade 6	20	11·30
Unified Grade 7	37	10·91
Senior Executive Officer	26	13·76
Higher Executive Officer	171	27·49
Executive Officer	433	54·74
Administrative Officer	750	67·45
Administrative Assistant	600	66·30
Professional, Scientific and Technical Grades	293	18·59
Industrial Grades	35	5·45
Other Grades	831	70·36
All Grades	3,205	41·46

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades of his Department, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department has circulated to all staff the Civil Service policy statements on race relations and equal opportunities for men and women to ensure that all staff are aware that discrimination will not be tolerated. All new entrants also receive copies. An equal opportunities officer has been appointed. A joint management and trade union side committee has been set up on the implementation of the recommendations of the Civil Service programme of action on women; substantial progress is being made on implementation and as appropriate action under the programme has also been

applied to ethnic minorities. An ethnic survey of existing staff has been carried out and ethnic monitoring will be extended to cover all recruitment in the autumn.

My Department keeps under review the need for further action on all issues affecting equality of opportunity.

Road, Bridge and Tunnel Facilities

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of road, bridge and tunnel facilities in Scotland for which tolls are levied, with a note for each entry of *(a)* the name and address of the responsible authority *(b)* whether it produces published accounts for that specific facility *(c)* which Minister, is responsible for authorising changes in such tolls, and *(d)* on which (i) public expenditure programme and (ii) class, vote and subhead, the toll revenue and associated expenditure is to be found.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Tolls in Scotland are levied on the Erskine, Forth and Tay road bridges. The required information relating to the specific facilities is as follows:

Erskine Bridge

(a) The Secretary of State for Scotland.
(b) A White Paper Account is published annually.
(c) The Secretary of State for Scotland.
(d) (i) Roads, Transport and Environmental Services, Scotland.
(ii) Class XVI, Vote 6, Subheads A1(2) and A2(5).

Forth and Tay Road Bridges

(a) (i) The Forth Road Bridge Joint Board
Regional Headquarters
George IV Bridge
Edinburgh EH1 1UQ
(ii) The Tay Road Bridge Joint Board
Tayside House
28 Crichton Street
Dundee DD1 3RJ
(b) Accounts are published annually by the respective joint boards
(c) The Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible for the authorisation of changes in tolls either:
(i) on his own initiative after consulting the joint board and taking into account any representations it makes; or
(ii) if the joint board, or any of the constituent councils, or a representative body of traders, vehicle users, and so on, request a revision of tolls.
(d) Revenue and expenditure is the responsibility of the joint boards and does not appear in a public expenditure programme.

Fish Farms

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards the role that the Crown Estate Commission should play in the allocation of seabed leases for fish farms.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) on 17 June, at column *336*.

Alcoholism (Treatment)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals exist for further designated places for those with drink problems similar to Albyn house in Aberdeen.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A grant offer under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 was recently accepted by the Church of Scotland for a designated place to be built at Inverness. The provision of designated places is a matter for voluntary organisations, which may apply for grant under the 1968 Act, or local authorities.

Community Programme Projects

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to establish a fund to allow the continuation of community programme projects in the community care field where these projects find difficulty in meeting the requirements of the new adult training projects.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on Wednesday 22 June.

School Facilities (Hire)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received seeking an amendment to the School Boards (Scotland) Bill to ensure that school facilities continue to be available for hire by youth organisations after responsibility for school letting has passed to boards of governors; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have received representations from the Scottish standing conference of youth organisations, and have explained to the conference that clause 14 of the Bill gives control of out-of-hours use of their schools to boards, subject to any direction given to them by their education authority.

Prison Service (Staff Training)

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has received from Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons for Scotland his report on staff training in the Scottish prison service.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland's report on staff training in the Scottish prison service. I have today placed copies of the report, including my response, in the Library, and I am sending a copy to the chairman of the Scottish all-party penal affairs group and to other interested bodies. Copies may also be purchased from my Department.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment of the entrants to the community programme in the 12 months to February and the entrants in the 12 months to April, what proportions were (i) to full-time places, (ii) men, (iii) single, (iv) aged over 25 years, (v) unemployed for over 12 months and (vi) formerly benefit claimants.

Mr. Cope: The figures requested are shown in the table:

Community Programme Entrants

	12 Months to February 1988	*12 Months to April 1988*
Total Entrants	268,895	266,966

		12 Months to February 1988	12 Months to April 1988
Proportion of:		*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
(i)	Full time places	11·5	11·4
(ii)	Men	74·2	74·3
(iii)	Single persons	72·1	70·2
(iv)	Aged over 25 years	45·3	47·3
(v)	Unemployed over 12 months	86·1	87·1
(vi)	Formerly benefit claimants	96·4	96·1

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the most recently available tables to show the total number of community programme projects and places by type of project and type of sponsor.

Mr. Cope: The following table gives the figures for authorised places at 29 May 1988.

Community programme
Number of authorised places by project type and sponsor (total) at 11 May 1988

Authorised places	*Total*	*Local authority*	*Local education authority*	*Voluntary organisations*	*Nationalised industry*	*Private sector*	*Health authority*	*Government department*	*Other*	*Educational institution*	*Ex-offenders organisations*
Total	271,657	108,076	41	68	997	6,716	2,619	1,007	508	3,248	17,650
Environmental	141	47	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	24
Building and Landscaping	181	116	..	..	..	10	..	..	..	..	37
Home Insulation	8,144	1,510	41	..	74	219	6	..	..	16	1,594
Research and Surveys	5,776	2,321	..	..	..	294	134	..	..	182	216
Library	7,021	3,420	..	..	..	197	163	4	..	684	98
Youth Work	14	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Voluntary Acts	42	11	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Other Social Services	75	7	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	18
Cultural	6,675	1,961	..	..	..	69	229	116	..	516	105
Workshop	15,139	3,213	..	52	..	325	48	..	..	44	2,505
CP Agent Management	16,662	4,986	..	..	68	717	211	48	74	150	2,196
Environmental and Landscaping	74,419	43,475	..	..	284	1,107	83	339	130	199	3,734
Building and Construction	37,101	15,461	..	..	100	2,338	335	59	68	27	2,833
Archaeological Digs	2,322	1,205	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	339	13
Children's Services	9,233	2,680	..	..	8	..	356	28	..	191	419
Young Peoples Services	18,503	5,549	..	16	82	180	185	412	7	535	424
Services for the Elderly	47,326	14,535	..	..	273	966	348	..	208	219	2,635
Services for the Disabled	21,865	7,017	..	..	107	294	520	..	21	146	800
Centres for the Unemployed	997	561	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

Community programme
Number of authorised places by project type and sponsor (total) at 11 May 1988 (continued)

Authorised places	*Churches*	*Youth Organisations*	*Old peoples groups*	*Disability groups*	*Ethnic groups*	*Environmental and conservation groups*	*Other voluntary organisations*	*Quasi commercial body*
Total	14,918	6,900	986	5,733	3,241	10,949	63,115	19,908
Environmental	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	71
Building and Landscaping	—	18	—	—	—	—	—	—
Home insulation	291	16	—	8	—	273	3,127	935
Research and Surveys	103	17	—	89	28	486	1,523	317
Library	120	33	—	88	13	290	1,532	307
Youth work	—	—	—	—	—	14	—	—
Voluntary acts	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other social services	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	49
Cultural	107	187	—	113	643	223	1,911	403
Workshop	1,986	395	—	372	188	146	4,165	1,336
CP agent management	922	379	44	249	291	612	4,326	997
Environmental and Landscaping	1,998	348	28	384	182	6,068	10,453	4,108
Building and Construction	2,851	615	257	505	160	1,428	6,649	2,864
Archaeological digs	54	—	—	—	—	301	231	140
Children's services	472	533	—	21	37	441	3,173	706
Young peoples services	676	2,758	—	132	793	317	5,742	539
Services for the elderly	4,112	1,145	639	348	829	303	14,541	5,679
Services for the disabled	1,189	406	17	3,424	64	45	5,472	1,457
Centres for the unemployed	35	51	—	—	13	—	320	—

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people under the age of 25 years are currently on community programme schemes; and what is the estimated number who will be on such schemes when the community programme ends in September.

Mr. Nicholls: Information is not available in the form requested.

The total number of entrants of the community programme in the 12 months to 31 May 1988 was 264,135, of whom about 50 per cent. were under 25. It is unlikely that the proportion in the under-25 age group will change significantly over the next two months. The total number of filled places at 31 May 1988 was 219,262.

Restart

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each employment service region, how many restart interviews were conducted between July 1985 and May 1986 inclusive, and during April and May 1988.

Mr. Cope: The national programme of restart interviews started in July 1986, following pilots in nine offices from January to June 1986.

The number of restart interviews conducted in the pilot offices between January and May 1986, together with the numbers of interviews conducted in each employment service region during April and May 1988, are shown in the tables.

Pilot office	*January-May 1986 cumulative*
Dundee	4,445
Billingham	1,099
Preston	2,801
Huddersfield	2,502
Stoke	4,221
Port Talbot and Neath	2,400
Plymouth	3,224
Crawley/Horsham	708
Ealing	2,467
Total	23,867

Restart programme: Number of interviews

	April 1988	*May 1988*
Northern	14,285	12,354
Yorkshire and Humberside	18,955	16,406
East Midlands and Eastern	17,457	15,296
London and South East	42,271	37,539
South West	10,047	8,616
Wales	10,961	10,082
West Midlands	20,123	16,716
North West	33,647	28,485
Scotland	24,694	21,601

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each jobcentre conducting restart interviews, how many restart interviews were conducted during May; and how many claimants were referred to the unemployment benefit service due to availability doubts during May.

Mr. Cope: The information requested is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each jobcentre in the 11 areas chosen to pilot the availability test questionnaire RR6 form, how many restart interviews were conducted during March, April and May; and how many claimants were referred to the unemployment benefit service due to availability doubts during March, April and May.

Mr. Cope: The information requested for the 11 offices involved in launching the restart interview form (RR6) is shown in the table.

Office	*March*	*April*	*May*
Billingham			
Restart Interviews	747	870	671
Availability Referrals	21	16	18
Huddersfield			
Restart Interviews	451	633	507
Availability Referrals	24	28	18
Leicester			
Restart Interviews	1,542	1,841	1,298
Availability Referrals	201	176	141
Ealing			
Restart Interviews	759	953	721
Availability Referrals	65	71	69
Wimbledon			
Restart Interviews	714	504	245
Availability Referrals	140	81	30
Watford			
Restart Interviews	340	515	333
Availability Referrals	22	60	45
Plymouth			
Restart Interviews	1,080	1,069	952
Availability Referrals	68	54	48
Port Talbot			
Restart Interviews	706	674	625
Availability Referrals	45	48	70
Stoke			
Restart Interviews	1,184	951	789
Availability Referrals	98	95	139
Preston			
Restart Interviews	756	608	533
Availability Referrals	58	36	50
Dundee			
Restart Interviews	963	1,448	1,185
Availability Referrals	30	43	57

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provision is to be made to include suitable courses of study to the restart menu; and what guidance will be given to restart counsellors to interpret the meaning of suitable when judging a course to be a positive outcome from a restart interview.

Mr. Cope: The restart programme is the gateway to a range of opportunities to help the individual into work. These include courses of study made available by local education authorities and others. The decision to take up a course of study is made by the individual after discussion with the restart interviewer. A course of study likely to benefit an individual's job prospects would be regarded as a positive outcome from the interview.

Job Training Scheme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what designation orders have been issued for new JTS; on what dates and in respect of what legislation.

Mr. Cope: Designation orders under section 13 of the Race Relations Act 1976 and section 14 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 were signed on 9 November 1987.

Unemployment Benefit Service

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each employment service region, how many claimants have been referred to the unemployment benefit service due to availability doubts during May 1988.

Mr. Cope: This information is not available in the form requested. Questions concerning a person's availability for

work may arise following any interview with an employment service official and records of all such instances are not kept.

However, the table gives figures by employment service region for the number of cases which were referred in May to the independent adjudicating authorities from unemployment benefit offices for a decision on a claimant's availability.

Region	[1] *Number*
London and South East	5,426
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,701
Scotland	1,869
Northern	936
North West	1,639
South West	1,700
West Midlands	2,015
East Midlands	1,777
Wales	1,149

[1] Number of availability submissions to the adjudication officer

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much will be allocated from the European social fund towards the costs of the employment training scheme for unemployed adults due to start in September.

Mr. Cope: My Department has not yet received formal notification of the European Commission's decision on United Kingdom social fund applications for 1988. We understand, however, that the Commission intends to allocate around £9¾ million towards the cost of this programme for unemployed people aged over 25 years and £14½ million for those under 25.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what would be the effect on the benefit entitlement to participants on employment training of paying £5 per week top-up and a further £5 for work done outside the programme.

Mr. Cope: Participants in employment training who are on income support when training starts will continue to receive an element of that benefit while they train. Additional income received will be treated in the normal way. Any voluntary top-up to the premium made at regular intervals will attract a £5 per week disregard. In addition, the appropriate weekly disregard (usually £5, but £15 in some circumstances) will be applied to any earnings received from work outside the programme.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of places on training programmes, by skill and the shortfall in trained workers, by skill.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not fully available in the form requested. However, the tables provide the breakdown by occupation/skill of places on the two main training programmes run by the Training Commission. There is no comprehensive information on the shortfall of trained workers by skill. However in the main employers who report skill shortages usually face difficulties in recruiting people with the desired mix of skills and experience.

The main skill shortages reported by the latest CBI/MSC special survey of skill shortages in November 1987 were:

professional engineers (especially) electrical, electronic and production engineers);
experienced managers;
computer specialists; and
certain engineering craft occupations such as machinists, welders and mechanics.

Other sources of information report skill shortages in:
construction—particularly builders, carpenters, plasterers
teachers and nurses.

Latest results (April 1988) from the CBI's quarterly industrial trends survey indicate that 19% of respondents in manufacturing industry expected skill shortages to limit output over the coming four months. These levels of shortages in the quarterly survey remain less serious than in the 1960s and 1970s.

[1] Weighted proportion.

Number in-training on YTS at end March 1988 by Training Occupational Classification

	Number
Engineering	113,900
Administrative and Clerical	72,400
Selling and Storage	44,900
Health, Community and Personal Services	43,300
Motor Vehicle repair and maintenance	29,100
Agriculture and related industries	18,500
Catering and Food Preparation and Processing	16,800
Clothing and Textiles	10,900
Other	38,400

Number of starts to the Old Job Training Scheme in 1987-88 by skill

	Number
Management and management services	1,900
Computer skills	6,800
Administrative and clerical	10,000
Engineering	13,900
Construction	8,500
Making and processing	1,300
Automotive	1,400
Other	5,600

[1] Engineering includes engineering fabrication, engineering science and technology.
NB. All figures are rounded to the nearest 100.

Mines and Quarries

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions have been initiated by mines and quarries inspectors for Devon and Cornwall for each year since 1970.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the number of prosecutions taken by the mines and quarries inspectorate in Devon and Cornwall for the period 1970-75 is not available. Since 1976 there have been none.

Hantergantic Quarry, St. Bernard

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the Health and Safety Executive has yet reached a decision on prosecution of the owners of Hantergantic quarry, St. Bernard arising from the accident occurring on 25 August 1987; and what is the average period of time taken by the executive to reach such decisions.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The Health and Safety Executive has taken action to seek counsel's opinion on this case. I will write and advise the hon. Member when a decision has

been reached. The time taken to reach a decision varies and depends on the facts and features of each individual case.

Penlee Quarry, Newlyn

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library a copy of the report of the investigation into the accident to Penlee quarry, Newlyn, Penzance on 28 January 1987, by the mines and quarries inspectorate.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The disclosure of information is governed by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Within these constraints there are established procedures for the supply of factual information by the executive to interested parties.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) on what date a guard was installed on the troughed conveyors at Penlee quarry, Newlyn, following the accident on 28 January 1987; and if he will make a statement;

(2) on what occasions advice was given by inspectors to the occupier of Penlee quarry, Newlyn, concerning the standard of guarding for their troughed belt conveyors installed at the quarry.

Mr. Nicholls: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Wages (Underpayments)

Ms. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total of underpayment of wages in 1987 detected by the inspectorate in the 4,443 establishments which were not prosecuted that year.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1987 arrears of pay assessed as due to workers employed by 4,443 establishments found to be underpaying totalled £1,252,034.

Earlier replies to the hon. Member on 13 May at column 286, and 27 May at column *396* may not have made it clear that *(a)* the number of establishments prosecuted is included in statistics of establishments found to be underpaying and *(b)* the two sets of figures cannot be directly related. Prosecutions brought in 1987, for example, do not necessarily relate to establishments found to be underpaying in that year.

Scotch Derrick Cranes

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, South, 26 May, *Official Report*, column *315*, what efforts are being made by the Health and Safety Executive to compile a comprehensive list of all scotch derrick cranes currently in use in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: None. I do not consider that this would be justified.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been *(a)* the total number of persons in employment each quarter since January 1979 and *(b)* total labour force for each quarter since the same dates; what was *(a)* as a percentage of *(b)* for each quarter; and what was the difference between *(a)* as a percentage of *(b)* and *(b)* from each of these quarters.

Mr. Lee: The available information is as follows:

Great Britain

	Employed labour force *Thousand*	*Working population* *Thousand*	[1] *Per cent.*	[2] *Per cent.*
1979				
March	24,699	25,894	95	5
June	24,767	25,916	96	4
September	24,844	25,957	96	4
December	24,886	26,014	96	4
1980				
March	24,824	26,052	95	5
June	24,706	26,088	95	5
September	24,440	26,117	94	6
December	24,205	26,176	92	8
1981				
March	23,966	26,058	92	8
June	23,754	26,028	91	9
September	23,630	26,038	91	9
December	23,409	25,995	90	10
1982				
March	23,435	25,983	90	10
June	23,329	25,944	90	10
September	23,202	25,907	90	10
December	23,060	25,857	89	11
1983				
March	22,997	25,841	89	11
June	23,039	25,947	89	11
September	23,165	26,077	89	11
December	23,293	26,217	89	11
1984				
March	23,398	26,361	89	11
June	23,483	26,451	89	11
September	23,577	26,613	89	11
December	23,708	26,776	89	11

YTS

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of YTS trainees who go on to obtain jobs in the same industry within three months of the end of their training.

Mr. Cope: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The list shows the percentages of trainees who leave YTS and obtain jobs in the same occupational area as that in which they trained. This information is taken from the 100 per cent. follow-up survey of YTS leavers in the period April 1986 to December 1987.

Occupational Focus of Training	*per cent.*[1]
Administrative and Clerical Occupations	78·2
Creative and Educational and Recreational Service Occupations	25·4
Health, Community and Personal Service Occupations	60·5
Selling and Storage Occupations	52·3
Scientific Occupations	27·7
Catering and Food Preparation and Processing Occupations	8·2
Agricultural and Related Occupations	62·3
Transport Operating Occupations	22·5
Construction and Civil Engineering Occupations	48·6
Mechanical, Electrical and Electronic Engineering Occupations	49·9
Motor Vehicle Repair and Maintenance Occupations	66·8
Non-Metal Processing Occupations	4·6
Printing Occupations	16·9
Clothing and Textiles Manufacturing Occupations	29·8

[1] Who gained work in the same occupational area.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of those declining a YTS place had a benefit reduction on grounds of voluntary unemployment for each month between June 1987 and May 1988; and how many of those leaving YTS early had a benefit reduction on grounds of voluntary unemployment for each month between June 1987 and May 1988.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

The numbers of people who had their supplementary benefit reduced for refusing a youth training scheme place, or for leaving a youth training scheme course early, in each four-week period between 6 May 1987 and 8 April 1988 are as follows:

For 4 weeks ending	*Refusal of place*	*Early leavers*
1987		
2 June	6	85
30 June	9	67
28 July	4	65
25 August	3	80
22 September	2	64
20 October	1	85
17 November	8	94
15 December	10	65
1988		
12 January	6	42
9 February	5	68
8 March	3	59
8 April (see note 3)	—	55

Notes:

1. The figures are provisional and subject to amendment.
2. No figures are available for periods after 8 April 1988.
3. The period to 8 April covers just over four weeks to run to the end of the end of the supplementary benefit scheme.

Opencast Coal Mining

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, in the light of recent medical evidence about the effects of opencast coal mining operations on the health of local populations, he will exercise his powers under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, sections 1(1)*(d)* and 5(1) to place a duty on any person having control of an opencast coal mining operation to use the best practicable means to prevent emission into the atmosphere from the premises of noxious or offensive fumes and for rendering harmless and inoffensive such substances as may be so emitted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have been asked to reply.

Opencast coal mining, in common with other mining and quarrying activities, is not a process prescribed under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 for the application of sections 1(1)*(d)* and 5(1) of the Act. There is already a strong framework of control over such operations under other parts of the 1974 Act and in the Mines and Quarries Act 1954. Responsibility for enforcement rests with Her Majesty's mines and quarries inspectorate, which already carries out tests at selected opencast sites for the presence of any respirable silica in airborne respirable dust.

I am aware of newspaper articles suggesting that opencast coal mining operations may have a significant effect on the health of the local population. I understand that the HSE considers that this matter could be tested only by a long-term study.

Nevertheless, the effects of dust and other impacts associated with opencasting are all matters to be considered by mineral planning authorities as part of the normal planning process in considering applications to work coal or other minerals by opencast methods.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drug Abuse

2. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further measures his Department is taking to combat the abuse of drugs; and if he will make a statement.

67. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further measures his Department is taking to combat the sale of illegal drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Our effort against drug misuse must continue at full strength. The Government's strategy is set out in detail in "Tackling Drug Misuse", a new edition of which is being issued today. A copy has been sent to all right hon. and hon. Members. It recognises that there is no single answer to the problem, and that sustained action needs to be taken both to reduce the supply of, and demand for, drugs. The new powers, contained in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 for the police and courts to trace, freeze and confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking have already proved their worth.

Devon and Cornwall Constabulary

12. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the most recent request for increased police numbers from the Devon and Cornwall constabulary.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The police authority applied in September 1986 for 137 posts to be recruited over three years. Seventeen posts were approved with effect from 1 January 1987, 20 with effect from 1 April 1987, and eight with effect from 1 January 1988. My right hon. Friend announced on 18 May a further 25 posts with effect from 1 June. The police authority has been informed that consideration will be given to the remaining posts when my right hon. Friend takes decisions on the next tranche of posts available under the programme announced in May 1986.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

31. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of the City of London police on the identity of the witnesses interviewed during recent inquiries into contacts between two of the principal Crown witnesses during the appeal of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

71. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of the City of London police on the identity of the witnesses interviewed during the course of inquiries

into contacts between Dr. Frank Skuse and former Superintendent Reade during the appeal hearing of the men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

79. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of the City of London police as to the number and identity of witnesses interviewed in the course of inquiries into alleged contacts between the two principal Crown witnesses during the appeal of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. John Patten: No. These inquiries into alleged criminal offences were made at the request of the Director of Public Prosecutions, to whom the Commissioner has already submitted a report.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General answered questions on these police investigations on 20 June at columns 823-27.

15. **Mr. Terry Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now appoint an independent review tribunal to examine the case against the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

31. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now appoint an independent inquiry into the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

64. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now appoint an independent review body to examine the case against the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. John Patten: No. The conviction has been carefully reviewed by the Court of Appeal, and we see no grounds for setting up any other form of inquiry.

54. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received from the Irish Government regarding the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings; and what was his response.

55. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received from the Irish Government regarding the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings; and what was his response.

84. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last discussed with the Irish ambassador or representatives of the Irish Government the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer to the reply my right hon. Friend gave earlier to the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall).

Retail Premises (Theft)

14. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress his Department is making in preventing theft from retail premises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The number of offences of theft from shops recorded by the police fell by just over 3 per cent. in 1987; but there is much scope for a further reduction in the incidence of these offences. Our handbook "Practical Ways to Crack Crime," published in March this year, points the way. This will aid the planning of effective counter measures against retail crime.

I am also encouraged by the interest shown by major retail organisations including the Association for the Prevention of Theft in Shops in our safer cities programme and the work of the new crime prevention organisation, Crime Concern.

Dr. Frank Skuse

16. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when officials of his Department last had contact with Dr. Frank Skuse; and for what purpose.

22. **Miss Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when officials of his Department last had contact with Dr. Frank Skuse; and for what purpose.

43. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when officials of his Department last had contact with Dr. Frank Skuse; and for what purpose.

75. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when officials of his Department last had contact with Dr. Frank Skuse; and for what purpose.

Mr. John Patten: On 16 June 1988, when an official in the establishment department wrote to Dr. Skuse in reply to a request he had made for extracts from the *Official Report*.

Terrorism and Drug Trafficking

17. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the Government's policies to prevent terrorism and drug-trafficking will be affected by the creation of a single European market in 1992.

33. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he proposes to take to ensure that the policies of Her Majesty's Government on combating terrorism and drug trafficking will not be weakened by the creation of a single European market in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

69. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on how the creation of a single European market in 1992 will affect his Department's efforts to combat terrorism and drug-trafficking.

Mr. Hurd: In accepting the provisions of the Single European Act, the United Kingdom and other member states expressly reserved their right to take such measures as they considered necessary to combat terrorism, crime and the traffic in drugs. At a meeting of the Trevi group in Munich earlier this month, my colleagues agreed with my suggestion that officials in the Trevi framework should consider the implications of changes in frontier controls and the kind of measures which could be taken to offset disadvantages to our security which might otherwise result from the implementation of the European internal market.

Metropolitan Police

18. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the current establishment figures for the Metropolitan police, giving the number of places vacant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Following the further increase of 300 which I approved in April the current establishment of the Metropolitan police is 28,115. After the latest intake of recruits on 6 June, the force was 178 below establishment. The Metropolitan police hope to reach full establishment by November 1988.

West Midlands Police Force

19. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking further increases in the establishment of the West Midlands police force.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has received representations from the police authority, which applied for 350 additional posts, and from hon. Members whose constituencies lie within the force area. On 18 May, at columns *466-67*, in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), my right hon. Friend announced an increase of 70 posts for West Midlands police with effect from 1 June. The police authority has been informed that the posts outstanding from its application will be considered when my right hon. Friend takes decisions on the next tranche of posts to be approved under the programme which my right hon. Friend announced in May 1986.

Satellite Television

20. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what current discussions he is holding with interested parties concerning the future development of United Kingdom satellite television.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 10 June that exploratory discussions were being held with the BBC, the IBA and British Satellite Broadcasting Limited to examine the technical, commercial and financial feasibility of transferring BBC 2 and Channel 4 to DBS. These discussions are at a very early stage, and we have not reached any decisions about this approach. Before reaching any decisions we will take full account of the interests of all those concerned, above all viewers.

Police Forces (Civilianisation)

21. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in civilianisation by police forces in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

41. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in civilianisation by police forces in England and Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested concerning police forces in England was given in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on 26 May at column *278*. As regards forces in Wales, the equivalent information is as follows:

	Per cent.
Dyfed-Powys Police	17·3
Gwent Constabulary	18·9
North Wales Police	22·9
South Wales Constabulary	28·9

National Lottery

23. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to amend the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976 to allow a national lottery to raise funds for good causes.

Mr. John Patten: We are considering the position in the light of recent developments.

Crimes (Write-off Scheme)

24. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes were cleared up under the write-off scheme following admissions by prisoners after interviews by police officers; and what percentage of total crimes was cleared up during 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Centrally held information about the way in which offences are cleared up is incomplete but it is estimated that, of the 1·2 million notifiable offences which were recorded by the police in England and Wales in 1987 as cleared up, about 200,000 were cleared up following prison visits. The overall clear-up rate for recorded offences during 1987 was 33 per cent.

Self-loading Rifles

25. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the number of self-loading rifles with an integral five-round magazine, that will have to be surrendered under the terms of the Firearms (Amendment) Bill; and what total compensation will be payable to the owners.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Insufficient information exists to enable a reliable estimate to be made. However, there are very few models of this kind on the market and, traditionally, they have been uncommon.

Cleveland Constabulary

26. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cleveland on the state of morale in the Cleveland constabulary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no evidence to suggest that my right hon. Friend should call for such a report. If my hon. Friend has any relevant information, perhaps he would write to me.

Isle of Man and Channel Islands

27. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received recently from the Governments of the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands seeking changes in their constitutional relationship with the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Masonic Lodges (Police Membership)

28. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to ask the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to reissue the section of the Metropolitan police principles of policing and guidance for professional behaviour relating to police membership of masonic lodges.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. All Metropolitan police officers are given a copy of the principles of policing and guidance for professional behaviour, which includes the guidance on membership of masonic lodges and many other aspects of behaviour.

Immigration

29. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect the imposition of visas on visitors to the United Kingdom from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana and Nigeria has had upon the operations of immigration service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier to questions from my hon. Friends the Members for Fylde (Mr. Jack) and Ipswich (Mr. Irvine).

North of England (Crime)

30. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to help fight crime in the north of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Our strategy for crime prevention applies to all parts of England and Wales. Police manpower and resources have been substantially increased and the largest ever national crime prevention publicity campaign has been launched. Two places chosen for our successful five towns local crime prevention initiative were in the north of England, at Bolton and north Tyneside. Using the valuable experience gained from this initiative, we have launched our safer cities programme. Our intention is to establish that programme in 20 high crime areas over a three-year period. One of the first two safer city areas will be Bradford. Local authorities and local agencies in other northern cities will also be invited to take part in this programme. With Home Office encouragement, inner city task forces and city action teams in the north of England are supporting and encouraging crime prevention work in their areas. Under the auspices of the joint Home Office/community programme crime prevention initiative, a number of schemes in the north of England are involved in a range of crime prevention activity including, for example, lock fitting, security patrols and support for victim support schemes.

Prisoners (Sanitation)

32. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for ensuring access to basic sanitation for all prisoners.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: By 1995, 75 per cent. of all prison places will have access to sanitation, compared with 43 per cent. in 1979. Trial schemes which might accelerate the introduction of integral sanitation are being tested in 13 different establishments.

Broadcasting Standards Council

34. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking an extension of the Broadcasting Standards Council's terms of reference to cover television current affairs and news programmes.

Mr. Renton: Various representations have been received about the sort of programmes on which the Broadcasting Standards Council should concentrate. The main purpose of the council is to act as a focus for public concern about violence and sex on television.

Strip Searches (Gatwick Airport)

35. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men and how many women have been strip-searched by immigration officials at Gatwick airport in the last year; and what guidelines are issued by his Department on strip searches.

Mr. Renton: Paragraph 4(3) of schedule 2 to the Immigration Act 1971 provides that an immigration officer may search the baggage and person of passengers seeking entry to ascertain whether they are carrying relevant documents, but no woman or girl may be searched except by a woman. Immigration officers normally seek the co-operation of Her Maj... Customs in any search of a passenger's baggage or person which may be considered necessary. In practice, immigration officers do not carry out strip searches and no guidelines on this have therefore been issued.

Aldermaston Forensic Science Laboratories

36. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last visited the forensic science laboratories at Aldermaston.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend visited the Home Office forensic science laboratory at Aldermaston and the Home Office forensic science service central research establishment, which is in the same building, on 31 May 1988. He was much impressed by the work in hand.

BBC Local Radio Stations

37. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are used in assessing need in the licensing of British Broadcasting Corporation local radio stations.

Mr. Renton: The BBC has been authorised for several years to extend its local radio services in accordance with the proposals set out in reports by the Home Office working party on local radio, copies of which are in the Library, with the general aim of enabling the BBC to provide such services to as many listeners as practicable within its overall resources and subject to the availability of frequencies for sound broadcasting. It has since been for the BBC itself to decide whether to operate local radio services in the areas concerned.

Passports

38. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current waiting time for

the issue of passports from the Glasgow office; what was the figure one year ago; and if he has any proposals for improvement.

Mr. Renton: The current time for straightforward non-urgent applications at the Glasgow passport office is 39 working days, six days fewer than at this time last year. Urgent applications are given priority. As I announced on 31 March, at column *679*, in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), a number of special measures to reduce delays at United Kingdom passport offices in advance of computerisation of the passport-issuing system, which is due to begin at Glasgow from this July. In the meantime, arrangements are in hand to transfer blocks of postal applications from Glasgow to Liverpool, where delays are shorter.

40. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the proposed introduction of machine-readable passports will affect passport applicants; and if he will make a statement.

44. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on how the proposed introduction of machine-readable passports will affect applicants for passports.

57. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the proposed machine-readable passports will affect applicants for passports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The computerised production of United Kingdom passports in machine-readable form should lead to a faster service in the issuing of passports and reduce delays at overseas frontier controls. Family passports, which include the particulars of a wife or husband, cannot be issued in machine-readable form and are being discontinued, although it will remain possible to include children.

46. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of employees at the passport office and the number of passports issued in 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985 and 1987.

Mr. Renton: The information, covering the six United Kingdom passport offices, is as follows:

Year	*Number of passports issued*	*Highest number of staff in post in any month*[1]	
		Permanent staff	*Casual staff*
1979	1,754,506	901	182
1981	1,748,118	996	119
1983	1,960,687	949	167
1985	1,794,111	938	111
1987	2,141,330	961	232

[1] Includes headquarters staff.

61. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current average time currently taken by the passport office in Petty France to process a passport renewal.

Mr. Renton: The current times for straightforward non-urgent postal applications at London and other passport offices are shown in the table. Urgent applications are given priority.

Passport office	[1] *Delay*
London	61
Glasgow	39
Peterborough	35
Newport	22
Liverpool	14
Belfast[2]	3

[1] Working days
[2] The Belfast Office is by far the smallest

Applicants making inquiries to a passport office about the progress of their application should always quote the date on which it was submitted, their full name and date of birth as this is necessary to locate the relevant papers.

Violent Crime (Sentences)

39. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received calling for longer minimum prison sentences in respect of violent offences.

Mr. John Patten: We receive many letters about sentencing policy and some call for the introduction of minimum sentences. At present, only murder has a mandatory sentence. We believe that minimum sentences for other offences would hinder the courts' ability to take account of the widely different circumstances of each case.

45. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department has taken to ensure that adequate penalties are available to the courts for them to deal with offenders convicted of violent crimes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We consider the existing maximum penalties are generally satisfactory but we keep them under constant review. When necessary, they are increased; the Criminal Justice Bill increases the maximum penalties for child cruelty and certain firearms offences. The Bill also includes a provision which will allow allegedly overlenient sentences to be referred to the Court of Appeal.

Car Crime

42. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures his Department is taking to combat car crime; and if he will make a statement.

68. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures his Department is taking to combat car crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Last November, the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention set up a working group to consider the prevention of car crime. Rover Group, which is represented on the working group, has offered to produce a thief-proof concept car, incorporating a range of the latest technology in car security, for display at this year's standing conference in December.

Three parts of a British standard on vehicle security (mechanical locking systems, security of in-car entertainment equipment and window etching) have been published and further parts are due to be published shortly. We are seeking to have the British standard adopted as a European Community directive.

Our new crime prevention publicity campaign, launched in March, includes information on car crime and the scope for preventing it.

In 1987 the number of offences of theft of or taking of a motor vehicle recorded by the police in England and Wales fell by 5·2 per cent. compared to 1986. Although conclusions should not be drawn from one year's statistics, it is encouraging that this reduction coincided with measures taken by the Home Office and by police forces throughout the country with the specific aim of reducing car crime.

Bookmakers

47. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been made against bookmakers soliciting bets by inducement in the last 10 years; and how many were successful.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available from the records of court proceedings held centrally.

Metropolitan Police (Drug Squad)

48. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers in the Metropolitan police are currently employed upon drugs squad duties; and what was the corresponding figure for 1 June 1986 and 1 June 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner that the numbers are as follows:

	Number
13 June 1988	186
1 June 1987	160
1 June 1986	107

Prisoners (Work Schedules)

49. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to enable more of the prison population to be available for open-air work and to reduce the length of time younger convicts are confined to their cells.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: About 7,500 inmate in work places are provided on prison service farms and gardens and on building maintenance, most of which involve work in the open air for a whole or part of the time, and there are a number of additional places in locally organised open air activities. Governors already make every effort to keep outside work parties up to strength, and to enable inmates to spend the maximum time out of their cells, a key objective for all prison service establishments, but operational and security considerations may constrain the extent to which these two objectives can be achieved. Full account will be taken of both objectives in planning regimes for young offenders under the unified custodial sentence proposed in the Criminal Justice Bill currently before Parliament. In addition, new performance monitoring arrangements being implemented in all establishments will help us to manage regimes effectively.

Punishment in the Community

50. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy with regard to punishment in the community.

Mr. John Patten: We are introducing national standards for community service orders which will ensure that the orders are rigorous and demanding. The standards will deal with the type of work to be done by offenders, the way hours worked are reckoned, standards of performance and behaviour and the action to be taken if an offender fails to comply with the requirements of the order. We propose that some of the requirements should be embodied in statutory rules made under the Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973.

We are also exploring with the probation service the scope for more intensive supervision of some offenders subject to probation orders. As part of this we are encouraging an expansion in the number of day centres run by the probation service. Offenders can be required to attend day centres under the terms of a probation order, and to undergo a programme of activities and education with the primary aim of making them face the consequences of their offending behaviour, both for themselves and for their victims. We have made available new money to approve four new projects in 1988-89 and we have asked the probation service to put forward proposals for other new projects in later years.

At the same time we have been putting the case for developing new disposals which would exercise more control over offenders in the community as well as punishing them for the harm they have done. This would build on the existing work of the probation service and extend it where necessary. We hope to publish proposals on this before long.

Badgers

51. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to prohibit those who have been convicted of badger baiting or the illegal destruction of badger sets from being allowed to own dogs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Badger baiting is an offence under the Protection of Animals Act 1911. A court may disqualify someone from having custody of any animal on a second or subsequent conviction for any offence of cruelty under the 1911 Act. The Protection of Animals (Amendment) Bill, which the Government are supporting, seeks to make such disqualification available on first conviction.

The Criminal Justice Bill currently before Parliament will also empower the court on conviction of any offence to order the forfeiture of any property (which could include an animal) used in the commission of the offence.

Vandalism

52. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking an increase in the penalties available to the courts for offences relating to *(a)* litter, *(b)* graffiti and *(c)* vandalism; and what response he has made.

Mr. John Patten: We have received representations from some hon. Members and members of the public. However, we believe the existing maximum penalties to be adequate. These are 10 years' imprisonment or an unlimited fine, or both, for offences of criminal damage, which include graffiti writing and vandalism, and a fine of £400 for dropping litter.

Commercial Radio Stations

53. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the legal requirement for local news on commercial radio stations; and when he expects to publish the White Paper on the future of broadcasting.

Mr. Renton: We have received a number of such representations, mainly from the National Union of Journalists or on behalf of the NUJ chapels of independent local radio stations. We expect to publish a White Paper on broadcasting within the next few months.

Police Manpower

56. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further plans he has to increase police manpower.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The programme announced in May 1986 allows for 500 posts for provincial forces and 300 for the Metropolitan police in 1989-90. We shall continue to keep the size of planned increases in police establishments under close review.

Sexual Offences Act 1985

58. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to review the working of the Sexual Offences Act 1985.

Mr. John Patten: We are continuing to keep the working of the Act under review.

Independent Television Programme Producers

59. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to promote the greater use of independent programme producers by the British Broadcasting Corporation and the independent television companies; and if he will make a statement.

63. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to promote the greater use of independent programme producers by the British Broadcasting Corporation and independent television companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight).

Police Complaints Authority

60. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking expanded powers and terms of reference for the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 13 June, at column *2*, I answered a question from the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who wanted the authority to be given power to carry out investigations of serious allegations against police officers.

Court Clerks

62. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the difficulties being experienced in the magistrates' courts service as a result of the inability to recruit court clerks; what steps he is taking to remedy the situation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I am aware that concern has been expressed by justices' clerks and others about difficulties in recruiting and retaining court clerks, especially those qualified as barristers or solicitors. I understand that in some areas court sittings have been cancelled and delays have increased. I understand that the joint negotiating committee (JNC) which negotiates pay and conditions of service for magistrates' courts staff is collecting information on recruitment and retention, and that the JNC will take such information into account when considering the pay settlement for 1988. We shall consider very carefully whatever proposals the JNC puts forward.

Broadcasting White Paper

65. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the White Paper on the future of broadcasting.

Mr. Renton: Within the next few months.

South Yorkshire (Crime)

66. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on trends in crime in South Yorkshire.

Mr. John Patten: Figures announced by the South Yorkshire police on 13 May show that in the 12 months to the end of March 1988, crime in South Yorkshire fell by 1 per cent. This is welcome news.

Broadcasting Regulations and Standards

70. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to discuss brodcasting regulation and standards with his counterparts in other European countries.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) on 19 May at columns *544-45*.

Prison Building Programme

72. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the prison building programme.

81. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in providing further places in Her Majesty's prisons; and if he will make a statement on future prison building.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The building programme should provide 22,000 new places by 1995—14,000 in 26 new prisons and 8,000 at existing establishments. Over 6,000 of these places, including six new prisons, have already been built since 1985; and a further two new prisons will open this year. Wherever possible we are accelerating the programme to bring new places on stream at the earliest possible date.

Safer Cities Programme

73. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the budget of the Government's programme "Practical Ways to Crack Crime" includes sums allocated to the safer cities programme.

Mr. John Patten: "Practical Ways to Crack Crime" is the title of a crime prevention handbook made available as part of a national crime prevention publicity campaign launched in March this year. The budget for that campaign does not include provision for the safer cities programme.

Leicestershire Constabulary

74. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next intends to review the established numbers of the Leicestershire constabulary.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The police authority has been informed that its application for an increase in the establishment of the Leicestershire constabulary will be considered again when my right hon. Friend takes decisions on the next tranche of posts to be approved as part of the programme announced in May 1986.

Prison Cells (Photographs)

76. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on the display of pin-up photographs in prison cells and dormitories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The display of such material is a matter for local control by the governor.

Industrial Estates (Crime Prevention)

77. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve security and crime prevention on industrial estates.

Mr. John Patten: We are looking for an extension and an intensification of the considerable efforts that are now being made locally to deal with local problems. We have been pleased to see an increase in the number of industry watch schemes being established around the country, including a particularly successful one at the North Lynn industrial estate in my hon. Friend's constituency. One of the aims of crime concern, the new national crime prevention organisation which was launched on 23 May, will be to stimulate and support local initiatives of this kind.

Crimes of Violence

78. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new measures are being taken by his Department to deter and punish crimes of violence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We are proposing new controls on the possession of firearms and knives. Initiatives are being taken, which follow up studies of violent crime undertaken by the Home Office research and crime prevention units and the standing conference on crime prevention; these include studies of commercial robbery and violence associated with licensed premises. The new national crime prevention publicity campaign deals with the problem of violent crime and advice on prevention is included in the new booklet "Practical Ways to Crack Crime". The safer cities initiatives will provide opportunities to target violent crime locally. Further policy planning is being developed by the ministerial group on crime prevention. We are providing the courts with powers to deal with offenders who commit serious or violent crimes. The maximum penalty for child cruelty is being increased from two to 10 years and for going equipped with a firearm from 14 years to life imprisonment. Within maximum penalties, the sentence given for any particular offence is a matter for the courts but, following guidance from the Court of Appeal, average sentences imposed by the Crown court have increased over the last five years by 30 per cent. for rape and 20 per cent. for offences including serious violence. We are operating a restrictive policy on release on licence and parole for all long-term prisoners.

Graffiti

80. **Mr. Faveli:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further penal measures he contemplates to combat the incidence of graffiti.

Mr. John Patten: We see no need to increase the maximum penalty for criminal damage, which is six months' imprisonment or a £2,000 fine or both on summary conviction, and two years' imprisonment or an unlimited fine or both on indictment. Those sentenced to community service may be required to do work making good damage to the environment. The proposed national standards for community service orders will encourage the probation service to involve offenders who have committed acts of graffiti vandalism in the removal of graffiti.

Neighbourhood Policing (Report)

82. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place a copy of the report on neighbourhood policing in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The report is the property of the Metropolitan police who commissioned the research.

Sunday Trading

83. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his consultations with interested parties on the reform of the Sunday trading laws.

Mr. Renton: Home Office Ministers have met various interested parties concerned with the reform of Sunday trading to try to find a practicable and acceptable solution likely to command a parliamentary majority. Consultations are continuing.

Football Grounds (Violence)

85. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he intends to make to seek to curtail violence at and around football grounds.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The police are conducting a full appraisal of last season, and will feed the results of that review into planning for next season in consultation with football clubs. My noble Friend the Minister of State and my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport

will also be discussing with the police and the football authorities what further joint steps need to be taken to curtail further the violence at football matches.

Identity Cards

86. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further consideration is being given to the possibility of introducing identity cards.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We shall continue to consider the views and representations which are put to us from time to time on this matter. But, at present, we remain to be persuaded that there is a sufficiently strong case for reintroducing identity cards.

Football Matches (Policing)

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with the police about controlling crowd behaviour at football matches.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis yesterday, and this was one of the matters discussed.

Jurors (Vetting)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the total numbers of jurors who have been vetted against police records, the number that have failed selection because of the vetting procedure and the reasons why they failed selection.

Mr. John Patten: No records are at present kept centrally of checks against records of previous convictions carried out by the police for the purpose of ascertaining whether a juror is disqualified from serving.

There are exceptional circumstances in which, in addition, checks may be made of the records of police special branches and inquiries may be made of the security services. Such further checks may only be made with the personal authority of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. The procedures to be followed are set out in the Attorney-General's guidelines, which were published in August 1980 and amended in February 1986.

I understand from my right hon. and learned Friend that during the 12 months ending 14 June 1988 he authorised checks in four such cases. In two cases, no juror was either required to stand by for the Crown or challenged; in each of the remaining two cases, two jurors were peremptorily challenged by the defence; and in one of those cases one juror was required to stand by for the Crown. My right hon. and learned Friend is not able to say whether any of the four jurors peremptorily challenged was so challenged as a result of information obtained during the course of the checks and supplied to the defence by the Crown.

Records are not maintained of the total number of jurors in respect of whom checks authorised by my right hon. and learned Friend are made.

Homicide

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been convicted in England and Wales of homicide since the abolition of the death penalty for murder.

Mr. John Patten: The number of persons convicted in England and Wales of homicide is published annually in table S2.1(A) of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables Volume 2", copies of which are in the Library; the figures for 1966-86 are given in the following table. The corresponding figure for 1987 is not yet available. The Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965 came into operation on 9 November 1965.

Persons convicted of homicide[1] in England and Wales

Year	*Convicted*
1966	254
1967	238
1968	260
1969	254
1970	301
1971	307
1972	312
1973	339
1974	381
1975	377
1976	396
1977	344
1978	334
1979	422
1980	447
1981	388
1982	459
1983	389
1984	403
1985	441
1986	431

[1] Homicide comprises murder, manslaughter and infanticide.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons convicted of homicide in England and Wales and released on licence or termination of sentence have been convicted of homicide again since the abolition of the death penalty for murder.

Mr. John Patten: Thirty-eight persons convicted of homicide in England and Wales and released on licence or termination of sentence have been convicted again of homicide since the abolition of the death penalty for murder. Of those, 15 committed their first offence of homicide before abolition.

Figures for 1966-87 are shown in the following table:

Persons convicted of homicide[1] in England and Wales and released on licence or termination of sentence and convicted of homicide[1] again

Year of second offence	*Number of persons*
1966	1
1967	—
1968	—
1969	—
1970	2
1971	1
1972	—
1973	2
1974	2
1975	3
1976	3
1977	3

Year of second offence	Number of persons
1978	1
1979	2
1980	—
1981	4
1982	2
1983	4
1984	3
1985	1
1986	3
[2]1987	1

[1] Homicide comprises murder, manslaughter and infanticide.
[2] Provisional.

NATO (Chemical and Biological Weapons)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to which sub-committee of NATO's senior civil emergency planning committee the NATO chemical and biological weapons' working party report; when he expects the chemical and biological working party to deliver it's final report; and whether it will be subject to any NATO security classification.

Mr. John Patten: I believe the hon. Member is referring to the NATO civil defence committee group of experts on nuclear biological and chemical warning and detection systems. The group meets regularly and its chairman reports each year to the civil defence committee. Minutes of the group's meeting are unclassified: copies are in the Library.

Security Marking

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the increase in the use of security marking, as recommended by his Department and the crime prevention centre, since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Whilst detailed information is not held centrally, there can be no doubt that security, or property marking, has increased significantly since 1983 and, in particular, that it is being widely used in neighbourhood watch scheme areas and by crime prevention panels. Apart from the results of research undertaken by the Home Office, there is also a large amount of anecdotal evidence from around the country which suggests that security marking acts both as a deterrent and as an important aid to the police in returning stolen property to its rightful owner.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Hurd: There are two equal opportunities officers in the Home Office, one for the prison service and one for the rest of the Department.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advertisements he has placed in ethnic and local press in order to promote greater equality in his Department.

Mr. Hurd: Some of our recruitment advertisements have been placed in the ethnic or local press. All recruitment advertisements refer to our commitment to equal opportunities in employment.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what methods his management training courses and those for members of recruitment and promotion boards address equal opportunities.

Mr. Hurd: The issue of equal opportunities is addressed on these training courses by means of presentations, discussion, and sometimes syndicate exercises.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are women and from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Hurd: The figures refer to non-industrial staff as at 1 May 1988. (Part-timers are counted as whole units).

Staff in post (grade equivalents)	Number of Women	Percentage of Women	Number of respondents to ethnic surveys	Percentage of respondents stating ethnic minority origin
Grades 1-7—1892	204	11	1,565	2
SEO and HEO—2858	567	20	2,284	1
EO—4964	1,512	30	3,233	3·5
AO and below 8698	5,271	61	6,441	8·8
Prison Service unified grades—19178 VI-VIII	1,120	6	5,597	0·6
Total—37590	8,674	23	19,120	4

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to improve equality of opportunity for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades of his Department, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

Mr. Hurd: We are committed to equality of opportunity for all members of staff, and all applicants for appointment. We shall continue to examine recruitment, training and promotion to see what further steps might usefully be taken.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what means he collected data on the ethnic origins and sex of staff; and whether he will place a copy of the collected data in the Library.

Mr. Hurd: Data on the sex of staff is collected routinely. Relevant figures have recently been published in "Equal Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service: Progress Report 1984-87". Data about ethnic origins have been gathered in a series of regional surveys of all non-industrial civil servants, by means of voluntary self-classification. The results of the surveys have been published by the

Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (OMCS) and are available in the Library. All applicants for employment are now asked about their ethnic origin and sex, and OMCS will periodically publish up-dated information.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what disparities in recruitment and promotion he identified by using the data collected on the ethnic origins and sex of staff.

Mr. Hurd: We have monitored all recruitment schemes since October 1987, and have recently begun to examine promotion. The information gathered so far is being assessed, but it is too early to reach firm conclusions.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect he has achieved through the steps he has taken to promote greater equality in his Department for women and for people from ethnic minorities, respectively, by use of part-time work, job-sharing, flexible working hours and arrangements for special leave.

Mr. Hurd: The arrangements for part-time work, job sharing, flexible working hours and special leave apply equally to both sexes and people from all ethnic groups; but they are likely to be particularly useful for staff with domestic responsibilities. At present, the Home Office has nearly 1,000 part-time members of staff, and 21 sets of job sharers; and some 8,000 members of staff are on flexible working hours schemes.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contacts he has made with ethnic minority communities in order to promote greater equality of employment within his Department.

Mr. Hurd: Meetings have been held with ethnic minority community and Church leaders. Details of our equal opportunities policy as it relates to staff have been given to the National Association of Community Relations Councils. Members of the ethnic minorities have addressed internal training course. We have close links with Project Fullemploy, which trains young people from the inner cities, many of whom are from the ethnic minorities. This year, we hope to sponsor a student under the Windsor Fellowship scheme, most of whose fellows are from ethnic minorities.

Forensic Services

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to vary the number of grades of those working in the forensic services of the Home Office.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Proposals for altering the grading structure within Home Office forensic science laboratories are being considered in consultation with the Institution of Professional Civil Servants. The proposed new structure offers a sound basis for the future development of the service and provides reasonable career prospects for staff.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals for reducing the staffing numbers currently employed in the forensic services of the Home Office *(a)* generally and *(b)* at Aldermaston.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Proposals to alter the grading structure within Home Office forensic science laboratories are under consideration, but there are no plans to reduce the overall numbers of staff in the forensic science service, either generally or at Aldermaston.

Crime Prevention

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to encourage greater private sector involvement in crime prevention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg).

Criminal Records (Screening Methods)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the methods used by private contracting companies to screen potential or existing employees for records of criminal offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Private companies are not generally able to receive information from the police to screen potential or existing employees for records of criminal offences.

Paris Commission (Isle of Man)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions his Department has had with the Government of the Isle of Man regarding representation of Manx interests at the recent meeting of the Paris Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A request by the Isle of Man Government to be granted observer status at the recent meeting of the Paris Commission was declined, but the United Kingdom delegation was aware of the position taken by the Isle of Man on Sellafield.

Works of Art (Illicit Movement)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Government plan to implement recommendation 1072 of the Council of Europe concerning the restitution of cultural property that has circulated illicitly; if he will seek to set up tighter controls of the export and import of works of art and to reinforce collaboration with international organisations, and Interpol, in taking action against the illicit movement of works of art; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Parliamentary Assembly's recommendation 1072 (1988) has not yet been the subject of full discussion by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, and it would therefore be premature to consider its implementation by Her Majesty's Government. Statutory control of the import and export of works of art is a matter for my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The facilities of Interpol are available to assist the investigation of the alleged illicit movement of works of art, just as they are for any other criminal investigation.

Custodial Remands

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people awaiting trial before magistrates and Crown courts were held in police cells for each day during May and June in England and Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of prisoners held in police cells in England and Wales on each day from 1 May, most of whom would have been awaiting trial, were as follows:

Date	*Number of prisoners*
1-3 May	1,115
4 May	1,011
5 May	1,004
6 May	977
7-9 May	985
10 May	1,007
11 May	957
12 May	967
13 May	908
14-16 May	931
17 May	984
18 May	905
19 May	910
20 May	900
21-23 May	862
24 May	862
25 May	872
26 May	825
27 May	855
28-31 May	903
1 June	839
2 June	816
3 June	847
4-6 June	787
7 June	817
8 June	752
9 June	756
10 June	745
11-13 June	746
14 June	755
15 June	722
16 June	709
17 June	720
18-20 June	757
21 June	774
22 June	735

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought under section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in *(a)* South Yorkshire and *(b)* the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information available to me, which may be incomplete, shows, in 1986 six prosecutions in South Yorkshire and 112 in England and Wales under section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Traffic (Policing Costs)

14. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total estimated cost of policing traffic for 1988-89.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I regret that it is not possible to provide an accurate estimate of the total cost of policing traffic. However, it has been estimated that in 1985-86 the total costs for the 43 police forces in England and Wales of police officers employed in specialist traffic departments and of traffic wardens was of the order of £200 million. Traffic duties are also carried out by other uniformed officers but it is not possible to produce a separate estimate of the cost of such work.

Newton Lodge Secure Unit (Escape)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of West Yorkshire police as to what representations have been received from the people who live in the vicinity of the secure unit in Wakefield following the escape of Carlos Brigins from Newton lodge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of West Yorkshire police that he has received one petition signed by 47 people who live in Westfield view, expressing their concern about the security of Newton lodge.

PLO Representative (Expulsion)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action had been taken by the Palestine Liberation Organisation representative that led to his recent expulsion.

Mr. Hurd: The application from Mr. Zaki Mohd Ibrahim Abu El Hawa for leave to remain in the United Kingdom as an employee of the PLO office has been refused on the grounds that his departure from the United Kingdom would be conducive to the public good in the interests of national security.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Wheat

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average export price for wheat sold from the European Community in the latest convenient year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: According to information provided by the International Wheat Council, the average price for wheat exported from the European Community (FOB Rouen) in the 1986-87 marketing year (July 1986-June 1987) was $83 (£55) per tonne.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the export restitution per tonne for wheat in pound sterling.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The latest export restitution granted by the cereals management committee on 16 June was 83 ecu or £54 per tonne.

Pig Farming

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to initiate discussions in the Council of Ministers and with the agriculture commissioner about banning the use of dry sow and tether stalls in pig farming.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The European Commission is already working on a proposal concerned with the welfare

of pigs kept in intensive systems. As soon as it is sent to the Council, I shall ensure that United Kingdom representatives play a full part in the discussions, taking account of British interests and the views of the Farm Animal Welfare Council.

Wartime Buffer Depots (Food Stocks)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of his Department's wartime buffer depots in each constituency and the type of food and amount contained in each; how often the contents are checked; how long the food has been in stock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Information about the types of food held in the strategic stockpile is given in section 11 of the emergency planning guidance issued to local authorities by the Home Office and is available through the House of Commons Library. Foods in the stockpile are maintained in good condition through a programme of systematic turnover, and regular inspections by scientific and other staff ensure that their quality is maintained and that they are wholesome, in good condition and ready to eat. In the interests of national security information on the levels and locations of the stockpile is not made available.

Tribunals

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any remuneration is payable to the chairman and other members of agricultural land tribunals; and what is the practice for dairy produce quota tribunals.

Mr. Gummer: Chairmen and deputy chairmen of agricultural land tribunals receive fees and expenses; lay members receive expenses only. I have not received any representations from lay members for the introduction of a fee. The chairmen and other members of the dairy produce quota tribunal receive a daily sitting fee and expenses.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the total administrative costs to his Department of the agricultural land tribunals in 1987-88; and what proportion of such costs were recovered from litigants.

Mr. Gummer: The total administrative costs to my Department of the agricultural land tribunals in 1987-88 were £186,655. None of this is recovered from litigants.

Waste Imports

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those local authorities which have approached his Department in the last 12 months seeking advice on the importation of household waste from overseas.

Mr. MacGregor: The following local authorities have made approaches to my Department on this matter in the last 12 months:—

Cheshire county council
Warrington borough council
Humberside county council.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment is available to him about the hazards to human health, animal and plant life from the importation of domestic refuse from other countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: It is not possible to make a general assessment since the animal health and plant life implications would have to be considered in relation to specific proposals taking into account the disease situation in the country concerned. The human health implications are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Animal Products (Imports)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the companies, and countries of origin, which have been granted licences under the Importation of Animal Products and Poultry Products Order in each year since 1980; and for what products;

(2) if he will list the companies and their country of origin which have been refused licences under the Importation of Animal Products and Poultry Products Order in each year since 1980; and for which products.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Since 1980 my Department has issued 13,000 licences under the order. Information about individual applications is commercially sensitive and could not be disclosed even if it were readily available.

Wild Birds (Shooting)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the tests carried out on the peregrine falcon and goosander shot recently in the Yorkshire Dales national park.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The carcases of a male goosander and a female peregrine falcon were submitted to the Ministry's veterinary investigation centre at Thirsk on 18 May and 1 June respectively with the request for post mortem examination. In both cases the cause of death was considered to be by shooting.

Budgie Seed

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) of 20 June, whether the compromise agreement on prices and support arrangements for agriculture commodities by 11 member states included the increase in the levy on budgie seed proposed by the Commission.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. The compromise package proposed by the presidency and Commission on 17 June, which 11 member states were prepared to accept, included a commitment from the Commission to withdraw its proposal on bird seed.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Investment Programme Allocations

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities have received extra housing investment programme allocations in 1988-89, to provide additional accommodation for the homeless under

the initiative he announced on 24 March; what additional housing investment allocation each local authority has received under this initiative; and how many units of accommodation each local authority has estimated will result, comprising *(a)* local authority dwellings refurbished, *(b)* hostel places provided by local authorities, *(c)* hostel places provided by housing associations other dwellings or places provided by local authorities and *(d)* how quickly these units are expected to become available.

Mrs. Roe: Local authorities estimate that the additional allocations of £28·1 million we have given them following our announcement in March will provide over 3,000 extra units of accommodation for the benefit of homeless people. These units should be available in the current financial year. The further details requested are set down in the table.

Allocations by Region and Authority

Authority	*Allocation £k*	*Estimated Additional Units of Accommodation*			
		LA Dwellings Refurbished	*LA Hostel Places*	*HA Hostel Places*	*Other*
Northern Region					
Derwentside	100·0	6	—	—	—
Gateshead	39·5	—	—	—	5
Newcastle	355·5	48	—	—	14
North Tyneside	60·0	4	—	—	—
South Tyneside	25·0	—	7	—	—
Middlesbrough	170·0	5	6	—	—
Blyth Valley	250·0	—	—	—	12
Wansbech	100·0	—	8	—	—
TOTAL	£1,100·0	TOTAL UNITS 115			
South West					
Bath	70·0	2	—	—	—
Bristol	250·0	50	—	—	—
Woodspring	120·0	—	—	12	—
West Devon	55·0	6	—	—	—
Bournemouth	100·0	5	—	—	—
Christchurch	35·0	4	—	—	—
West Dorset	100·0	—	5	—	—
Forest of Dean	60·0	5	—	—	—
Kennet	120·0	—	—	—	8
N. Wilts	150·0	—	—	8	—
Salisbury	40·0	5	—	—	—
TOTAL	£1,100·0	Total Units 110			
Eastern					
Ipswich	200·0	16	—	—	—
Colchester	100·0	4	—	—	—
Waneney	180·0	—	11	—	—
Tendring	25·0	12	—	—	—
Luton	222·0	—	8	—	—
S. Norfolk	70·0	—	—	—	6
St. Edmundsbury	4·0	2	—	—	—
Basildon	26·0	—	—	—	14
Braintree	90·0	—	4	—	—
N. Beds	83·0	16	—	—	—
TOTAL	£1,000·0	Total Units 93			
North West					
Manchester	1,000·0	—	—	—	75
Bolton	250·0	—	26	—	—
Blackpool	150·0	—	68	—	—
Chester	140·0	5	—	—	—
Stockport	100·0	7	—	—	—
Tameside	160·0	8	—	—	—
Bury	80·0	—	—	—	3
Hyndburn	70·0	15	—	—	—
Lancaster	400·0	20	—	—	10
Blackburn	70·0	—	—	15	—
Wigan	100·0	121	—	—	—
Ribble Valley	50·0	—	10	—	—
Salford	500·0	60	—	—	—
Carlisle	150·0	12	—	—	—
Rossendale	200·0	—	—	—	18
Rochdale	80·0	5	—	—	—
TOTAL	3,500·0		Total units 478		
South East					

Authority	Allocation £k	Estimated Additional Units of Accommodation: LA Dwellings Refurbished	LA Hostel Places	HA Hostel Places	Other
Brighton	525·0	—	—	—	42
Reading	418·0	5	19	—	11
Maidstone	400·0	—	—	—	8
New Forest	400·0	—	20	—	—
Shepway	359·0	—	—	—	41
Oxford	250·0	8	—	—	—
Rushmoor	240·0	—	8	—	—
Test Valley	200·0	—	—	—	10
Gravesham	170·0	—	—	—	5
Guildford	155·0	8	—	—	—
Slough	150·0	—	—	—	32
East Hampshire	130·0	—	—	—	5
Southampton	82·0	4	—	—	—
Hastings	50·0	2	—	—	8
Canterbury	36·0	—	—	—	27
Gillingham	35·0	2	—	—	—
TOTAL	3,600·0		Total units 265		
West Midlands					
Hereford	80·0	—	—	—	12
Worcester	110·0	—	—	—	7
Shrewsbury	80·0	20	—	—	—
North Salop	32·0	—	10	—	—
South Salop	136·0	—	—	—	8
Wrekin	60·0	—	—	—	16
Stoke on Trent	100·0	20	—	—	—
Tamworth	100·0	8	—	—	—
Staffordshire Moorlands	100·0	—	—	—	4
Birmingham	467·0	37	12	—	—
Coventry	85·0	—	25	—	—
Dudley	100·0	10	—	—	—
Walsall	100·0	20	—	—	—
TOTAL	1,600·0		Total units 209		
Yorks and Humberside					
Sheffield	310·0	26	—	—	—
Wakefield	149·0	6	—	—	4
Kirklees	200·0	13	—	—	—
Leeds	200·0	20	—	—	—
Barnsley	128·0	—	—	—	8
Bradford	140·0	—	—	—	15
Hull	180·0	—	—	—	9
Scarborough	30·0	2	—	—	—
Calderdale	63·0	—	6	—	—
Total	1,400·0		Total Units 109		
East Midlands					
Nottingham	514·0	50	—	—	54
Leicester	191·0	—	33	—	16
Derby	200·0	—	—	—	6
East Lindsey	50·0	3	—	—	—
Corby	40·0	—	9	—	—
Mansfield	50·0	—	—	—	3
Bassetlaw	15·0	—	—	—	2
Harborough	40·0	—	—	—	1
Total	1,100·0		Total Units 177		
London					
Brent	1,066·0	36	—	—	7
Bromley	215·0	—	60	—	—
Camden	1,100·0	114	4	—	—
Ealing	792·0	66	—	—	6
Greenwich	801·0	143	—	—	—
Hackney	1,065·0	154	—	—	—
Hammersmith	810·0	12	—	—	77
Haringey	990·0	40	—	—	26
Islington	810·0	100	—	—	38
Kensington	310·0	—	—	20	10
Lambeth	804·0	133	—	—	—
Lewisham	540·0	—	182	—	10

Authority	Allocation £k	Estimated Additional Units of Accommodation: LA Dwellings Refurbished	LA Hostel Places	HA Hostel Places	Other
Newham	1,104·0	27	68	—	—
Southwark	803·0	58	—	—	—
Tower Hamlets	1,160·0	53	—	—	—
Wandsworth	550·0	—	—	—	30
Westminster	780·0	24	—	—	16
Total	13,700·0		Total Units 1,514		

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities bid for extra housing investment programme allocations in 1988-89 to provide additional accommodation for the homeless under the initiative he announced on 24 March; what additional housing investment allocation each local authority bid for under this initiative; and how many units of accommodation each local authority estimated would result, comprising (i) local authority dwellings refurbished, (ii) hostel places provided by local authorities, (iii) hostel places provided by housing associations and (iv) other dwellings or places provided by local authorities.

Mrs. Roe: The information requested is given in the table.

Accepted bids

Authority	Bid £k	Estimated additional units of accommodation: Local authority dwellings refurbished	Local authority hostel places	Housing association hostel places	Other
Northern region					
Gateshead	39·5	—	—	—	5
Newcastle	636·4	82	—	—	14
North Tyneside	960·0	4	—	—	48
South Tyneside	25·0	—	7	—	—
Hartlepool	415·3	22	—	—	—
Middlesbrough	666·0	5	18	—	10
Stockton	250·0	76	—	—	—
Derwentside	730·0	30	—	—	5
Blyth Valley	250·0	—	—	—	12
Wansbeck	100·0	—	8	—	—
South West					
Bath	70·0	2	—	—	—
Bristol	650·0	50	—	14	10
Woodspring	340·0	—	—	34	—
Caradon	65·0	—	5	—	—
Isles of Scilly	180·0	—	—	—	2
Kerrier	100·0	—	8	—	—
Penwith	450·0	—	8	—	—
Restormel	175·0	—	11	—	—
West Devon	55·0	6	—	—	—
Torridge	150·0	—	6	—	—
South Hams	250·0	—	—	—	10
Bournemouth	125·0	5	—	—	—
Christchurch	35·0	4	—	—	—
East Dorset	200·0	—	10	—	—
Poole	120·0	—	5	—	—
West Dorset	500·0	—	12	—	—
Weymouth	220·0	—	25	—	—
Forest of Dean	200·0	10	—	—	—
Stroud	200·0	—	5	—	—
Mendip	150·0	—	5	—	—
Taunton Deane	150·0	—	6	—	—
Kennet	120·0	—	—	—	8
North Wiltshire	300·0	—	—	8	12
Salisbury	40·0	5	—	—	—
Eastern					
Ipswich	400·0	16	15	—	—
Southend	30·0	—	7	—	—
Colchester	100·0	4	—	—	—
St. Albans	200·0	—	—	—	25
Waveney	180·0	—	—	11	—
Tendring	25·0	12	—	—	—
Luton	575·0	—	—	8	20
South Norfolk	70·0	—	—	—	6
St. Edmundsbury	4·0	2	—	—	—
Basildon	26·0	—	—	—	14

Authority	Bid £k	Estimated additional units of accommodation			
		Local authority dwellings refurbished	Local authority hostel places	Housing association hostel places	Other
Braintree	90·0	—	4	—	—
North Bedfordshire	183·0	16	—	—	5
North West					
Manchester	2,860·0	40	—	—	150
Bolton	488·0	52	26	—	—
Blackpool	160·0	—	68	—	—
Chester	145·0	5	—	—	—
Stockport	130·0	7	—	—	—
Tameside	161·0	8	—	—	—
Bury	100·0	—	—	—	3
Hyndburn	71·0	15	—	—	—
Lancaster	600·0	20	—	—	40
Blackburn	75·0	—	—	15	—
Wigan	115·0	121	—	—	—
Ribble Valley	91·3	—	10	—	—
Salford	638·3	60	—	—	6
Carlisle	245·0	85	—	—	—
Rossendale	354·0	—	—	—	30
Rochdale	160·7	5	—	—	2
South East					
Reading	1,363·0	5	19	—	36
Slough	400·0	—	—	—	40
Wokingham	77·0	—	—	—	3
East Hampshire	130·0	—	—	—	5
New Forest	600·0	—	20	—	10
Rushmoor	240·0	—	8	—	—
Southampton	832·0	22	—	—	—
Test Valley	455·0	—	—	—	15
Medina	500·0	—	—	—	15
South Wight	500·0	—	—	—	20
Ashford	450·0	—	—	—	9
Canterbury	36·0	—	—	—	27
Dartford	250·0	10	—	—	—
Gillingham	135·0	4	—	—	—
Gravesham	170·0	—	—	—	5
Maidstone	1,000·0	—	—	—	20
Rochester	780·0	—	—	—	12
Shepway	400·0	—	—	—	50
Thanet	600·0	12	—	—	—
Oxford	2,500·0	51	—	—	—
South Oxon	400·0	—	—	—	8
Vale of White Horse	350·0	—	—	—	10
Guildford	155.0	8	—	—	—
Reigate	500·0	—	—	—	11
Brighton	3,225·0	—	—	—	77
Hastings	180·0	7	—	—	—
Lewes	160·0	6	—	—	6
Wealden	300·0	—	—	—	—
West Midlands					
Hereford	180·0	—		—	14
Malvern Hills	255·0	—	—	6	—
Worcester	496·0	—	—	—	15
Shrewsbury	80·0	20	—	—	—
North Salop	32·0	—	10	—	—
South Salop	256·0	—	—	—	12
Wrekin	60·0	—	—	—	16
Stoke on Trent	100·0	20	—	—	—
Tamworth	100·0	8	—	—	—
Staffs Moorlands	375·0	—	—	—	10
Birmingham	2,950·0	96	187	—	4
Coventry	85·0	—	25	—	—
Dudley	200·0	20	—	—	—
Walsall	430·0	42	—	—	—
Yorks and Humberside					
Sheffield	800·0	40	7	—	12
Wakefield	149·0	6	—	—	—
Kirklees	1,025·0	43	—	—	6
Leeds	737·9	20	16	—	10
Barnsley	339·0	2	—	—	17
Bradford	720·0	—	—	—	57

Authority	Bid £k	Estimated additional units of accommodation			
		Local authority dwellings refurbished	Local authority hostel places	Housing association hostel places	Other
Hull	325·0	—	—	—	13
Beverley	80·0	—	—	6	—
Harrogate	100·0	—	—	—	8
Scarborough	57·0	4	—	—	—
Calderdale	63·5	—	6	—	—
East Midlands					
Derby	240·0	—	2	—	6
Corby	265·0	12	9	—	—
Bassetlaw	15·0	—	—	—	2
Boston	40·0	—	—	—	3
East Lindsey	50·0	3	—	—	—
Mansfield	375·0	—	14	—	5
Nottingham	3,253·0	109	—	—	226
Leicester	873·0	—	33	—	36
Harborough	40·0	—	—	—	1
London					
Brent	4,764·0	54	—	—	160
Bromley	4,973·0	4	186	26	30
Camden	4,240·0	152	4	31	15
Ealing	3,563·0	70	98	29	42
Greenwich	2,774·0	203	—	—	27
Hackney	4,165·0	464	—	—	—
Hammersmith	3,829·0	34	41	—	106
Haringey	4,115·0	20	—	—	105
Hillingdon	960·0	—	—	—	8
Islington	5,000·0	231	97	—	10
Kensington	545·0	—	—	20	24
Lambeth	2,125·0	150	—	36	23
Lewisham	1,790·0	—	197	—	67
Newham	3,666·0	54	86	—	36
Southwark	3,831·0	167	9	—	29
Tower Hamlets	3,673·0	143	—	—	—
Waltham Forest	4,280·0	60	—	62	14
Wandsworth	2,050·0	10	—	—	36
Westminster	3,880·0	127	—	—	94

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he used in selecting *(a)* which schemes should be approved for additional housing investment programme allocations; *(b)* which local authorities should receive additional housing investment programme allocations; and *(c)* what extra housing investment programme allocation each local authority should receive under the initiative he announced on 24 March to provide additional accommodation for the homeless.

Mrs. Roe: In making available the additional £28·1 million of resources announced in March to help homeless people we looked particularly at the number of households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and at the number of people councils were housing as homeless. Authorities made bids, and we responded to those which showed the greatest needs and had reasonable plans for meeting them. My right hon. Friend has since announced a further £21·1 million, which we are aiming to distribute in the same way.

Urban Regeneration

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much is being spent per head in *(a)* the northern region and *(b)* Scotland in support for urban regeneration, factory provision and derelict land clearance.

Mr. Trippier: Estimated spending on my Department's urban regeneration programmes in 1987-88, per head of the northern region's population, was £22·7, of which spending on derelict land reclamation was £3·86 per head.

Expenditure in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland; expenditure on factory provision generally is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Note:

1. Urban regeneration programmes include urban development grant and urban regeneration grant (now city grant), urban development corporations, the urban programme, derelict land grant and estate action.

2. Mid-1987 population estimates are not yet available; mid-1986 estimates have therefore been used.

3. Urban programme, urban development grant and urban regeneration grant include some spending on factory provision.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what planning procedures will apply to proposals for the construction of a new terminal at Heathrow airport or the development of a rail link to central London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Application for planning permission for a new terminal would need to be made to the local planning authority in the normal way. The promoters of any new rail link from the airport to central London could

be expected to seek parliamentary authorisation via a private Bill as is normal in the case of authority to construct railways. When such a Bill is passed, the works have permitted development rights under class XII of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977.

Right to Buy (Southwark)

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mrs. S. G. Beale of her home at 4 Lyall avenue, Dulwich, London SE21 8QS from Southwark borough council.

Mrs. Roe: According to Southwark council this delay was the result of staff shortages, particularly in the valuers' department.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the categories of corrosive, flammable and toxic substances dangerous to life; whether he has plans to extend the list and to widen the scope of the definition of special waste; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to define hazardous waste and to establish controls over its disposal; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has any plans to introduce amendments to the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980 to provide greater protection to the environment from waste disposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The term hazardous waste is not well defined as almost all waste is potentially hazardous in some circumstances. In United Kingdom legislation the term "special waste" is used to describe wastes which are dangerous or difficult to dispose of. The Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980 list 31 substances and the criteria to be applied to them to determine whether they are in a form which poses a risk to human life. The regulations impose controls on the movement of these wastes so that waste disposal authorities can ensure they are sent to facilities licensed to deal with them.

A consultation paper reviewing the special waste regulations is planned for later this year. This will include consideration of the extent to which the list of substances and the toxicity criteria require amendment to ensure proper protection for human health and the environment.

Nine Ladies

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take about the poor condition of the bronze age stone circle known as Nine Ladies on Stanton moor.

Mr. Moynihan: This is a matter for English Heritage. I gather it has a programme of remedial works in hand and is monitoring the condition of the site carefully. I am sure that the chairman, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, will be happy to provide my hon. Friend with further details.

Sheltered Workshops

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether, following the passage of the Local Government Act 1988, those sheltered workshops recognised by the Government as priority suppliers will still be afforded opportunities by local authorities to tender or quote for suitable work; and whether having had any submissions to local authority supplies officers suitably examined, such workshops will be offered part or all of a contract at a price acceptable to the supplies officer and subject to the provisos of the local authority preference scheme;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of the Local Government Act 1988 on the observation by local authorities of the requirements of the Treasury priority supplies scheme, with regard to sheltered workshops for people with disabilities.

Mr. Howard: It is, of course, for individual local authorities to decide from whom to invite tenders, but they have previously been encouraged to give preferential treatment to priority suppliers, including sheltered workshops, on the lines of the Treasury priority suppliers scheme which is binding on Exchequer Departments. The effect of part II of the Local Government Act 1988 is to prevent local authorities giving preferential treatment to priority suppliers other than their own sheltered workshops. I understand, however, that most of the business awarded by local authorities to priority suppliers is placed with their own sheltered workshops and the Act should not therefore have any adverse effect on the business levels of sheltered industry.

Thorncliffe Hotel

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set up an inquiry into allegations of squalid conditions and abuse of residents by staff at Thorncliffe hotel for the homeless; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: No. The London borough of Hounslow, in whose area the Thorncliffe hotel is situated, has very wide ranging powers to deal with hotels used as temporary accommodation for homeless families.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigations his Department has made of the legal aspects of constructing a nuclear waste disposal facility *(a)* under the sea bed, accessed from a coastal land base and *(b)* under the sea bed, accessed from an offshore structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Any proposal to develop a facility under the sea bed would be subject to a number of legal considerations. These will depend on the specific nature and location of the proposal.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what research by private companies his Department has wholly or partially financed regarding the disposal of nuclear waste *(a)* under land, accessed from a land base, *(b)* under the sea bed, accessed from a coastal land base, and *(c)* under the sea bed, accessed from an offshore structure; and if he will make a statement.

(2) what research his Department has undertaken regarding the disposal of nuclear waste *(a)* under land, accessed from a land base; *(b)* under the sea bed, accessed

from a coastal land base, and *(c)* under the sea bed, accessed from an offshore structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department of the Environment has undertaken no research directly related to the disposal of nuclear waste since 1982 when Nirex was established. The company now has responsibility for such research. Work undertaken up to that time has been published and made available to Nirex.

Sellafield (Discharges)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has received from the Government of the Isle of Man regarding radioactive discharges from the Sellafield nuclear facility.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend has received no recent representations from the Government of the Isle of Man on radioactive discharges from BNFL's Sellafield site.

Special Sites (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of sites of special interest in South Yorkshire which have been damaged or destroyed since 1981; and by what causes.

Mr. Moynihan: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that no SSSI in South Yorkshire has been destroyed since 1981. The following five sites have sustained some damage.

Site	*Type and cause of damage*
(i) Hatfield Moor (ii) Thorne Crowle and Goole Moors	Peat/gravel extraction, carried out with the benefit of long-standing planning consents.
(iii) Roche Abbey Woodland	Arson/wood cutting—short-term damage by third parties from which the site is expected to recover.
(iv) Sandall Beat	Motor cycling—short-term damage by third parties from which site is expected to recover.
(v) Shirley Pool	A small area of the 15½ ha site has been damaged by agricultural operations but overall scientific interest of the site has not been significantly affected.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the name, size, type of habitat and whether privately or publicly owned of *(a)* sites of special scientific interest, *(b)* national nature reserves, *(c)* local nature reserves, *(d)* sites protected by the Ramsar convention and *(e)* sites protected by the European Community birds directive, in South Yorkshire.

Mr. Moynihan: The information is as follows:

(a) SSSIS (as at 21 June 1988)

Site name	*Site area (ha)*	*Habitat type*	*Ownership*
Anston stones wood	33·7	Woodland/grassland	Public
Ashfield brick pits	0·6	Geological/physiographical	Private
Bilham sand pits	0·2	Geological/physiographical	Private
Bradgate brickworks	0·9	Geological/physiographical	Private
Cadeby quarry	97·0	Geological/physiographical	Private
Denaby Ings	24·5	Swamp, fen, inundation, communities, grassland	Private
Edlington wood	99·7	Woodland	Private
Hallam moors (part)	200·0	Moorland	Public/private
Hatfield moor	199·1	Woodland, raised bog, open water	Private
Houndkirk moor	19·6	Wet heathland	Public
Kinder and Bleaklow (part)	500·00	Moorland	Public/private
Lindrick golf course	34·7	Woodland, scrub, grassland	Private
Little Don stream section	1·1	Geological/physiographical	Public/private
Maltby low common	3·8	Grassland	Private
Neepsand brickworks	6·3	Geological/physiographical	Public
Neepsand railway cutting	1·4	Geological/physiographical	Public
Owston hay meadows	5·5	Grassland	Public/private
Potteric Carr	118·6	Woodland, swamp, fen, inundation, communities, open water	Public/private
Roche abbey woodlands	52·8	Woodland	Private
Sandall Beat	63·9	Woodland	Public
Shirley pool	15·5	Woodland, grassland, swamp, fen, inundation, communities, open water	Private
Sprot Gorge	76·9	Woodland, swamp, fen, inundation communities, grassland	Private
Stannington Ruffs	2·4	Geologrical/physiogaphical	Public/private
Thorne, Crowle and Goole moors	1,918·6	Lowland raised bog	Public/private
Totley wood	14·7	Woodland	Public
Went Ings meadows	5·9	Grassland	Private
Warncliffe craggs	14·5	Geological/physiographical	Public
Wood lee common	6·3	Geological/physiographical	Private

(b) National nature reserves

None

(c) Local nature reserves

Site name	Site area (ha)	Habitat type	Ownership
Sandall beat	63·9	Woodland	Public
Calton marsh	2·2	Marsh	Public

(d) Sites Designated Under the Ramsar Convention

(e) Sites Designated Under the EC Birds Directive (79/409)

No sites have been designated. The NCC has identified two sites which it considers meet the criteria for listing under the convention and/or directive. The boundaries of the sites have yet to be determined.

Site Name	Designation Proposed	Site Area (ha)	Habitat	Ownership
Thorne and Hatfield moors	Ramsar SPA	To be determined	Lowland, raised bog, open water, woodland	Public/Private
Peak District Moors	(Part) SPA	To be determined	Moorland	Public/Private

Westminster Hall (Plaques)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are to be taken to ensure that the commemorative plaques in the floor of the Westminster Hall can be refurbished so that the lettering can be read without difficulty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I shall consider what might be done to refurbish the plaques and will write to the hon. Gentleman in due course.

Water (Aluminium Content)

Mr. Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information was made available to *(a)* water authorities and *(b)* his Department to consumers prior to May 1988 on the risks associated with the addition of aluminium components to water.

Mr. Moynihan: Consumers who requested information have been told that current aluminium concentrations in water supplies are not a health risk. I also refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 17 June, at column *360*.

Rating Reform

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now publish the Price Waterhouse report on the implementation and collection of the community charge; if he will announce what further resources will be made available to local authorities in recognition of these costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed copies of the Price Waterhouse report in the Libraries of the Houses of Commons and Lords. The report is in two volumes. Volume 1 contains the consultants' forecasts of costs of setting up and collecting the community charge. Volume 2 consists of a summary of best practice which should help to reduce the cost of implementing the new arrangements.

The consultants confirm the Government's estimate that the cost of collecting the community charge from each chargepayer would be very similar to the present average cost for collecting rates from each ratepayer.

Since there are twice as many chargepayers as ratepayers, this would produce collection costs in 1990 of between £379 million and £435 million, compared with the £200 million it now costs to collect rates each year.

The report finds wide variations in the present productivity of different rating departments. The consultants believe that economies of up to 15 per cent. could be achieved if all authorities were to perform as well as the most efficient for each category of authority.

The consultants estimate that current expenditure on preparation in 1989-90 could be around £122 million but note that improved productivity could reduce this to £99 million, compared with the Government's initial estimate of £70 to £90 million.

The report's estimate of the cost of administering community charge benefit and of operating the phasing in of the new arrangements in parts of inner London during 1990 to 1994 are in line with Government estimates. The report also confirms that little expenditure is likely to need to be incurred by authorities before April 1989.

Authorities have already been provided with sufficient resources to absorb the limited expenditure likely to be incurred in 1988-90 through the provision for current expenditure made in the RSG settlement for that year and the additional capital allocation of £25 million announced on 24 March 1988.

For 1989-90 we shall take account of the Price Waterhouse findings in our proposals for the RSG settlement. We will be making additional capital allocations when we have further considered the figures contained in the report. Final announcements on provision will follow the usual consultation with local authority associations on RSG and in the specification of capital allocations which will follow the Chancellor's autumn statement.

In the meantime, I am arranging for a summary of these findings together with the whole of volume 2 to be widely circulated to local authorities in order that they may consider the many opportunities now open to them for introducing the community charge as efficiently and economically as possible.

Paris Commission

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who will be representing Her Majesty's Government at the annual meeting of the Paris Commission to be held in Lisbon on 15 to 17 June.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* Her Majesty's Government were represented by officials from the Department.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Governments of *(a)* the Isle of Man and *(b)* the Irish Republic concerning their proposals to the next annual meeting of the Paris Commission on 15 to 17 June.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* I have received no representations from either the Isle of Man or the Irish Governments concerning any of the proposals discussed at this year's meeting of the Paris Commission.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the level of community charge for spending at needs assessment which would apply in 1988-89 if the proposed local government finance system were in operation; and what assumptions are made to arrive at that answer.

Mr. Ridley *[pursuant to his reply, 13 May 1988, c. 267]:* I have today placed in the Library illustrative community charge figures for English authorities based on 1988-89 budgets.

The figures have been calculated on the same basis as those for 1987-88 and are subject to the same limitations. In particular they are not a prediction of the community charges which will apply in practice. Those will depend on the spending decisions of individual local authorities at that time.

The figures do, however, illustrate the community charge levels associated with current levels of overspending. The Government's proposals would allow all authorities to finance expenditure sufficient to provide a standard level of service for £202 in 1988-89. The extent to which the full community charge may exceed £202 is simply a measure of the overspending by local authorities in that area. Likewise, a full community charge of less than £202 is a measure of the economy of the authorities concerned. The level of the community charge in this way provides a ready reckoner enabling charge payers to compare the amount which their councils spend with what they need to spend and with the performance of other authorities.

I am pleased to say that compared with the figures based on 1987-88 expenditure levels published on 29 June last year, many of the highest community charges have been substantially reduced. This is largely the result of Government action to reduce the spending of the highest spending authorities in London through rate capping. In particular, the illustrative charge for Camden is £143 lower. For Hackney and Lewisham charges are £113 and £100 lower, respectively, than before. I hope these reductions will continue. There is still time for overspending councils to reduce their spending before the community charge is introduced in 1990 and before the safety net grant is withdrawn finally in 1994. In particular authorities in inner London will have the opportunity to deal with the overspending of the ILEA and all authorities will be able to benefit from increased competitive tendering.

The published figures also include later estimates of the effect of moving to a uniform business rate, or NNDR, although estimates of the effects of the revaluation will not be available before the autumn. The latest figures suggest that 60 per cent. of non-domestic hereditaments would have benefited from the NNDR on its own. There will be particular benefits to businesses in the north and the inner cities. For example, poundages would reduce by 27 per cent. in Manchester, 31 per cent. in Sheffield and 26 per cent. in Liverpool. The NNDR will continue to be particularly good news for areas of above average unemployment where high rates have slowed economic regeneration.

Businesses generally will also benefit from the linkage of business rates to the RPI. Rate increases this year for some businesses were over 20 per cent.—five times the rate of inflation.

In those cases where there will be significant increases in rate bills arising from either the national non-domestic rate or the concurrent revaluation of non-domestic property, there will be generous transitional arrangements which will limit year-on-year changes in rate bills. The Government are also taking powers to provide for a lower annual limit on rate increases for small businesses.

I have also placed in the Library estimates of the impact of a local income tax and of the combination of a local income tax and capital value rates which have been revised in the light of the new expenditure information.

DEFENCE

Equipment Exhibition

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether all overseas delegations will be allowed to see all the exhibits on display at the British Army equipment exhibition.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes.

AWACS

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many United Kingdom companies have benefited so far from offset from the AWACS purchase.

Mr. Sainsbury: Boeing has, to date, submitted two reports to my Department which are now being evaluated. These reports show that approximately 120 United Kingdom companies have so far received contracts placed by Boeing and its sub-contractors under the AWACS offset programme.

Submarines

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many new Royal Navy submarines have been launched over the past five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: Five Royal Navy submarines have been launched over the past five years.

Communications Relay Station (Rugby)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the very low frequency communications relay station at Rugby was first made available to United States forces.

Mr. Freeman: The site at Daventry was first made available to the United States in 1961. It has not been used since 1978 but it is proposed to reactivate it next year.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which United States military service is responsible for the very low frequency communications relay station at Rugby.

Mr. Freeman: The United States microwave communications relay facility at Daventry is the responsibility of the United States air force.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the United States very low frequency communications relay station at Rugby includes both transmitter and receiver facilities.

Mr. Freeman: The United States communications station at Daventry is a microwave relay facility not a very low frequency system. It includes both transmitter and receiver facilities.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the relationship between the British-owned and operated very low frequency communications facilities at Rugby and the United States very low frequency communications relay station at Rugby.

Mr. Freeman: The British-owned very low frequency communications facility at Rugby is a British Telecom transmitting station. The United States microwave facility referred to in my answer of 7 June at columns *556-57* is at Daventry. There is no connection between the two stations.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the United States very low frequency communications relay station at Rugby is notified to pilots of aircraft as a high intensity radio transmission area.

Mr. Freeman: The United States microwave communications relay facility at Daventry is not a high intensity radio transmission system and consequently is not notified to pilots as such.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for or on behalf of which United States forces communications systems the very low frequency communications facility at Rugby is operated; if Her Majesty's Government have any right of access to the traffic carried via the very low frequency communications facility at Rugby; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The United States microwave communications relay facility at Daventry is part of the digital European backbone communications system. This provides communictions for United States forces stationed in Europe operating in support of NATO, though other NATO nations, including the United Kingdom, have access to the system.

Royal Naval Armament Depot, Beith

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what area outside his Department's property at the royal naval armament depot, Beith explosive hazard areas extend; what is the total civil population resident within these areas; and what plans exist for evacuation of the resident population in the event of an accident at the depot.

Mr. Freeman: The explosive hazard areas surrounding the royal naval armaments depot, Beith are detailed on the safeguarding map held by the local planning authority, Cunninghame district council. I am sending a copy of this map to the hon. Member.

It is estimated that approximately 130 people are resident in these areas. Detailed standing orders exist to cover potential fire and explosion situations and frequent exercises are held to test these procedures. In addition copies of the RNAD emergency plans are held by the local fire and police authorities. These arrangements would enable immediate action to be taken to protect the public in the unlikely event of a serious fire or accidental explosion at RNAD Beith.

RAF (Drink and Drugs)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the substance of allegations about drinking and drug taking by airmen working on Royal Air Force aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: Recent press reports are based on generalised and unevidenced allegations which cast a slur on the high professional standards maintained by dedicated air crew and ground crew throughout the Royal Air Force. The service will, of course, investigate any specific complaints which are made against it.

Procurement Executive

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of project managers in the Procurement Executive were *(a)* uniformed, *(b)* civilian with previous military service and *(c)* civilian without previous military service in the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force controllerates in 1980, 1985 and at present.

Mr. Sainsbury: In 1985 civilian staff occupied 77 per cent. of project manager posts in the sea systems controllerate, 50 per cent. in the land systems controllerate and 90 per cent. in the air systems controllerate. Military staff occupied the balance of posts. These proportions have remained broadly constant up to the present day. No figures are available for distribution between civilian and military staff in 1980. The information requested about the proportion of civilian project managers with previous military experience could be provided only at a disproportionately high cost to the Department.

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum permitted height for fixed-wing military aircraft operating *(a)* over the landward portion of the Castlemartin danger area, D 113, *(b)* over the landward portion of the Manorbier danger area, D 115, *(c)* over the landward portion of the Pendine danger area, D 117, *(d)* in the Salisbury main training area and *(e)* in the Shawbury area of intense aerial activity.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* The information concerning the minimum permitted operating heights for military fixed-wing aircraft is as follows:

(a) 15,000 ft over Castlemartin range, when the danger area is activated. When inactive, a 250-ft minimum separation distance (MSD) is operated;

(b) 30,000 ft from Monday to Friday between 8 am and 5 pm and 23,500 ft at weekends and on public holidays (unless this needs to be raised to 30,000 ft on occasion) over Manorbier range danger area. At other times, a 250-ft MSD exists;

(c) 27,000 ft over P&EE Pendine danger area when this is activated. When not activated, a 250-ft MSD is used;

(d) the minimum operating height varies between 2,000 and 15,000 ft according to the type of live firing taking place on the five United Kingdom danger areas on Salisbury Plain training area. When live firing is not taking place, 250-ft MSD is followed;

(e) the Shawbury area of intense aerial activity extends from the surface to 6,000 ft and covers part of low-flying area (LFA) 9 which is a user area for intensive helicopter pilot training. Military fixed wing aircraft are allowed to fly through LFA 9 at low level (below 2,000 ft) with prior clearance from RAF Tern Hill.

As regards all the above areas, aircraft may, however, transit danger areas when these are activated at the 250-ft MSD with prior clearance from the danger area co-ordinating authority.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Rule Changes (Advertising)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what national newspaper or television advertising has already been carried out by his Department to inform or explain to the public the current social security rule changes; whether any such advertising is to be carried out and at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: In the period between July 1986, when the Social Security Act became law, and March 1988, the end of the 1987-88 financial year, £1·41 million was spent on advertising. The split between television and press advertising was as follows:

£ thousands

	TV	*Press*
General reform advertising	—	243
Pensions	64	141
Maternity benefits	—	344
Housing benefits	—	55
Family credit	322	—
Income support	—	126
Widows benefits	—	49
Funeral benefits	—	59

Planned spending in the 1988-89 financial year is approximately £5 million. The split between television and press advertising of expenditure already committed is as follows:

£ thousands

	TV	*Press*
Pensions	1,162	286
Housing benefits	—	263
Family credit	2,106	709

Children in Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take, in the light of the Economic and Social Research Council's report, entitled the "Physical and Mental Health of Children in Care: Research Needs", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

The Economic and Social Research Council has a research initiative on children in care in which the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Health and Social Security are both collaborating. The papers which make up this report were commissioned by the ESRC and were intended to review the need for research and to establish the research base for the council's initiative. As such the report is primarily for the council itself to consider but the Departments will take account of what it says in their approach to the further development of the initiative.

Ambulances

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the criteria used in determining the recommended intervals between replacements of *(a)* National Health Service ambulances and *(b)* National Health Service cars.

Mrs. Currie: Because of the rust-free body specification, high maintenance standards, practical experience and depreciation factors, the recommended interval between replacements for ambulances is after 140,000 miles or seven years.

For National Health Service vans replacement is recommended after 70,000 miles or five years, thus reflecting general fleet management practice for this type of vehicle, modified to meet the specialised circumstances of the National Health Service.

Decisions on replacement of individual vehicles are taken in the light of local usage and circumstances.

Nurses (Job Vacancies)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many unfilled nurses' jobs there are in Doncaster; and what is the national average figure.

Mr. Newton: Information about nurse vacancies is not collected centrally. However, a sample survey for the nurses' pay review body showed that at 31 March 1987 about 3·5 per cent. of all nursing and midwifery posts had been vacant for three months or more.

The hon. Member may care to write to the chairman of Doncaster health authority for details of the position within the authority.

Surplus Property (Sales)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Beverley, 7 June, *Official Report*, column *563*, what guidance has been supplied to regional health authorities concerning the retention of receipts from the sale of surplus assets by district health authorities, other than the general statement of policy contained in the answer.

Mrs. Currie: No guidance has been supplied. It is for regions and districts to allocate sales proceeds in the light of the Department's policy and the circumstances of each individual transaction.

Income Disregard

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what categories of unemployment claimants are entitled to the higher rate weekly income disregard; and what plans there are to extend this concession to other categories.

Mr. Portillo: Unemployed claimants are entitled to the higher disregard on earnings if they are receiving, or satisfy the condition for receiving, the disability premium or the lone parent premium; or are members of a couple who have been in receipt of benefit continuously for two years. Certain types of employment also attract the higher disregard, namely employment as a part-time fireman, an auxiliary coastguard, in the part-time manning or launching of a lifeboat and a member of any territorial or reserve force.

There are no plans to extend this concession.

S Manual

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what amendments have been made to the S manual at paragraphs S1287 to S1307, inclusive, since the release of amendment 34.

Mr. Portillo: None. From 11 April the instructions contained in these paragraphs of the S manual have been replaced by part 25 of the adjudication officers' guide. Although the format has altered the guidance remains the same.

Regional Health Authorities (Trade Union Nominees)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what timetable he is working to in relation to the appointment of trade union nominees to regional health authorities; and what criteria for selection he employs.

Mrs. Currie: The terms of office approximately half the members of regional health authorities end on 30 September 1988. My right hon. Friend appoints members because of their own personal qualities and not to represent any particular interest and will consider all nominations, including those from wider trade union movement, on that basis.

Income Support

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many claimants are in receipt of income support transitional protection of *(a)* £1 to £5, *(b)* £6 to £10, *(c)* £11 to £15 and *(d)* over £15;

(2) how many claimants are in receipt of income support transitional protection, by county, and by Department of Health and Social Security local office.

Mr. Portillo: This information is not currently available. Statistical information about claimants receiving income support transitional protection will appear in the annual statistical inquiry. This will be published in summer 1989. The information will, however, be published only on a Great Britain or DHSS regional basis.

South Manchester (Hospitals)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations his Department has had concerning south Manchester's hospitals; what action is being taken; and when a definitive statement can be expected in regard to the matters raised by the deputation received by the Minister for Health on 13 June.

Mr. Newton: We have received representations from a number of right hon. and hon. Members.

Following my meeting with the deputation on 13 June, which included the right hon. Member, I wrote to the chairman of the South Manchester community health council on 15 June. This letter was copied to the right hon. Member. It confirmed that discussions on changes to patient services were continuing at local level and no final decision had been reached on them at that stage.

Dental Services

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the maximum that a dentist may charge for dental work undertaken by the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: The maximum charge for a course of treatment required to secure dental fitness under the general dental service is currently £150. Where an NHS denture needs to be replaced as a result of an act or omission on the part of the patient an additional charge may be made.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he has any plans to require dentists to inform their patients of the cost of treatment before it is undertaken;

(2) if he has any plans to require dentists to provide an itemised bill detailing the costs of treatment.

Mrs. Currie: As indicated in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249), the Government's proposals for a revised contract for general dental practitioners include a requirement to explain the treatment plan to patients and the probable cost.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to require dentists to display details of their charges in their surgeries.

Mrs. Currie: We have agreed with representatives of the profession a requirement that National Health Service general dental practitioners should display information about National Health Service charges. A poster giving information about National Health Service dental treatment and charges is already supplied free of charge to all National Health Service general dental practitioners. Information on charges is also contained in leaflet D11 available from local social security offices.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations or evidence he has received alleging that dentists are encouraging patients to undergo unnecessary treatment.

Mrs. Currie: The committee of inquiry into unnecessary dental treatment chaired by Mr. S. G. Schanschieff, which reported in 1986, concluded that a small but significant

amount of unnecessary treatment was undertaken in the general dental services; but that this was not so great that patients should lose confidence in their dentists, the vast majority of whom continued to provide a thoroughly professional service. The committee made a large number of recommendations, the majority of which have been, or are in process of being, implemented. Since publication of the committee's report the Department is not aware of receiving any direct representations or further evidence that dentists generally are encouraging unnecessary treatment.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will detail the average number of beds in private residential homes for the elderly and handicapped for each year for which the figures are available since 1979;

(2) if he will detail the average number of beds in local authority residential homes for the elderly and handicapped for each year for which the figures are available since 1979;

(3) how many private residential homes registered under the Registered Homes Act have rooms containing three or more beds;

(4) what is the latest estimate for the numbers of elderly and handicapped persons living in private residential establishments with fewer than four beds.

Mrs. Currie: The average numbers of places, that is beds, per local authority and private residential care homes for elderly or handicapped people in England at 31 March in the years 1979 to 1986 are contained in the table. Information is not available centrally on residential establishments with fewer than four beds or on the numbers of beds in bedrooms within establishments.

Year	*Local authority homes*	*Private homes*[1]
1979	43·3	15·6
1980	43·3	15·7
1981	43·2	15·6
1982	43·4	15·7
1983	43·4	15·3
1984	43·6	15·4
1985	43·4	15·4
1986	43·3	15·2

[1] Private homes registered under the Registered Homes Act 1984; that is homes with four or more beds.

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the average number of beds in local authority residential establishments for children and young persons for each year for which the figures are available since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: Information on the average size of residential homes is not available centrally.

Details of the number of children and young persons in care accommodated in community homes are given in the table.

Table

Children and young persons in care of local authorities and accommodated in community homes[1] at 31 March, 1979-86, England.

England	
As at 31 March	*Number*
1979	29,300
1980	28,800
1981	26,500
1982	23,800
1983	20,100
1984	16,500
1985	14,700
[2]1986	13,700

[1] Maintained, controlled and assisted community homes.
[2] Provisional.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many private nursing homes registered under the Registered Homes Act have rooms containing three or more beds.

Mrs. Currie: Information about the number of beds in individual rooms in nursing homes is not collected centrally.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding his policy towards medical practitioners with pecuniary interests in particular private, residential or nursing homes treating residents or patients in those homes; and what response he made.

Mr. Newton: None.

Consultants

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why consultants holding part-time contracts with the National Health Service are allowed to include time spent travelling between home and hospital or clinic as part of their working hours.

Mr. Newton: Because this was agreed in 1949 as part of the hospital medical and dental staff terms and conditions of service, which are subject to negotiation between the health departments and the professions.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what percentage of consultants were employed full time within the National Health Service for each year since 1979;

(2) what percentage of consultants employed within the National Health Service held maximum part-time contracts for each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The latest available information is set out in the table.

Permanent paid NHS Consultants (Medical and Dental) at 30 September, England
Whole time and maximum part-time staff as a percentage of all Consultants (Numbers)

	Whole time	*Maximum part-time*
1979	41	26
1980	43	34
1981	44	33
1982	46	33
1983	47	32
1984	47	32
1985	46	33
1986	46	33

Note: Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.

Social Work (Diploma)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding his

refusal to fund the introduction of a new qualifying diploma in social work; and what was the nature of these representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have received about 20 letters, which express continuing support for the introduction of a new qualifying diploma in social work. I have also met representatives of the parliamentary panel on the personal social services and of the professional social work associations to discuss their views.

Griffiths Report

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to implement the Griffiths report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 29 March at columns *439-40*.

Social Security (Scrutiny Body)

Mr. Gow: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has now received the reports of the scrutiny body looking at the social security organisation and the study of the location of headquarters work.

Mr. Moore: I have received both the report of the regional organisation scrutiny team and the report of a study team appointed to look at the possibilities of relocating work currently based at DHSS headquarters in London. Copies of both reports have today been placed in the Library.

Both reports express the views of the respective study teams and both raise important and wide-ranging issues which affect many aspects of the Department and the way it functions. I will wish to consider these carefully before making decisions. That consideration will proceed with all possible speed.

I accept in principle that some relocation of work from London will provide a better way for the Department to conduct its business. The aim is to improve the efficiency of our operations so as to deliver a better service to those who use them.

Leeds Western Health Authority (Chairman)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce the appointment of the new chairman of Leeds western health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 29 March at column *449*.

Northern Region

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what action is being taken by his Department following the 1987 report by Professor Peter Townsend and colleagues on inequalities in health and deprivation in the northern region, a copy of which has been sent to him;

(2) if he will make specific provision to assist those areas identified as having the worst health and being the most deprived in the 1987 report by Professor Peter Townsend and colleagues on inequalities in health and deprivation in the northern region, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Newton: The report was commissioned by Northern RHA and raises issues for its consideration which it is no doubt taking into account in its planning.

Electricity and Gas (Deductions)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest figures for the number of people on supplementary benefit who had direct deductions for *(a)* electricity and *(b)* gas.

Mr. Portillo: The number of cases with deductions for electricity and gas is as follows. Where a person has deductions for both electricity and gas, they are included in both figures.

	Number
Electricity	163,000
Gas	138,500

Source: Annual statistical inquiry, May 1987.

Newton Lodge

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will take steps to provide for more staff to be employed at the Newton Lodge secure unit in Wakefield so as to prevent any further escapes by inmates, following the escape on Friday 10 June of Carlos Brigins; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps are being taken to protect the security of patients at the Pinderfields, Stanly Royd, and Fieldhead hospitals in circumstances when inmates at the Newton Lodge secure unit are allowed in the grounds of those hospitals unaccompanied and without surveillance; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make a statement on the security arrangements applied to inmates at the Newton Lodge secure unit in Wakefield when they are allowed out and away from the secure unit on parole.

Mrs. Currie: The running of Newton Lodge regional secure unit, including security arrangements, is the responsibility of Wakefield health authority. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairman of that authority for the information he is seeking.

Drug Abuse (Publicity)

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make available copies of the studies evaluating the efforts of the drug prevention and anti-injection publicity campaigns launched in September 1987.

Mrs. Currie: We have received reports from two studies commissioned to evaluate the effects of the drug prevention and anti-injecting campaigns and copies of the research studies have been placed in the Library.

In summary, the findings show that general awareness of advertising and publicity against heroin is as high as it has ever been since the Government's drug prevention campaign started in 1985. The drug prevention campaign seems to have consolidated young people's negative attitudes towards drug misuse, and resistance to trying drugs remains at a high level. The anti-injecting campaign clearly communicated the risk of becoming infected with HIV through sharing equipment. The television commercial in particular was seen as accurate, authentic, and hard

to deflect. It was praised by the majority of injectors interviewed. There was nothing in the research to suggest that the anti-injecting campaign had in any way undermined the drug prevention message by making other ways of misusing drugs seem more tempting.

Oral Tobacco Products

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations have been received by his Department in respect of the proposed safety regulation under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 to ban oral tobacco products; what proportion of these were in support of and against the proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[pursuant to her reply 8 June 1988, c. 592]:* The Department has now uncovered further representations which were overlooked due to a backlog in mail. The correct total for separate representations received by 26 May is 328. Of these, 300 were in support of the Government's proposal and 28 were against.

Health Care (Spending)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the proportion of gross domestic product devoted to health care for each year since 1980 including expenditure on nursing home care.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 27 May 1988]:* The figures in the following table have been derived from the United Kingdom national accounts prepared by the Central Statistical Office and show the percentage of GDP spent *(a)* on health services and *(b)* on private sector residential and nursing homes in the period 1980 to 1986. For the latter series it has not been possible to separate expenditure on nursing home care from that on residential homes.

Percentage of GDP spent on health services by sector and on private sector residential and nursing homes

Year	*Health Services*			*Private sector residential and nursing homes*[1]
	Public	*Private*	*Total*	
1980	5·2	0·6	5·8	0·1
1981	5·4	0·6	6·0	0·1
1982	5·2	0·7	5·9	0·1
1983	5·4	0·7	6·1	0·2
1984	5·4	0·8	6·2	0·3
1985	5·2	0·8	6·0	0·3
1986	5·3	0·8	6·1	0·4

[1] Figures in this column show the estimated annual total of public and private expenditure on such homes. Because these estimates are based on a series of assumptions regarding the proportion of residents in such homes receiving supplementary benefits, attempts to further disaggregate the total expenditure figures would result in spurious accuracy.

Private Operations

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library a copy of the report on certain expenditures by North Staffordshire and Shropshire health authorities on private operations, being prepared for him by his Department's statutory auditor, group 4, Birmingham, when that report is completed; and if he will make a statement.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the date of publication of the audit report of the plan by the West Midlands regional health authority for North Staffordshire and Shropshire district health authorities to purchase private operations; and if he will make it his policy to place a copy of the report in the Library as soon as it is available.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 7 June 1988]:* The statutory audits of North Staffordshire and Shropshire district health authorities are due to take place over the next few months. Audits take place annually and are not confined to specific areas of expenditure. Statutory auditors' reports normally consist simply of the formal certification of a health authority's annual accounts. They only contain additional comments when the auditors wish to raise matters which they feel are of particular concern. While the audits have yet to take place, there is no reason to believe that the pilot project to make use of the private sector facilities for treatment for National Health Service patients will be one.

The advice issued to health authorities by the Department is that they should normally take any issues raised formally in such reports in open session. We do not consider it necessary, therefore, to place copies of the reports in the Library of the House.

Nurses

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what plans he has to reduce student nurses' registered service contributions on National Health Service wards;

(2) what plans he has made to deal with the staffing gap that will result from making student nurses supernumerary on National Health Service wards;

(3) what percentage of the time student nurses presently spend working directly on wards in National Health Service hospitals is devoted purely to training as opposed to giving patient care; and how this calculation is made;

(4) by what date state enrolled nurse training will be phased out;

(5) whether all those state enrolled nurses eligible for conversion courses to train for qualifications to become state registered nurses will have those courses made available to them on request;

(6) what is the level of the student nurse bursary being proposed in plans to implement Project 2000;

(7) if he will make a statement as to the proposed role, annual remuneration and training programme to be carried out by nurse helpers, as defined in Project 2000.

Mr. Newman: In accepting the broad thrust of the project 2000 proposals put forward by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting my right hon. Friend indicated that further work needed to be done before final decisions could be reached on some of the proposals. We need to be satisfied that the UKCC's proposals for widening the entry gate to qualified nurse training and the development of proposals for the new support worker grade will successfully make good the gap in the work force resulting from the fall in school leavers, the cessation of enrolled nurse training and the lower rostered contribution of students.

Implementation of Project 2000 will be phased over a number of years, with the new support worker grade being phased in, in parallel with the phasing out of enrolled

nurse training. It is likely that the support worker will undertake a variety of roles, but the exact nature of the work and the training required have yet to be determined.

My right hon. Friend made it clear that agreement to the cessation of enrolled nurse training would be dependent on the successful outcome of the further work referred to above. Meanwhile, health authorities will be encouraged to expand the already growing number of courses for enrolled nurses to convert to the first (registered nurse) level.

We shall set the size of the proposed student nurse bursary, having regard to the level of support for other students among other factors, when we have received firm proposals from the statutory nursing bodies as to the duration and shape of the new courses.

In work for the UKCC, management consultants Price Waterhouse estimated the current service contribution of student nurses to be 59 per cent. In arriving at this figure it took account not only of the time spent in clinical placements as part of the establishment, but the relative efficiency of a student compared with a permanent member of the work force. While Project 2000 will not significantly lessen students' clinical experience, placements in the clinical environment will in future be determined by the educational needs of the students. The detail, and therefore the extent of the reduction in the service contribution which can be restored and relied upon, has yet to be determined.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 24 June 1988

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Land Registry

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General how many people were employed at Her Majesty's Land Registry during each of the past 10 years; how many are now employed by the Land Registry; and whether he has any proposals for increasing staffing of the Land Registry.

The Attorney-General: Staff in post as at 1 April in each of the last 10 years:

	Permanent	*Casual*	*Total*
1988	8,200·0	728·0	8,928·0
1987	7,310·0	608·0	7,918·0
1986	7,029·0	262·5	7,291·5
1985	6,820·5	329	7,149·5
1984	6,676·5	316·5	6,993·0
1983	5,818·0	712·5	6,530·5
1982	5,546·5	361·5	5,908·0
1981	5,680·5	3·0	5,683·5
1980	5,898·0	45·0	5,943·0
1979	5,543·0	47·0	5,590·0
1978	5,309·0	42·0	5,351·0

There are current proposals for additional resources to meet the Land Registry's growing commitments, which have nearly trebled over the last 10 years.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General what was the cost of staffing the Land Registry during the last year for which records are available; what was the total cost of operating the Land Registry during that year; and what was the total in fees received by the Land Registry during that year.

The Attorney-General: The provisional memorandum trading account for 1987-88 shows staff costs (including superannuation) of £94·04 million, total costs of £121·14 million and income from fees of £141·07 million.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General what is the minimum, maximum and average time taken to process an application to the Land Registry to complete a registration.

The Attorney-General: The minimum processing time can be as low as one week. Applications so processed include the registration of transactions where the register has already been computerised, expedited applications and many straightforward applications where no points arise. The average time for processing substantive applications at the end of May 1988 was 16 weeks.

No information is available as to the maximum processing time, but many complex applications take some considerable time to process and can be dependent on the ability of applicants to deal satisfactorily with departmental requisitions.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General how much profit he estimates was made by the Land Registry during each of the last 10 years for which records are available.

The Attorney-General: The surpluses shown in the Land Registry's memorandum trading accounts for the last 10 years are as follows:

	£ million
1978-79	5·93
1979-80	8·13
1980-81	1·17
1981-82	6·93
1982-83	12·40
1983-84	10·18
1984-85	20·64
1985-86	16·98
1986-87	26·02
1987-88	19·93

The figures for 1987-88 are, as yet, only provisional.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General on what basis fees are payable to the Land Registry for the registration of properties assessed.

The Attorney-General: Section 145 of the Land Registration Act 1925 (as amended) provides for the making of fee orders, under which applications to register conveyances and transfers are charged on an ad valorem basis related to the price or value of the property. Most minor applications are either charged at flat rate or there is no fee. The current fee order is the Land Registration Fee Order 1988.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will establish an inquiry into the operation and staffing of Her Majesty's Land Registry; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No. The National Audit Office has conducted a review of the operations of Her Majesty's Land Registry and the Comptroller and Auditor General reported to Parliament the findings of the review on 28 July 1987. The Committee of Public Accounts has considered the report and the report on its findings is awaited.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General how long he estimates it takes for applications to the Land Registry to be opened; and how long it takes thereafter for required payments received from applicants to be banked.

The Attorney-General: Applications to the Land Registry are opened on the day of receipt and cleared funds in respect of the cheques associated with these applications are normally available five working days later.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will institute a system whereby interest is paid to applicants on moneys received from them, where registration is not completed within two months of the date when fees paid to the Land Registry have been banked.

The Attorney-General: No.

Secret Intelligence Operations (Member's Book)

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Attorney-General what action he proposes to take in the light of the publication of the

book "The Friends—Britain's Post War Secret Intelligence Operations" written by the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason).

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 22 June, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. There is no legal action that I propose to take in the light of the publication of this book.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committee on Scottish Affairs

Mr. McLeish: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will estimate the administrative costs of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs in each of the years 1983 to 1987 inclusive.

Mr. Beith: The administrative costs of Select Committees borne on the House of Commons Vote include the costs of visits in the United Kingdom and overseas, the fees and expenses of specialist advisers, witnesses' expenses, entertainment expenses and the costs of preparing minutes of evidence for publication. Details of all such costs in respect of the Scottish Affairs Committee in the financial years 1983-84 to 1986-87 are set out in the Select Committee returns for each Session. The totals of these costs were as follows: 1983-84, £12,162; 1984-85, £38,612; 1985-86, £13,487; and 1986-87, £23,535.

Printing and publishing costs are borne by Her Majesty's Stationery Office and are also shown in the Sessional Returns. Staff serving the Committee varied from time to time in this period, and had other responsibilities in addition to their work for the Committee; it is not possible, therefore, to give precise figures of staff costs. For most of this time, however, the staff of the Scottish Affairs Committee consisted of a deputy principal clerk, an assistant clerk and a secretary.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has carried out monitoring exercises in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively.

Mr. Brooke: In 1982 the Department carried out a study of career opportunities for women in the Treasury, which included the monitoring of relative success rates for men and women at an internal promotion board from the EO to the HEO grade and a comparison of these rates with relative assessments of long-term potential.

This year the Treasury will be participating in the OMCS review of career development issues, including the promotion process and allocation to duties, by gender and ethnic origin. This will involve monitoring two internal promotion boards during 1988 and calculating the likely representation in five and 10 years' time of women and ethnic minority staff in the grade levels covered by the exercise. This information will be used to judge future equal opportunities performance.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what monitoring of ethnic recruitment to his Department has been undertaken; and what have been the results of that monitoring.

Mr. Brooke: The Treasury introduced the ethnic monitoring of recruitment for the AO and AA grades in London in July 1987. This is now carried out continuously. Results suggest that the number of appointments offered to members of ethnic minorities is broadly in proportion to the number of eligible candidates applying from each ethnic group.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what extra allocations of funds have been made, other than those related to the nurses pay settlement, to *(a)* the Scottish Office, *(b)* the Northern Ireland Office and *(c)* the Welsh Office since he published his public expenditure White Paper; and for what purposes.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* Only a few low-cost adjustments in 1988-89 amounting to about £3 million in Scotland, and £1 million in Wales, and no change for the Northern Ireland Office.

VAT

Mr. Madel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to provide that, where a company incurs liability for value added tax or deposits taken from customers for goods not yet supplied, value added tax may be collected on a quarterly basis for all the deposits the company has taken, rather than the company being required to raise a second invoice for each customer's job to account for the value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* Existing legislation already provides for this where a company supplies goods to customers who are not registered for VAT, since there is no obligation in such cases to issue a tax invoice for either the deposit or the main supply. However, if a tax invoice were not issued to a registered customer in respect of VAT charged on a deposit, the customer would not, in turn, be able to reclaim the VAT.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Holloway Prison

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many hours a day women spent out of their cells, on C1 psychiatric unit, Holloway, from 14 May to 14 June; and how many women have attended the skills training unit each day during the same period of time.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the period 14 may to 14 June 1988, inmates on C1 unit spent an average of 5·7 hours out of cell each day.

The table gives the number attending the skills training unit each weekday.

Weekday	*Number attending skills training unit*
May	
16	18

Weekday	*Number attending skills training unit*
17	4
18	17
19	14
20	16
23	17
24	5
25	14
26	17
27	14
30	[1]0
31	6
June	
1	9
2	8
3	10
6	12
7	4
8	15
9	12
10	[1]0
13	12
14	5

[1] The unit does not open at weekends or on public holidays. On 10 June the unit remained closed because of shortage of staff.

Passport Applications

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the current average time taken in dealing with full passport applications at each passport office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave yesterday to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett).

Political Asylum

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applicants for political asylum in 1988 to date have been refused permission to enter or remain in the United Kingdom; to what countries they have been sent upon refusal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Recent press reports have referred to information gathered weekly from Heathrow and Gatwick airports and Dover, for guidance of management. These describe the number of asylum applications made by passengers arriving at those ports, and the initial action taken. The returns do not trace further action, for example, to grant temporary admission or to remove a passenger who was initially detained.

The latest available refugee statistics are for 1987 and were published earlier this month in Home Office statistical bulletin 16/88, copies of which are in the Library.

Itinerants (Stonehenge)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Wiltshire as to what recent checks have been made by the police concerning the insurance, road fund tax and where applicable MOT certificates of vehicles in the convoy of itinerants at present in the vicinity of Stonehenge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Wiltshire that over the period of the summer solstice police resources were concentrated as a priority on the maintenance of public order and prevention of mass trespass in the Stonehenge area. Nine vehicles were impounded following the attempted occupation of Stonehenge by a group of people on 16 June. Subsequent checks showed that eight of these were unroadworthy and they have been retained by the police.

Concessionary Television Licences

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications have been received recently by the National Television Licence Records Office from the Walsall metropolitan borough council on behalf of pensioners for the concessionary licence fee; how many were approved and on what dates; and how many submitted before the change in the regulation remain outstanding and for which proportion.

Mr. Renton: Three applications have been received since 1 January this year, all of them before the new regulations came into force. They were approved on 4 February, 29 March and 12 April. There are no applications outstanding. However, I understand the hon. Member has been in correspondence with NTVLRO about some further applications which Walsall metropolitan borough council says it sent earlier this year, but of which there is no record of receipt.

Identity Cards

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards identity cards being issued for all citizens.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The question of the issue of identity cards has been considered from time to time, but we remain to be persuaded that there is a sufficiently strong case for their introduction.

Anabolic Steroids

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the report from the Home Office advisory committee on drugs relating to anabolic steroids.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* We expect to receive advice shortly from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs on extension of the controls in the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to anabolic steroids. A further announcement will be made when this advice has been received and considered.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Reform

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the overall additional estimated costs that will be incurred by local authorities as a result of the implementation of the provisions of the new Education Reform Bill.

Mrs. Rumbold: The cost of the progressive implementation of the measures in the Education Reform Bill for schools and further education will vary from authority to authority according to developments already under way. Some redirection of recurrent and capital resources will be required. My right hon. Friend has announced proposals for the education support grants programme in 1989-90, which includes some £65 million new expenditure related to the Bill's provisions for financial delegation and the national curriculum. A significant part of the programme of in-service training grants, currently supporting expenditure of £270 million, will be directed towards the implementation of the Bill's provisions in 1989-90 and subsequent years. There will also be implications for capital programmes within the Government's plans to enable local education authorities and voluntary bodies to spend more than £750 million on improving school buildings between now and 1990-91. The Government have set aside £65 million over the next three years mainly for the development and administration of assessment procedures, for which local authorities will not be charged fees. The Bill's provisions for the transfer of funding responsibility for polytechnics and colleges to central Government will lead to a reduction in spending and grant for local authorities of some £800 million from 1989-90.

Home Education

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children in England are educated at home *(a)* by their parents and, *(b)* by local education authority tutors; and what is the cost per child per week.

Mr. Dunn: The precise information requested is not available. Based on local education authority returns to the Department of Education and Science, 8,266 pupils in England were receiving education otherwise than at school in January 1987 under arrangements made by the authorities. The number includes those being taught in hospitals, excluding hospital special schools, in other groups such as units for spastics, assessment centres and community homes as well as at home. Figures for the various categories are not available; nor are the separate costs of this provision.

Pupil Costs

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the cost of educating a child *(a)* at a state primary school and *(b)* at a state secondary school in England.

Mr. Dunn: The average net institutional recurrent expenditure per pupil in England in 1986-87 was £900 in maintained primary and £1,340 in maintained secondary schools.

Net institutional recurrent expenditure covers the cost of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not cover the cost of school meals, central administration and inspection, debt charges or revenue contributions to capital outlay.

Truancy

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many prosecutions for truancy of pupils aged *(a)* under 11 years of age, *(b)* 11 years, *(c)* 12 years, *(d)* 13 years, *(e)* 14 years and *(f)* 15 years were instituted in each of the past five academic years;

(2) what is the average time taken to bring court proceedings against parents whose children play truant from school.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department does not collect statistics on court proceedings related to truancy.

Itinerants (Stonehenge)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps are taken to ensure that children of school age living in vehicles attached to the convoy of itinerants currently in the vicinity of Stonehenge are educated in accordance with the provisions of section 36 of the Education Act 1944; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is the duty of parents to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suited to their age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. It is for local education authorities to ensure that the parents of any children of compulsory school age in their area are performing this duty.

Children (Statistics)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide figures for the number of children in England *(a)* in care, *(b)* in psychiatric units and *(c)* in residential schools for non-attendance at school; and if he will give the overall costs and costs per week per child for each case.

Mrs. Currie: I have been asked to reply.

I regret that not all the figures requested are available; the available information is as follows.

At 31 March 1986, it is estimated that there were 66,700 children in care of local authorities in England.

In 1985-86, the total expenditure on children in care was £406 million, an average cost of £144 per child per week (provisional figure). Expenditure on some items, including administration and field work, cannot be separately identified for children in care and is not included here. Children on whom little or no expenditure has been incurred (for example children in care living at home) have been excluded in calculating the average cost.

There were 500 children aged under 16 years resident in NHS mental illness hospitals and units in England at 31 December 1986.

It is estimated that there were 1,900 children in care for non-attendance at school under section 1(2)(c) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 at 31 March 1986. It is not known how many of these children are in residential schools.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the average payment of regional selective assistance in *(a)* development areas and *(b)* intermediate areas under (i) the old system of grants and (ii) the new system.

Mr. Atkins: The average payment of regional selective assistance by my Department per completed project where the offer was made in the period 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1988, when the revised regional development grant scheme was terminated, was £58,862 in development areas and £33,359 in intermediate areas. There have not yet been any payments to projects which have received offers since 1 April 1988. Regional selective assistance has been interpreted as covering project and training grants.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the average payment per job for regional selective assistance in *(a)* development areas and *(b)* intermediate areas.

Mr. Atkins: The average payment per job by my Department for regional selective assistance on completed cases where the offer was made in the period 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1988 was £2,710 in development areas and £2,099 in intermediate areas. Regional selective assistance has been interpreted as covering project and training grants.

Leeds-Bradford Airport

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimate he has made of the likely impact on industry in Yorkshire of an extension of operating hours at Leeds-Bradford airport.

Mr. Atkins: Both the Association of Yorkshire and Humberside Chambers of Commerce and the Yorkshire region of the Confederation of British Industry have recently supported the case for extension of operating hours at the airport. I see no reason to doubt that an extension would be of benefit to industry in the region.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimate he has made of the likely impact on industry in Yorkshire and Humberside region of a high speed rail link through the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Consideration of high-speed rail links through the Channel tunnel from regional centres is still at an early stage. My Department keeps closely in touch with British Rail and business nationally and regionally over the way services can be developed once the tunnel is open in 1993, in order to maximise the benefits to the business community.

PRIME MINISTER

European Monetary System

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the operation of the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

The Prime Minister: I will be discussing a number of aspects of monetary co-operation with my European colleagues at the European Council meeting to be held in Hanover on 27-28 June, but the Government's position on the matter to which my hon. Friend refers is well known.

Security Services (Employment Policy)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister whether the security services are an equal opportunity employer; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The legislation governing equal opportunities recognises the need for exceptions in relation to members of the armed forces and the safeguarding of national security.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the take-up of certificated and standard housing benefit separately in 1985, showing in each case *(a)* the total likely to be entitled to benefit, *(b)* the proportion receiving benefit, *(c)* the numbers not receiving benefit, *(d)* estimated amount of benefit unclaimed, and *(e)* the average weekly amount unclaimed, broken down into pensioners, sick and disabled, families with children, and one-parent families.

Mr. Portillo: We expect to publish housing benefit take-up estimates based on the 1985 family expenditure survey by the end of the year.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of senior citizens who have lost *(a)* some and *(b)* all of their housing benefit as a result of changes in regulations implemented in April 1988 by region for (i) Scotland, (ii) England, (iii) Wales and (iv) Northern Ireland.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available.

Patient Information Systems

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the extent to which computerised patient information systems and inter-hospital information systems have assisted development of the desired service cost indicators; and where such systems have been implemented.

Mr. Newton: All district health authorities have systems for processing the cost and activity data required to derive specialty costs, the major components of which will be drawn from computerised patient information systems.

Child Benefit

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much would be saved if child benefit were given in full up to £100 a week gross earnings, and phased out between £100 and £140 gross earnings for one child and £100 and £180 gross earnings for two children, if no payment were made for more than two children.

Mr. Nicholas Scott: The precise savings from such a measure would depend on the exact nature of the scheme adopted. However, assuming that families who lose child

benefit would be compensated, as appropriate, through income support and housing benefit, and also through family credit (via the addition of £7·25 per week to the child credits), the estimated net saving, in a full year at 1988-89 prices and benefit levels, would be of the order of £2·7 billion.

Income Support

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the value of income support, including premiums where appropriate, for *(a)* a single person aged under 25 years, *(b)* a single person aged over 25 years, *(c)* a couple over the age of 18 years, *(d)* a couple with two children aged under 11 years and *(e)* a one-parent family with one child under 11 years of age as a proportion of average net earnings for all males and all manual males.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is given in the table:

Income support benefit rates—as percentages of average earnings (11 April 1988)

Recipients under pension age	[1] *Per cent.*	[2] *Per cent.*
Single person		
Aged 16-17	11·1	13·3
Aged 18-24	15·0	17·8
Aged 25 and over	19·2	22·8
Married couple	28·4	33·5
Married couple plus 2 children	37·3	43·4
One parent family with one child (under 11)		
Aged 16-17	21·2	24·9
Aged 18 and over	28·7	33·6

[1] Average net earnings: All males.
[2] Average net earnings: All manual male workers.
Notes:
1. Net average earnings are taken to be provisional gross average earnings less tax and national insurance contributions at the non-contracted out rate, plus child benefit where appropriate.
2. The calculations for one parent families incorporate the additional personal tax allowance in respect of a one parent family.

Erith and District Hospital

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received during the past six months on the future of Erith and district hospital.

Mrs. Currie: One letter has been received from a member of the public.

1991 Census

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his proposals for the 1991 census are on schedule.

Mrs. Currie: Yes.

Orthotists and Prosthetists

Mr. Orme: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received representations from the Orthotists and Prosthetists Training and Education Committee, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation and other organisations on the need to increase the number of trained orthotists in England and Wales; if he has received representations of the best methods for training such professional staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: No representations have been received on this subject. The Orthotists and Prosthetists Training Council is currently considering future training needs for orthotists.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give his best estimate of the anticipated shortfall in the number of trained prosthetists in England and Wales; what action is being taken on behalf of his Department in *(a)* the short term and *(b)* the long term to overcome the shortfall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Orthotic and Prosthetic Training and Education Council is currently considering the future training needs of prosthetists, in consultation with the Disablement Services Authority, which is concerned with prosthetic services in England.

Lost or Stolen Payments

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what, on average, is the waiting time by region for a claimant reporting a payment lost or stolen to be informed of the outcome of inquiries.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the period laid down in his Department's guidelines for dealing with a claimant who reports that a payment is lost or stolen and the claimant being told of the result in investigations; and whether he will publish the guidelines in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Portillo: The administrative procedures followed when a claimant reports a loss of benefit vary according to the benefit concerned, the method of payment and the circumstances of the loss.

Itinerants (Stonehenge)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total amount of benefits currently being paid by his Department to claimants who are living in vehicles attached to the convoy of itinerants currently in the Stonehenge area of Wiltshire; what steps are taken by his Department to ensure that no benefits are paid in respect of fraudulent claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: A total of £6,383·57 has been paid in benefit to claimants who were part of the convoy in the Stonehenge area of Wiltshire. All income support claimants are required to produce evidence of identity and all statements are subject to verification.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for 1979 and for the latest available year the total figures showing the change in the number of beds in the areas covered by the following health authorities: North West Thames, South West Thames, North East Thames, South East Thames, Basingstoke, Winchester, Portsmouth, Southampton, Isle of Wight, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury, Wycombe, East Berkshire, West Berkshire and Oxfordshire; and if he will also give the totals for acute bed changes.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* The available information is given in the table.

Average daily number of available beds

Region/District Health Authority	All Specialties 1979	All Specialties 1986	All Specialties Percentage change	Acute Specialties 1979	Acute Specialties 1986	Acute Specialties Percentage change
North West Thames[1]	27,904·5	22,904·7	−17·9	11,287·9	8,602·3	−23·8
North East Thames[1]	29,442·8	25,982·0	−11·8	13,500·6	11,732·2	−13·1
South East Thames[1]	28,407·9	23,095·6	−18·7	12,082·8	10,096·8	−16·4
South West Thames[1]	26,242·0	21,141·4	−19·4	8,347·5	6,831·6	−18·2
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	1,633·7	1,414·9	−13·4	487·8	501·3	2·8
Winchester	920·9	842·8	−8·5	413·1	376·3	−8·9
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	3,057·5	2,656·6	−13·1	1,142·2	1,088·2	−4·7
Southampton and South West Hampshire	3,112·4	2,859·6	−8·1	1,369·7	1,315·4	−4·0
Isle of Wight	946·0	683·8	−27·7	310·6	298·0	−4·1
Milton Keynes[2]	—	470·3	—	—	273·5	—
Aylesbury Vale	1,872·1	1,421·6	—	628·6	572·7	—
Wycombe	777·7	739·9	−4·9	474·6	432·8	−8·8
East Berkshire	1,773·3	1,537·1	−13·3	948·5	771·5	−18·7
West Berkshire	2,987·4	2,335·6	−21·8	1,029·3	916·3	−11·0
Oxfordshire	3,288·4	2,951·0	−10·3	1,649·8	1,624·8	−1·5

[1] Data for 1979 and 1986 is not comparable due to NHS restructuring in April 1982
[2] Milton Keynes is included in Aylesbury Vale for 1979

Patients (Expenditure)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the average annual expenditure per patient in 1986-87 by *(a)* the Northern regional health authority and *(b)* Sunderland district health authority.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 24 March 1988]:* For patient treatment costing purposes all hospitals are classified into a series of standard types which reflect the principal use to which their beds are allocated and an overall average cost or expenditure per patient is thus not determined.

In terms of 1986-87 per capita expenditure (that is, total revenue expenditure on hospital and community health services, etc. per head of resident population) the figure for Sunderland health authority (£206) is typical of the overall average for all sixteen district health authorities within the northern region (£208).

Smokeless Tobacco Products

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will detail the scientific and research evidence which has been produced to him in support of the proposed ban on all smokeless tobacco products;

(2) on what statistical scientific and analytical information his Department has based its proposed ban on all smokeless tobacco products.

Mrs. Currie *[pursuant to her reply, 23 march 1988, c. 153-54]:* A number of references were omitted from the list placed in the Library. A revised list has been placed in the Library. The Government's proposals rest on the evidence listed and the conclusions based on it of the committee on carcinogenicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment, those of the independent scientific committee on smoking and health, the report of the United States Surgeon General of April 1986 on evidence of links between smokeless tobacco products and oral cancer, the findings set out in the International Agency on Research into Cancer's report on evaluation of carcinogenetic risks to humans (volume 37) and the views of a WHO group of experts meeting in June 1987. A press release summarising their views has also been placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Contracts (Regional Policy)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration is given to regional policy implications when contracts are placed by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: As I said to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 10 November 1987, at column *158*, it is our policy to place equipment orders, wherever practicable, by competitive tendering. This policy has brought significant benefit to the defence budget and to the taxpayer and has promoted the health and efficiency of the defence industry. Where appropriate, however, we do take into account wider, relevant factors, including local employment levels.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is now in a position to state how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are *(a)* woman and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Sainsbury: As at 1 May 1988 the number of women industrial and non-industrial employees was 40,800 (28·6 per cent.). As there are some 430 different non-industrial grades within the MOD the following breakdown relates to stated grades and equivalents: grades 7 and above, 135 (2·8 per cent.), SEO/HEO, 1,452 (7·1 per cent.), EO, 4,141 (16·5 per cent.), AO and below 24,791 (65·2 per cent.), industrial grades 10,281 (19 per cent.). In common with what is happening in other Government Departments, the voluntary survey of the ethnic origins of MOD staff is being conducted in six phases. The results of the three phases completed were published in December 1987 by the Cabinet Office. The figures from the first three phases show that the number of respondents from the ethnic minorities

employed in the MOD was as follows: grade 7 and above 31 (1 per cent.), SEO/HEO and equivalent 91 (0·9 per cent.), EO and equivalents 148 (1·2 per cent.), AO/AA and equivalents 598 (2·9 per cent.). The overall figure was 868 (1·9 per cent.). No figures are available yet for industrial staff.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he has taken to encourage more applicants from the ethnic minorities; and when and with what results and by which sections within his Department such positive action was taken.

Mr. Sainsbury: The MOD has implemented a programme of positive action to encourage more applicants from the ethnic minorities. The actions already taken include advertising in the ethnic press, featuring ethnic minorities in new recruitment brochures, sponsoring students under the Windsor fellowship scheme, and participating in a scheme to provide training for potential executive officer recruits. Further actions are being given consideration.

The actions are primarily being undertaken by MOD recruitment authorities serving units located in areas with a high ethnic minority working population. It is too early to say whether this programme of positive action has had an effect on the number of ethnic minorities applying for posts in the MOD.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what efforts he has taken to increase the number of part-time posts in his Department and with what results; and how many and what percentage of such part-time posts are occupied by women and by people form ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Sainsbury: As at 1 May 1988 there were 3,849 part-time posts in the MOD. Of these 3,545 (92 per cent.) are occupied by women. Figures for ethnic minorities in part-time posts are not available. The MOD actively encourages part-time working and job-sharing. As part of the MOD equal opportunities plan, instructions on part-time working have been issued within the Department, and job-sharing trials are being conducted in a number of local areas.

Submarines

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will now make a statement on the disposal of the Dreadnought submarine;

(2) whether he has made a decision on the disposal of Polaris submarines once they are decommissioned.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to the answers I gave to the hon. Member on 28 January 1988, at column *307*.

Persian Gulf (Naval Co-operation)

Mr. Wood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the arrangements for co-operation between the Royal Navy and other Western navies in the Gulf.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Following discussions held in the framework of the WEU between the United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands, the three Governments have agreed to integrate their mine countermeasures forces operating in the Gulf with effect from 1 July. The three Royal Navy, one Belgian and one Dutch MCMVs will operate as a joint force, with logistic support provided by RN or RFA vessels. RN destroyers or frigates of the Armilla Patrol will provide any necessary protection for mine countermeasures operations. Operational tasking will be co-ordinated from the headquarters of the RN's commander-in-chief fleet at Northwood, although in the case of the Belgians and Dutch ultimate command over their own ships will be retained by their respective national naval authorities. The British commander of the integrated flotilla will be assisted by a staff officer provided alternately by the Belgian and Dutch navies. The joint operation has been designated Calendar after the world war H code name for the successful tri-national mine clearance of the Scheldt estuary in 1944-45.

Overall, the United Kingdom remains committed to close co-ordination with other Western navies also working to preserve international freedom of navigation in Gulf waters, and the arrangements for co-operation between the Royal Navy and other Western navies in the Gulf remain in other respects unchanged.

ENVIRONMENT

Stud Farms (Rates)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount was collected in rates from stud farms and other horse breeding establishments in each of the last two years; if he has any estimate of the amount due in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Information on rateable values and rates paid by stud farms is not available centrally. We have announced that an exemption from rates for these buildings which are occupied together with agricultural land or buildings and which are below a specified size threshold, will be provided for by Government amendment to the Local Government Finance Bill. It is envisaged that this provision will result in the great majority of those that keep one or two horses for their own enjoyment or for breeding on a small scale being exempt.

Council House Sales

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the continuing delay in the purchase by Mr. W. B. Hamond of his home at 12b Mount Adon park, London SE22 0DT from Southwark borough council.

Mrs. Roe: I am most concerned about the continuing delay in this case, which Southwark says is due to a shortage of valuers. I understand that a section 125 offer notice is expected to be served in early July.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mrs. R. Newton of her home at 10 Denesmead, Herne Hill, London SE24 from Southwark borough council.

Mrs. Roe: I understand that industrial action has caused a delay in the dispatch of the draft lease. The council says that it expects to dispatch it next month.

Homelessness

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give his latest estimate of the numbers of single homeless persons in London.

Mrs. Roe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) on 22 June.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the extra £24·1 million to be made available to local authorities to combat homelessness constitutes new expenditure; from which Vote it will be financed; to which authorities, and based upon what criteria, these moneys will be paid; how much each receiving authority will receive; what guidelines will be given to authorities about how they may spend these moneys; and what restrictions will be placed upon its use.

Mrs. Roe: The extra money is not voted expenditure. It forms part of the £141·7 million increase in this Department's cash limits arising from a local authority underspend in 1987-88. £21·1 million of the £24·1 million extra is to be targeted on authorities with the most severe homelessness pressures. Decisions on specific allocations have not yet been taken, but they will reflect numbers of homeless acceptances and in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Whilst it is our intention that these additional resources will be used to alleviate homelessness, it will be for the local authorities to make the final decision on the use of individual allocations.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appointments have been made to the National Rivers Authority to date, stating positions and salary levels.

Mr. Moynihan: No appointments will be made to the National Rivers Authority until it has been established by the main water privatisation legislation, which we hope to introduce next Session. As has already been announced, my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Crickhowell has been appointed chairman of the National Rivers Authority advisory committee, which will advise Ministers on the reorganisation of the water authorities needed to prepare for the creation of a separate NRA. The committee will be assisted by a team of civil servants and consultants under a grade 3 civil servant.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the result of his consultation exercise on waste regulation and disposal.

Mr. Moynihan: We expect to make an announcement very soon.

Trade in Endangered Species

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take to secure better compliance with the convention on the international trade in endangered species by signatory nations; and whether he will make proposals for the strengthening and more effective enforcement of the convention.

Mr. Moynihan: The United Kingdom vigorously supports the convention and, together with our partners in the European Community, implements the provisions of the convention through EC regulations 3626/82 and 3418/83.

We shall be considering with our European partners whether it would be appropriate to submit any proposals for securing better compliance with the convention to the next meeting of the conference of the parties to the convention to be held in October 1989.

Leasehold Valuation Tribunal (Appeals)

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the arrangements for appealing against the decision of the leasehold valuation tribunal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department and the Welsh Office have written to a wide range of interested parties inviting comments on a consultation paper about the arrangements for appealing against the decision of the leasehold valuation tribunal in connection with the operation of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. I am arranging for copies of the paper to be placed in the Library.

Rating Reform

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes any concessions concerning the uniform business rate for charity shops.

Mr. Howard: We are currently considering representations on this matter which have been received during proceedings on the Local Government Finance Bill in another place.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 16 June, *Official Report*, column 248-49, when he expects to have the necessary information to estimate the effect of exempt individuals including student nurses, on the likely levels of central grant and community charge for particular areas; and how often that information will be updated.

Mr. Howard: It will be necessary to have this information in good time for the introduction of the community charge in England and Wales on 1 April 1990, and to update it each year thereafter.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish an updated version of figures K1 and K3 on pages 130 and 132 of Cmnd. 9714, using the most recent available statistics.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* An updated version of figure K3 is provided in the table. Data to update figure K1 are not readily available and could be collated only at disproportionate cost.

Tax revenues from the main local taxes as percentage of total tax revenues of local governments (selected countries 1985)

Taxes on	*Income and profits*	*Payroll*	*Property*	*General consumption*	*Specific goods and services*	*Taxes on use*	*Other*
Federal Countries[1]							
Australia	—	—	95·9	—	—	4·1	—
Austria	39·4	11·0	10·1	22·7	10·7	1·5	4·5
Canada	—	—	84·7	—	—	1·2	14·0
Federal Republic of Germany	80·6	—	18·4	—	0·4	0·4	0·2
Switzerland	87·1	—	12·6	—	0·2	0·1	—
United States of America	5·9	—	74·2	10·9	4·7	4·3	—
Unitary Countries							
Belgium	78·9	—	—	—	—	15·3	5·9
Denmark	93·4	—	6·4	—	0·1	0·1	—
Finland	99·0	—	0·9	—	—	—	—
France	16·0	—	32·6	—	3·3	6·4	41·7
Greece	14·5	—	9·0	2·4	24·5	6·9	42·6
Ireland	—	—	100·0	—	—	—	—
Japan	58·0	—	23·7	—	12·4	4·8	1·0
Italy	66·7	—	—	—	10·2	0·3	22·7
Luxembourg	83·0	—	4·2	7·0	0·3	0·3	4·7
Netherlands	—	—	75·4	—	1·1	23·5	—
New Zealand	—	—	93·0	—	1·9	5·1	—
Norway	91·4	—	5·5	—	—	0·4	2·7
Portugal	64·4	—	1·6	9·3	19·2	4·4	1·0
Spain	40·3	—	10·4	26·0	13·9	—	9·4
Sweden	99·7	—	—	—	0·2	0·1	—
United Kingdom	—	—	100·0	—	—	—	—

[1] Excludes state, regional or provincial figures.
Source: OECD Revenue Statistics 1965-86.

Merseyside Task Force

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what have been the staffing levels of the Merseyside task force in every year since its inception.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* The following are the numbers:

Year	*Number*
1981	27
1982	27
1983	24
1984	39
1985	43
1986	51
1987	59
1988	59

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to appoint a new director of Merseyside task force;

(2) what review is being carried out into the functions of the Merseyside task force; who is in charge of such a review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* An internal management review is being carried out by two of my officials. Decisions about future senior management of the task force will be taken after the review has been completed.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in respect of the future of the Merseyside task force; and what has been his response.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* I have received representations that the task force has been valuable in promoting the regeneration of Merseyside and should remain in operation. I have indicated in my response that I intend to retain a strong office in Merseyside.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what role is being planned for the Merseyside task force in the administration of the Government's policies for the inner cities.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 13 June, at column *21*.

Chimneys (Lining)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce grants for lining of chimneys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I have been asked to reply.

The existing arrangements for renovation grants can include, at local authorities' discretion, works for the provision of chimney linings where such works form part of a wider package of renovation. I have no plans to introduce a specific grant for such provision.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Spending

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current annual expenditure incurred by Her Majesty's Government on items relating to agriculture which were, prior to 1979, financed in part or whole by the European Economic Community; and if he will specify the nature of the functions involved.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* All the costs of operations in the United Kingdom under the CAP

are ultimately borne by the United Kingdom, either directly or via our contribution to the EC budget. Estimates for United Kingdom expenditure in 1987-88 on CAP schemes which are fully or partly-funded by the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund (EAGGF) are given in the table.

For the guarantee section, all the schemes listed were in operation prior to 1979, although Community reimbursement for intervention costs was reduced by 25 per cent. of the standard amounts fixed for this purpose only with effect from December 1985. Community funding for guarantee section expenditure was also reduced in 1987-88 by the introduction of a two-month delay in advances from the EAGGF. As a result of this, funding for expenditure in February and March 1988 was not received until the 1988-89 financial year.

For the guidance section, most of the schemes listed, or their predecessors, were in operation prior to 1979. It would not be practical to provide figures which exclude all those schemes which did not exist before 1979.

	Total expenditure £ million	*EAGGF funding £ million*
Guarantee section		
Fully-funded by the EAGGF		
Internal subsidy schemes	557	413
External trade measures	521	458
Intervention purchasing (including EAGGF receipts for financing costs) (losses on sale fully reimbursed when produce sold)	113	208
Partly-funded by the EAGGF		
Storage and technical costs of intervention	96	41
Beef variable premium scheme	136	44
Suckler cow premium scheme	36	19
Guidance section		
Farm capital grants (part European Community-funded schemes)	76	[1]14
Support for agriculture in less- favoured areas (hill livestock compensatory amounts and additional benefits under capital grants schemes)	131	[1]27
Other	13	[1]2

[1] Reimbursement for eligible expenditure incurred in 1986.

Brewers Society Code of Practice

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has had from the National Licensed Victuallers Association to make the Brewers Society code of practice a legally binding document; what action he intends taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave to our hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) on Tuesday 14 June 1988, at column *135*.

Fishing Industry

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what he hopes to achieve at the next EC Council of Ministers meeting with regard to the fishing industry in general, and the inshore fleets in particular.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to his reply, 13 May 1988, c. 290]:* I represented the United Kingdom at the meeting of the Council of Fisheries Ministers in Luxembourg on 23-24 June.

The Council agreed an amendment to the marketing regulation which amongst other things provided for carry-over premiums to assist the private storage of herring and mackerel. This should facilitate smoother marketing of species of considerable importance to the United Kingdom industry. The Commission will also review the operation of the carry-over premium system for all species within the next two years. A widening of the margin of tolerance in the price at which herring and mackerel can be withdrawn from the market was agreed, which will also assist our industry. In addition, the new regulation limits the total amount of subsidy which can be paid in the tuna sector, where expenditure has been growing significantly.

The Council also agreed an amendment to the technical conservative regulation which reduces the minimum landing size of nephrops in the Irish sea and the seas of western Scotland to acceptable levels. The Council endorsed the requests of the United Kingdom and France for further scientific work to be undertaken before any action is taken to revise the technical conservation measures in respect of nephrops in the North sea and the Bay of Biscay. I again drew the Council's attention to the problem of the changing migratory pattern of western mackerel and warned that we may wish to return to the Council later to request flexibility in the fishing across the 4°W line should this prove to be necessary.

The Council had a first round of discussions on amendments to the control regulation which would facilitate better enforcement in the case of vessels landing in a member state other than its flag state. I explained the need for urgent action and the Council agreed to reach an early decision on this question. I pressed the Commission to make proposals as soon as possible, on the basis of the evidence we have given it, to increase the precautionary TACs for Channel cod and plaice, and the Commission undertook to consider this request urgently. This was a useful Council meeting in which progress was made on a number of issues of importance to the United Kingdom fishing industry.

Radioactive Contamination

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make available in the form of a map the figures for milk and sheepmeat tests for caesium 137 included in "Radionuclide Levels in Food, Animals, and Agricultural Products 1987," for the areas of Clwyd and Gwynedd only, showing as accurately as possible the sampling sites.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have been asked to reply.

The document contains over 160,000 milk and sheepmeat results for Gwynedd and Clwyd, and the cost of mapping in the form requested would be disproportionate.

ENERGY

B205 Corridor (Decontamination)

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will seek to have placed in the Library copies of the British Nuclear Fuels plc video recordings of

aspects of the B205 corridor incident clean-up and decontamination operations of about June 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that from time to time video recordings are taken to assist in the planning of, and briefing for, engineering work. Although the cassettes used for these recordings are reused as a matter of course, some recordings presently remain of the —205 corridor work of June-July 1987. As it is not BNFL's normal practice to issue these recordings, I shall ask its chairman to write to the hon. Member to arrange a suitably convenient time for viewing.

Sacked Miners

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has concerning the number of miners in the north-east area of British Coal who are not yet re-employed, having lost their jobs during the miners' strike.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Questions on the dismissal and re-employment of mineworkers are matters for the management of the British Coal Corporation.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Falkland Islands

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to fund a Government-sponsored seismological survey using the latest available techniques in order to establish the oil and gas potential around the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Eggar: There are no current plans to fund such a survey.

SCOTLAND

Patients (Waiting Times)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board for each year since 1970 the mean in-patient and out-patient waiting time and two standard deviations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on waiting times is available for health boards from 1975—the first full year of boards' operation. The mean waiting times for in-patient treatment are given in the table. They refer to heterogeneous groups of specialties, within each of which the distribution of waiting times is not symmetrical. In these circumstances, an overall standard deviation is not meaningful. The sharp increases in 1979 and 1983 reflect industrial action in the NHS. Mean waiting times for out-patients are not available.

Mean wait in days for all specialists except obstetrics, mental illness and mental handicap by health board of treatment—1975 to 1986

Health board of treatment	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Argyll and Clyde	104	103	107	84	91	99	93	77	99	91	93	85
Ayrshire and Arran	93	83	77	81	90	89	82	90	104	103	92	80
Borders	103	81	79	83	87	72	83	59	58	54	52	52
Dumfries and Galloway	112	109	102	101	95	122	94	90	138	116	101	95
Fife	99	96	89	77	89	83	95	67	133	112	101	95
Forth Valley	82	98	110	88	105	87	82	65	78	71	60	55
Grampian	70	66	65	61	90	91	86	69	132	102	83	78
Greater Glasgow	64	71	67	64	74	65	63	60	105	79	66	66
Highland	63	58	51	47	48	46	49	54	57	61	63	71
Lanarkshire	93	81	73	68	76	69	64	66	77	56	51	46
Lothian	67	71	71	61	83	67	59	58	81	67	61	65
Orkney	11	28	[1]25	18	22	22	18	21	17	18	28	18
Shetland	61	64	73	89	90	110	112	67	67	51	56	44
Tayside	70	71	79	66	71	67	74	69	92	86	86	87
Western Isles	45	39	34	35	45	48	45	47	53	40	41	51
Scotland	75	77	75	67	80	73	71	65	95	80	72	71

[1] This mean is based on five cases.

Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee for Further Education

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his plans for the future of the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee for Further Education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: In the Government's view the 40-strong statutory committee has proved a cumbersome and ineffective forum for negotiating the pay and conditions of academic staff in the local authority further education colleges and in the centrally-funded colleges.

In large measure this seems to be because the two sectors have different funding sources, the staff have different conditions of service and the pressures facing management are different. Over the last six years management and staff sides have done their best to establish the committee as an effective forum for negotiation, but progress has been disappointing. Moreover, from time to time in recent years we have received representations from both management and staff interests about the unsatisfactory nature of the present arrangements.

In the last two negotiation rounds the differing interests of the two sectors have been recognised by both management and staff interests with the creation of two separate negotiating groups. The 1987 negotiations resulted in two separate packages which reflected the differing priorities of the two sectors. In the 1988 negotiations a settlement has just been reached for the further education, but not for the centrally-funded, sector, and the expectation must be that in due course there will again be a different outcome affecting pay and conditions in the two sectors.

In the light of this evidence of the difficulties inherent in working within the present SJNC(FE), I intend taking the first legislative opportunity to abolish the committee. I do not wish to reach a conclusion at the present time on the precise form of any replacement negotiating machinery, as this is a matter on which the interests concerned in the two sectors will themselves have views.

My officials stand ready to assist the various parties in devising alternative arrangements which better reflect the needs of management and staff at all levels in the two sectors.

Rating Reform

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in which regional council areas service men are exempt from requirements to register for the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: In general, adult United Kingdom service personnel and their families who are solely or mainly resident in the area of a local authority will require to register for and pay the personal community charge in the normal manner. The position of those United Kingdom service personnel in Scotland who are exceptionally mobile and for whom individual registration for the personal community charge would be impracticable is the subject of continuing discussion between the Scottish Office and the Ministry of Defence. These arrangements will not apply to visiting forces which, in fulfilment of the United Kingdom's international treaty obligations, will be exempt from personal community charge liability. Provisions covering the position of visiting forces are contained in the Local Government Finance Bill.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has held with the United States Government over registration and payment of community charge by United States service men stationed in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: None. The Ministry of Defence is the principal point of contact between Her Majesty's Government and the United States forces stationed in the United Kingdom. That Department is in regular contact with the United States authorities on a wide range of matters, including the implications for visiting forces of the introduction of the community charge.

Leukaemia (Rosyth)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to inquire into the link between leukaemia and radiation in the Rosyth area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) has completed consideration of the incidence of leukaemia occurring in young people near Dounreay and has published its report, copies of which are in the Library. We have referred to COMARE information on the incidence of leukaemia throughout Scotland, including incidence in the vicinity of Rosyth. We will continue to be guided by the committee on any further work which is necessary in relation to specific Scottish sites.

East Kilbride Development Corporation

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) last met officials of the East Kilbride development corporation; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Lang: I last met officials of the East Kilbride development corporation on Tuesday 7 June, when I had the pleasure of announcing the establishment in the new town of the Motorola Semiconductor Company's European design centre. We discussed the successful conclusion of Motorola's plans to bring to East Kilbride the full range of its manufacturing, assembly, test and design operations and to create the largest centre of its type in Europe.

Schools (Staffing Review)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the outcome of his Department's review of staffing standards in Scottish schools will be available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A review of the staffing needs of secondary, primary and special schools has been completed and I shall be issuing today for consultation new guidance on staffing standards based on its outcome. This will replace existing standards, which date from the mid-1970s. The new standards are based on existing and immediately foreseeable demands on teachers' time. They reflect the weight of classroom duties, but also take into account the need for specialist teachers, management time required to service school boards and for other purposes, and the importance of adequate provision for small primary schools and for pupils from eithnic minorities and from deprived backgrounds. They should also give authorities and head teachers more flexibility in the disposition of their staff resources than hitherto.

The standards offer a framework for the staff complements needed to implement current educational policies, and they are commended as an indicative guide to staffing levels. I shall be monitoring the effect of their application on schools from 1989-90, and as changes occur in the running of schools, for example, through the progressive delegation of financial and managerial responsibility to school level, I shall be ready to review the form of guidance on staffing for the longer term.

Application of the revised standards would have increased by about 2,700 the teacher numbers taken directly into account within the RSG settlement covering 1988-89. Financial provision for education within this year's settlement included an unallocated margin pending completion of the review of staffing standards. The new standards will be used as the basis of provision for the cost of teachers' salaries within the revenue support grant settlement for 1989-90.

Further Education (College Principals)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will establish a review into the further education negotiating machinery with a view to offering principals of further education colleges a negotiating right on the Scottish joint negotiating committee for teaching staff in further education, or its successor body.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 22 June 1988]:* I refer to the reply I gave today to a question from the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) in which I announced my intention to abolish the SJNC(FE) at the

first legislative opportunity. I hope that the parties concerned in the local authority sector will discuss how best to represent the interests of the principals in discussing the form of replacement negotiating machinery.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Day Care

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average cost per day care place in Northern Ireland for each year from 1976-87 according to type of day centre.

Mr. Needham: The information is not collected in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Residential Care

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will state for residential care in the personal social services in Northern Ireland the average cost per resident for each year from 1976-87 by type of establishment.

Mr. Needham: The cost per resident week by type of establishment is shown in the table.

Type of establishment	*1976-77* £	*1977-78* £	*1978-79* £	*1979-80* £	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £
Old people's homes	51·99	58·90	65·07	78·38	100·87	111·19	119·86	126·75	131·50	142·39	147·84
Children's homes	75·03	80·21	89·03	117·15	174·16	204·08	236·80	270·47	287·90	277·62	287·80
Hostels for the mentally ill	35·41	39·37	43·30	45·17	58·09	63·74	67·53	74·51	80·84	87·76	105·15
Family group homes	36·30	47·67	52·24	78·06	105·10	103·15	117·34	133·59	203·30	226·22	272·32
Mental handicap hostels	44·16	47·81	52·85	67·68	85·04	96·40	113·33	147·32	158·55	171·18	181·10
Hostels for adolescents	67·79	84·89	82·56	103·44	158·29	146·57	176·81	187·32	207·78	228·59	204·94
Other residential accommodation	34·33	41·92	30·32	33·97	32·22	62·10	71·32	80·54	96·58	114·24	112·40

Hospital Patients

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will state for Northern Ireland the average cost per in-patient day or case by hospital type from 1971-72 up to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham: The average cost per in-patient day by hospital type for 1978-79 and subsequent years is shown in the following table. Costs for years prior to 1978-79 are not available on a comparable basis.

Average cost per in-patient day

	1978-79 £	*1979-80* £	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £
Acute	38·74	48·35	63·45	71·25	76·95	79·41	86·21	92·36	96·86
Mainly acute	30·16	37·59	48·60	54·51	60·02	60·43	65·46	69·25	72·68
Partly acute	28·59	30·64	40·23	44·33	48·07	50·55	54·26	67·38	62·73
Sub-acute	24·64	28·40	35·27	39·28	42·10	44·42	46·81	47·34	48·06
Mainly long stay	22·21	26·56	34·29	36·98	44·54	49·39	50·76	61·01	66·54
Long stay	16·85	20·66	27·55	29·83	32·46	34·16	36·35	37·57	40·12
Maternity	50·70	49·94	76·73	88·05	80·12	84·28	84·41	90·27	87·82
Psychiatric	14·93	18·19	24·04	26·50	29·88	31·39	33·89	35·55	39·48
Psychiatric (mental handicap)	15·71	18·75	24·51	27·23	29·38	31·00	32·81	33·79	35·66
Tuberculosis and chest	31·05	36·70	47·29	46·66	61·90	68·65	71·30	—	—
Other hospitals	—	35·86	45·27	50·05	55·31	58·09	59·91	63·06	67·34
Teaching hospitals	47·95	57·29	74·73	81·98	88·99	93·85	98·95	100·14	110·42

Personal Social Services

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a table showing for Northern Ireland gross current expenditure at 1986-87 prices by programme budget in personal social services in each year since 1976-77.

Mr. Needham: Information requested for the years 1977-78 to 1986-87 is shown in the table. Figures for 1976-77 are not available in the format requested.

Gross expenditure on personal social services by main budget headings at 1986-87 price levels

	1977-78 £	*1978-79* £	*1979-80* £	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £
Residential accommodation	23,491,265	24,570,923	26,983,698	29,837,148	30,708,419	31,543,868	32,019,937	31,878,591	32,217,445	31,636,233
Day care accommodation	4,821,139	5,738,420	6,389,279	7,117,841	7,421,435	8,101,376	7,630,390	8,008,679	7,955,753	7,976,386
Special care/Mental handicap services	8,230,800	8,794,676	9,132,603	10,059,436	10,093,157	10,907,942	12,473,100	13,087,532	13,545,494	14,314,658
Fieldwork services	9,905,966	11,211,447	14,189,872	16,128,842	16,371,630	17,109,456	17,725,394	17,794,490	17,956,726	18,545,470
Home help services	17,527,042	17,531,547	18,525,685	18,109,760	19,405,982	19,411,458	19,238,643	18,922,634	19,722,556	18,845,131
Meals service	880,213	892,447	938,260	960,885	880,273	785,882	788,338	799,139	741,416	684,940
Other	8,378,176	11,050,411	11,136,984	12,723,627	12,393,425	13,319,216	13,963,624	13,846,139	14,108,910	12,780,311
	73,234,601	79,789,871	87,296,381	94,937,539	97,274,321	101,179,198	103,839,426	104,337,204	106,248,300	104,783,129

Health Services

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a table showing for Northern Ireland gross current expenditure at 1986-87 prices by programme budget in hospital and community health services for each year since 1976-77.

Mr. Needham: Information requested for the years 1977-78 to 1986-87 is shown in the table. Figures for 1976-77 are not available in the format requested.

Gross expenditure on Hospital and Community Health Services by main budget headings at 1986-87 price levels

	1977-78 £	1978-79 £	1979-80 £	1980-81 £	1981-82 £	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £	1985-86 £	1986-87 £
Hospital and Related Services	347,154,334	358,687,830	369,682,307	369,284,987	381,432,344	386,942,275	394,707,830	394,967,460	389,229,391	381,719,558
Community Health	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Centres	6,015,305	6,788,044	7,234,664	7,599,770	8,030,310	8,382,775	8,774,550	8,842,585	9,018,479	9,181,949
Health Clinics	2,812,295	2,026,380	1,932,574	1,682,917	1,856,391	1,870,116	1,895,114	1,832,673	1,688,261	1,662,833
Health Visiting Services	5,154,534	5,497,733	5,667,286	5,999,904	6,117,720	6,434,529	6,594,638	6,835,716	6,871,360	7,114,662
Home Nursing Services	10,897,778	11,422,085	12,011,270	13,158,212	12,774,820	13,047,350	13,984,665	14,510,956	14,789,767	15,417,330
School Health Services	3,287,055	3,992,692	4,127,793	4,363,932	4,460,866	4,578,986	4,563,391	4,663,802	4,569,733	4,542,026
Other	4,625,369	4,980,999	4,948,863	5,078,782	5,301,486	5,541,501	5,940,520	6,248,191	6,457,285	7,102,727
	32,792,336	34,707,933	35,922,450	37,883,517	38,541,593	39,855,257	41,752,878	42,933,923	43,394,885	45,021,527

NHS (Patients)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was, for acute services, the number of day cases, out-patient attendances and in-patient cases treated in Northern Ireland in each year from 1976-77 together with the expenditure after allowing for general inflation, expenditure after allowing for hospital and community health service inflation and the average stay per patient.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

	Day and out-patient cases				*In-patient cases*			
Year	*Day patient attendances*	*Out patient attendances*	*Expenditure as adjusted by: General inflation*	*HCS inflation*	*No. of patients treated*	*Average (days) stay*	*Expenditure as adjusted by: General inflation*	*HCS inflation*
1976-77	13,974	1,126,252	13,460,500	14,463,990	124,604	11·34	95,989,508	103,145,597
1977-78	16,113	1,143,499	12,226,836	13,780,409	127,171	11·41	96,350,761	108,593,334
1978-79	15,854	1,187,471	12,464,667	14,190,831	126,350	11·54	94,534,130	107,625,731
1979-80	24,098	1,220,861	12,951,374	14,299,252	133,758	11·01	101,311,754	111,855,495
1980-81	24,706	1,291,836	14,225,355	14,548,733	134,229	10·92	110,493,399	113,005,191
1981-82	22,737	1,307,681	14,337,609	14,896,106	134,857	10·86	113,155,421	117,563,194
1982-83	22,662	1,345,017	14,802,368	15,486,124	132,226	10·85	114,402,466	119,686,981
1983-84	25,966	1,439,633	15,664,991	16,321,411	138,740	10·72	117,268,256	122,182,221
1984-85	24,948	1,486,116	16,242,589	16,709,847	142,254	10·30	119,945,885	123,396,420
1985-86	29,681	1,541,986	16,117,280	16,700,638	148,577	9·83	119,720,597	124,053,830
1986-87	31,412	1,552,628	17,684,635	17,684,635	144,583	9·95	119,549,166	119,549,166

Maternity Services

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was, for maternity services in Northern Ireland, the number of in-patient cases, the expenditure after allowing for general inflation, the expenditure after allowing for hospital and community health service inflation, the number of out-patient attendances and the length of stay per patient for each year since 1976-77, together with the perinatal mortality rate.

Mr. Needham: The health and social services boards' accounts are not maintained in such a way as to permit the expenditure on maternity services to be separately identified. The statistical information requested is as follows:

Maternity services in Northern Ireland

	In-patient cases	*Out-patient cases*	*Length of stay*	*Perinatal mortality cases*
1976	33,270	137,675	6·6	22·3
1977	32,884	139,979	6·7	21·1
1978	34,183	146,814	6·5	18·1
1979	37,358	151,870	6·3	16·6
1980	37,674	158,876	6·1	15·6
1981	36,221	152,671	6·1	15·3
1982	35,103	151,696	6·2	13·3
1983	35,606	163,385	5·9	13·1
1984	36,808	170,489	5·8	10·8
1985	36,968	169,735	5·6	11·1
1986	37,388	173,208	5·5	[1] 9·5

[1] Provisional.

Mentally Ill People

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what, for the personal social services for the mentally ill in Northern Ireland, was the number of day centre places, expenditure after allowing for general inflation, expenditure after allowing for personal social services inflation and the number of residents in each year from 1976-77.

Mr. Needham: The information is not collected in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Constitution (Referendum)

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will arrange for a referendum on the constitutional position to be held in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I have no current plans to do so.

Mental Handicap Hospitals

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the number of patients leaving mental handicap hospitals and units after a stay of five or more years in Northern Ireland and by area board.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

National Health Service

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of National Health Service community psychiatric nursing staff, mental illness, in Northern Ireland and each area board at 30 September in each of the years 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986; and what was the percentage change between 1983 and 1986.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Year[1]	*Eastern Board*	*Northern Board*	*Southern Board*	*Western Board*	*Northern Ireland*
1983	22	8	10	22	62
1984	25	9	10	20	64
1985	33	8	13	21	75
1986	35	8	11	25	79
Percentage change					
1983-	59	Nil	10	14	27

[1] Information on the numbers of community psychiatric nurses is collected on an ad hoc basis and therefore it is not possible to give information as at 30 September in each year.

Vehicle Imports

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new *(a)* motorcars, *(b)* vans, and *(c)* other vehicles have been brought into Northern Ireland from the Irish Republic in each of the last 12 months for which figures are available; how many in each category have been listed as personal imports; how many have been imported for sale by the importer; and what percentage of total sales in each month in each category these imports represent.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* The information requested is set out in the tables:

1. Private cars

Total registrations in Northern Ireland		*ROI "personal" imports*	*per cent.*	*ROI "dealer" imports*	*per cent.*
May 1987	5,047	45	0·89	18	0·35
June 1987	5,722	53	0·92	38	0·66
July 1987	4,091	62	1·51	18	0·43
August 1987	4,348	52	1·19	16	0·36
September 1987	4,600	75	1·63	21	0·45
October 1987	3,919	95	2·42	17	0·43
November 1987	2,810	60	2·13	27	0·96
December 1987	1,503	39	2·59	10	0·66
January 1988	6,715	118	1·75	67	0·99
February 1988	5,328	121	2·27	95	1·78
March 1988	5,644	108	1·91	35	0·62
April 1988	3,941	152	3·85	22	0·55

2. Light goods vehicles—As type approval does not apply to light goods vehicles, no information is available on whether imports are "Personal" or "Dealer".

Total Registrations in Northern Ireland		*ROI Imports*	*Percentage*
May 1987	360	27	7·50
June 1987	416	24	5·76
July 1987	317	18	5·67
August 1987	284	27	9·50
September 1987	312	17	5·44
October 1987	344	29	8·43
November 1987	327	33	10·09
December 1987	211	33	15·63
January 1988	513	74	14·42
February 1988	343	67	19·53
March 1988	375	13	3·46
April 1988	285	13	4·56

3. *Other Vehicles*[1]

Total Registration		*ROI Imports*	*Percentage*
March 1988	444	51	11·48
April 1988	352	44	12·50

[1] This information is available only from March 1988 onwards and does not distinguish between "Personal" and "Dealer" imports.

Irish Language

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the role of Irish in the school curriculum has been discussed at meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* The Intergovernmental Conference has discussed Irish language questions and education questions on a number of occasions, as reported in the joint statements issued after such meetings. The details of conference proceedings are confidential.

Tolls

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of road, bridge and tunnel facilities in Northern Ireland for which tolls are levied, with a note for each entry of *(a)* the name and address of the responsible authority *(b)* whether it produces published accounts for that specific facility *(c)* which Minister is responsible for authorising changes in such tolls, and *(d)* on which (i)

public expenditure programme and (ii) class, vote and subhead, the toll revenue and associated expenditure is to be found.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 23 June 1988]:* There are no roads, bridges or tunnel facilities in the Northern Ireland public road system for which tolls are levied.

WALES

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when his Department's ethnic monitoring exercise commenced; when he expects it to be concluded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 16 June 1988. A survey of the ethnic origin of staff in my Department commenced on 20 April 1988 and was concluded on 31 May. A 94 per cent. rate of return was achieved. The results of the survey are currently being analysed by the Cabinet Office (Office of the Minister of the Civil Service).

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what positive action he has taken to remedy past inequalities in employment practices in his Department in compliance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively, other than those measures specified in his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West dated 27 May, at columns *397-8*.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 27 May. Since my earlier reply agreement has been reached with the trade union side in my Department on equal opportunities framework papers covering monitoring of policies, training, promotion and job allocation.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: An equal opportunities officer has been designated within my Department's personnel management division. The officer has responsibility for advising senior management on the application and monitoring of the Civil Service policy on non-discrimination. The officer also provides advice on the implementation of the programme of action on equal opportunities recommended by the joint review group of the Civil Service National Whitley council's joint personnel management committee.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively;

(2) what were the results of the survey recently completed to provide information on the ethnic origin of staff in his Department; and how many, and what percentage of staff in each unit or grade were found to be of Afro-Caribbean and Asian origin, respectively.

Mr. Peter Walker: The details requested by the hon. and learned Gentleman for female staff in my Department are set out in the table. The information sought about staff from ethnic minorities is not available, since an ethnic monitoring staff-in-post survey of the Welsh Office has only very recently been completed and the results are currently being analysed by the Cabinet Office (Office of the Minister of the Civil Service).

Women

	Number	*per cent.*
Grade 1	—	—
Grade 2	—	—
Grade 3	—	—
Grade 4	—	—
Grade 5	1·5	3
Grade 6	11	17
Grade 7	15	13
SEO	14	17
HEO	67	34
EO	179·5	50
AO	277	67
AA	148·5	61
Typing and secretarial grades	219·5	100
Other support grades	44·5	31
Professional grades	24	16
Industrials	2	2
TOTAL	1,003·5	46

Notes:
1. All figures relate to current operational grades.
2. As at 1 June 1988.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to improve equality of opportunity for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades of his Department, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department, as an equal opportunities employer, is conducting a continuing policy of encouraging women and members of ethnic minorities to play their full part in its work. The matter is kept under review by a joint management-union working party. Specific issues currently under consideration include a feasibility study of day care facilities, training for women managers and efforts to build links with schools with significant numbers of children from ethnic minorities.

Home Education

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has to how many children in Wales are educated at home *(a)* by their parents and *(b)* by local education authority tutors; and what is the cost per week per child.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information on children educated at home is not collected by the Department.

Non-attendance at School

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide figures for the number of children in Wales *(a)* in care, *(b)* in psychiatric units and *(c)* in residential schools for non-attendance at school; and if he will give the overall costs and costs per week per child.

Mr. Peter Walker: There were 3,481 children in care on 31 March 1987. The number of resident patients aged under 16, in mental illness hospitals and units, as at 5 April 1987, was 38. Information on expenditure in respect of children in mental illness hospitals and units is not

available centrally. Information is not collected centrally on residential schools for non-attendance at school. However, it is estimated that 84 children were in care under a care order for non-attendance at school. It is not known how many of these children were in residential schools. The provisional 1986-87 current expenditure by local authorities on children in care was £15·7 million and the average cost per child per week was £110.

Pupil Costs

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the cost of educating a child at *(a)* a state primary school and *(b)* a state secondary school in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The costs to local authorities of educating a child in Wales in 1986-87 were as follows:

	£ (out-turn)
State primary schools	909
State secondary schools	1,320

Language Teaching

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many children educated in maintained schools in Wales passed Russian A-level in 1987; if he is satisfied with the quantity and standard of Russian teaching in Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many children educated in maintained schools in Wales passed Italian A-level in 1987; if he is satisfied with the quantity and standard of Italian teaching in Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many children educated in maintained schools in Wales passed Spanish A-level in 1987; if he is satisfied with the quantity and standard of Spanish teaching in Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he is satisfied with the quantity and standard of German teaching in Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he is satisfied with the quantity and standard of French teaching in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The policy statement "Modern Languages in the School Curriculum" recognised recent improvements in the nature and provision of foreign language teaching. While levels of performance taken as a whole have improved, there is evidence that much higher standards can be achieved, especially in oral communication. Recent attention by LEAs in service training programmes, and the work of LEA advisers, will enhance the quality of foreign language teaching and will help raise standards of achievement. I hope to see, also, a greater diversity in the range of languages offered in schools.

Implementation of the national curriculum will mean that all pupils up to the age of 16 in maintained secondary schools will in due course study a modern language, which will, in Wales, be in addition to Welsh.

The numbers of pupils educated at maintained schools who passed Spanish, Italian and Russian at A-level in 1987 in Wales were 46, five and one respectively.

Starter Homes

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the rate of building of starter homes in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Data are not collected on the number of starter homes built in Wales. I am satisfied, however, that the housebuilding industry is responding to the demand for all types of homes. In 1987 the private sector started 8,700 new homes in Wales, an increase of 23 per cent. on the previous year and the highest total since 1973.

Tolls

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of road, bridge and tunnel facilities in Wales for which tolls are levied, with a note for each entry of *(a)* the name and address of the responsible authority, *(b)* whether it produces published accounts for that specific facility, *(c)* which Minister is responsible for authorising changes in such tolls, and *(d)* on which (i) public expenditure programme and (ii) class, vote and subhead, the toll revenue and associated expenditure is to be found.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 23 June 1988]:* There are two major tolled crossings in Wales—the Cleddau bridge and the Porthmadog Cob. Neither is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales and toll revenue and associated expenditure do not appear in the roads public expenditure programme. The toll rate on the Porthmadog Cob is fixed in primary legislation. Changes in the tolls on the Cleddau bridge are not required to be authorised by the Secretary of State, though he has certain powers relating to such tolls. Accounts are published annually and the authorities responsible for these crossings are:

Cleddau Bridge
Dyfed County Council
County Hall
Carmarthen
Dyfed SA31 1JP

Porthmadog Cob
The Rebecca Trust
Y Dollborth
Porthmadog
Gwynedd

Details of ownership and accounting arrangements for minor crossings and roads are not readily available.

EMPLOYMENT

Co-operative Development Agency

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing for each of the past four years the funding provided under the terms of the Co-operative Development Agency and Industrial Development Act 1984, as well as an estimate of the funds which will be available in the current year.

Mr. Cope: The Co-operative Development Agency's estimated funding for the 1988-89 financial year under the terms of the Co-operative Development Agency and Industrial Development Act 1984 has been approved at £240,000. The table shows for each of the past four years the funding provided under the terms of the Co-operative Development Agency Act 1978, as amended by the Co-operative Development Agency and Industrial Development Act 1984.

Year	Funding £'000s
1 April 1984—31 March 1985	200
1 April 1985—31 March 1986	200
1 April 1986—31 March 1987	235
1 April 1987—31 March 1988	200

Also, under the terms of the Industrial Development Act 1982, £40,000 was made available in 1987-88 and £45,000 has been approved for 1988-89.

Training Schemes

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many filled places on the following programmes for each standard region, including Greater London, there were at the end of each month from February to May inclusive: community programme, enterprise allowance scheme, YTS, young workers' scheme, job release scheme, jobshare scheme, new job training scheme and jobstart allowance.

Mr. Cope: The information by standard region is as follows:

(a) Community programme[1]	February 1988	March 1988	April 1988	May 1988
South East	10,263	10,104	9,889	9,624
London	14,117	14,217	14,259	14,274
South West	14,576	14,401	14,120	13,783
West Midlands	26,127	25,643	25,433	25,038
East Midlands and Eastern	17,065	16,894	16,605	16,340
Yorkshire and Humberside	26,030	25,927	25,561	25,140
North West	36,279	36,351	36,036	35,453
Northern	28,182	28,277	28,200	28,055
Wales	19,816	19,865	19,668	19,688
Scotland	30,971	31,052	31,344	31,033

[1] Excluding Charities.

(b) Enterprise Allowance Scheme	February 1988	March 1988	April 1988	May 1988
London and South East	21,915	23,232	22,968	22,858
South West	9,944	9,893	9,857	9,933
West Midlands	9,316	9,229	9,173	9,029
East Midlands and Eastern	10,167	9,001	8,957	9,116
Yorkshire and Humberside	9,025	9,032	8,951	8,950
North West	14,193	14,205	14,073	14,155
Northern	5,097	5,152	5,140	5,197
Wales	5,810	5,854	5,851	5,799
Scotland	8,643	8,710	8,603	8,571

(c) Youth Training Scheme[2]

	February 1988	March 1988	April 1988	May 1988
South East	42,250	41,260	40,570	40,320
London	20,550	20,220	20,110	20,180
South West	31,150	30,280	29,680	29,590
West Midlands	46,570	44,900	44,200	44,080
East Midlands and Eastern	46,430	45,220	44,640	44,970
Yorkshire and Humberside	43,410	42,270	41,920	42,500
North West	59,980	58,370	56,560	56,660
Northern	28,570	27,720	27,090	27,180
Wales	23,160	22,510	22,340	22,600
Scotland	45,340	44,520	43,260	43,300

[2] Adjusted figures to take account of late notification of young people leaving the scheme.

(d) The New Workers Scheme[3]

	February 1988	March 1988
South East	725	529
London	194	194
South West	1,178	e1,075
West Midlands	2,424	2,338
East Midlands and Eastern	1,449	1,053
Yorkshire and Humberside	e2,059	e1,845
North West	4,099	3,852
Northern	e1,748	e1,548
Wales	1,860	e1,697
Scotland	1,990	1,739

	April 1988	May 1988
London and South East	517	384
Wales and South West	2,538	2,358
East Midlands/Eastern and West Midlands	3,016	2,743
Yorkshire and Humberside and Northern	3,071	2,752
North West	3,408	3,031
Scotland	1,524	1,341

[3] The new workers scheme replaced the young workers scheme in April 1986. Figures are for employees being supported at specified time. Figures for February/March and April/May are shown separately due to a change in the way that the figures are collected.
e = estimate

(e) The Job Release Scheme

	February 1988	March 1988	April 1988	May 1988
South East	2,016	1,874	[4]3,149	[4]2,977
London	930	865	—	—
South West	1,632	1,548	1,384	1,303
West Midlands	1,938	1,834	1,660	[5]3,277
East Midlands and Eastern	2,930	2,783	1,780	—
Yorks and Humberside	3,035	2,891	2,611	2,496
North West	3,175	3,025	2,506	2,600
Northern	788	747	910	638
Wales	684	652	594	559
Scotland	1,422	1,319	1,163	1,089

[4] Figures are for London and the South East
[5] Figures are for the West Midlands, East Midlands and Eastern

(f) Jobshare[6]	February 1988	March 1988
South East	22	18
London	3	2
South West	26	25
West Midlands	47	46
East Midlands and Eastern	74	72
Yorks and Humberside	194	189
North West	288	257
Northern	58	54
Wales	87	90
Scotland	34	30

	April 1988	May 1988
London and South East	15	16
Wales and South West	115	111
East Midlands/Eastern and West Midlands	121	111
Yorks and Humberside and Northern	234	207
North West	263	188
Scotland	31	28

[6] Figures are for employees being supported at specified time and due to a change in the way that the figures are collected they are shown separately for February/March and April/May.

(g) The New Job Training Scheme[7]

	February 1988	*March 1988*	*April 1988*	*May 1988*
South East	2,849	3,010	3,056	—
London	3,283	3,547	3,123	—
South West	2,126	2,398	2,462	—
West Midlands	3,051	3,467	3,183	—
East Midlands and Eastern	2,814	2,833	2,863	—
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,168	4,329	4,275	—
North West	3,716	4,097	4,159	—
Northern	2,097	2,339	2,590	—
Wales	1,351	1,390	1,469	—
Scotland	2,828	3,025	3,055	—

[7] Figures for May are not yet available.

(h) The Jobstart Allowance[8]

	February 1988	*March 1988*	*April 1988*	*May 1988*
London and South East	173	171	164	153
South West	114	102	92	88
West Midlands	391	367	311	305
East Midlands and Eastern	328	276	239	216
Yorkshire and Humberside	399	396	342	324
North West	741	712	599	537
Northern	252	253	252	248
Wales	246	253	213	204
Scotland	344	332	363	355

[8] The figures relate to the number of people actually in receipt of the allowance at a given date.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment under what circumstances an unemployed claimant receiving income support or unemployment benefit and studying in further education on a course of less than 21 hours per week can continue with that course work as an element within an employment training personal action plan.

Mr. Cope: Everyone joining employment training will follow an integrated programme of directed and practical training based on an agreed individual action plan. Employment training will build on trainees' previous attainments and experience, and an individual's action plan may include the completion of courses started before the trainee joined the programme that are relevant to the plan.

YTS Bridging Allowance

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment under what circumstances 16 and 17-year-olds in receipt of the YTS bridging allowance will be able to pursue a part-time education course, similar to the 21-hour rule without losing the allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The YTS bridging allowance will be paid for a maximum of eight weeks in any 12-month period to young people who have lost a job or a previous YTS place. To be eligible for the allowance young people must apply for a YTS place, make themselves available for interviews when required and be prepared to start on a YTS course at any time. Subject to those conditions young people may, if they wish, pursue a part-time education course while receiving the allowance.

Itinerants (Stonehenge)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total amount of benefits currently being paid by his Department to claimants who are living in vehicles attached to the convoy of itinerants currently in the vicinity of Stonehenge; what steps are taken by his Department to ensure that no benefits are paid in respect of fraudulent claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My Department does not keep records which show the amount of benefit paid to special groups of claimants. My Department has over 800 officers engaged exclusively in the investigation of benefit fraud. They liaise with their counterparts in the Department of Health and Social Security to ensure that every suspicion of benefit fraud is investigated. Because of the nature of their travels, the itinerants gathering at Stonehenge are unlikely to be committing the most common sort of benefit fraud, which is working and signing. If they are drawing benefit, however, they may be infringing the benefit system by not being available for work. Availability for work is rigorously enforced by my Department through the availability questionnaire which I announced in the House on 1 December 1987. Instructions issued to officials in the south-west require them to apply the full test of availability to any unemployed person claiming benefit.

YTS

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the projected numbers of YTS trainees on *(a)* year one and *(b)* year two for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 and what are the projected average lengths of stay.

Mr. Cope: The Government's expenditure plans, published in January 1988, show projected entrants to YTS at 363,000 in 1989-90 and 358,000 in 1990-91. Assumptions which underpinned that forecast are that 207,000 trainees with a two-year entitlement would progress into a second year in 1989-90, and 195,000 such trainees would progress into a second year in 1990-91. Average length of stay for those with a two-year entitlement would be 72 weeks in 1989-90, and 73 weeks in 1990-91, while for those with a one-year entitlement average length of stay would be 42 weeks in 1989-90 and 43 weeks in 1990-91.

The current public expenditure survey will cover the three years in question. The projections made last year are of course under review as part of this year's survey in the light of labour market trends, changes in legislation, and other factors.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he now has final figures for the number of entrants to YTS in 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The Training Commission has released figures today which show that there were 419,635 starts to YTS in 1986-87. Cumulative figures at the end of each month were:

	Number
1986	
April	22,826
May	37,738
June	128,225
July	190,786
August	244,557
September	332,928
October	356,181
November	371,877
December	379,849
1987	
January	396,055
February	407,198
March	419,635
TOTAL FOR YEAR	419,635

These figures represent the actual numbers of scheme starts, including second and subsequent starts where trainees have transferred between schemes. It is estimated that the number of individuals entering YTS in 1986-87 was some 20 per cent. lower than the figures for starts in the table.

These figures differ from those published during 1986-87 because they include notifications of starts which had not been received at the time the monthly statistics were announced.

Wages Councils Agreements

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the estimated number of establishments and workers covered by wages council agreements, in 1987, in each region in Scotland and in each of the four cities: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen; and if he will show in that table the number of inspections, by visit and by other methods, carried out by the Wages Inspectorate in each area, and the rate of compliance with wages councils' rates in 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: Wages Inspectorate statistics are not compiled for areas smaller than the inspectorate's nine divisions, of which Scotland is one. Those items requested for which separate figures are compiled for Scotland were provided in the reply given to the hon. Member on 4 March 1988, at columns *734-38*.

Minimum Wages

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of employers who have been informed by the Wages Inspectorate in Scotland that the maximum period for which arrears arising from under-payment of minimum rates can be claimed is 18 months; and if he will estimate the number of workers in Scotland affected by this information.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not the case that arrears can be claimed only for a period of 18 months. To the best of the inspectorate's knowledge, no such advice has been given.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about recent changes in the loan guarantee scheme.

Mr. Cope: As one of the initiatives in the action for cities launch on 7 March the Government announced their intention to raise the guarantee level on the loan guarantee scheme loans from 70 to 85 per cent. for eligible borrowers in inner city task force areas. That initiative has now been brought into effect. Since the introduction this January of simplified arrangements for loans of up to £15,000, take up under the scheme has doubled to over 200 per month. Both those changes should assist small businesses to start up and grow.

TRANSPORT

Departmental Staff

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give for each standard planning region of England *(a)* the number of employees of his Department, *(b)* the amount spent on wages and salaries and *(c)* the proportion of total expenditure in each region by his Department which is represented by personnel costs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of employees in each economic planning region of England at 21 June was as follows:

Region	
Northern	444
Yorkshire and Humberside	689
North West	840
East Midlands	547
West Midlands	776
East Anglia	306
South East	2,146
South West	1,103
London	2,818

The Department does not have a breakdown by former planning region of the amount spent on wages and salaries or of the proportion of total expenditure which personnel costs represents.

Motorists (Green Card)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if there are any plans to end the green card insurance requirement for British motorists travelling in EEC countries as a result of the Single European Act.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no requirement for motorists to have a green card when driving in other Community countries. Motor insurance policies issued in one member state already provide the cover required in law in each of the others. For convenience, United Kingdom insurers issue green cards to drivers who wish to extend the full cover provided by their domestic policies. This use of the green card does not correspond with its original purpose. To use some other form of certification as evidence of the extension of such cover would introduce an additional complication at a time when the aim is for freer movement between EC countries.

Irish Road Traffic

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set up a survey to identify the total amount of road traffic from the Republic of Ireland which passed through the United Kingdom on its way to the continent of Europe during a given period of time.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No.

Road Traffic Law

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to complete his consideration of the recommendations of the North report on road traffic law.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said on 12 April, at column *79*, we are pressing ahead with consideration of the recommendations of the North report. We will report to the House on our progress before the summer recess.

A27 (Flyover)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide a scale model of the road flyover at the Offington roundabout proposed in the consultant study of the A27 to enable constituents of the right hon. Member for Worthing attending the public exhibition to assess the impact of the proposed flyover on the local environment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The consultants' recommended route has been developed to a sufficient extent to show that it would be a practicable solution and to indicate the approximate height of a flyover at the Offington roundabout. It would not be possible to prepare an accurate scale model until the detailed design stage is reached.

Tyre Treads

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he plans to discuss the issue of tyre tread depths with Governments of those countries enforcing a minimum tread depth of 1·6 mm or above; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the minimum statutory tyre tread depths in each country for which his Department has records.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have no plans to discuss tread depths with other Governments. In use requirements for tyres are a domestic matter which each country decides in the light of local conditions. The Department does not keep complete records of minimum statutory tread depths in other countries. I would also refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for York, (Mr. Gregory) on 18 April, at columns *538-39*. The latest informal information we have is as follows:

European and other country tread depth standards

Italy, West Germany, Denmark, Ireland, Belgium:
1 mm over the full width

France:
1 mm in the principal grooves

Luxembourg, Switzerland and Japan:
1·6 mm over the full width

United States of America:
$\frac{1}{16}$ inch over the full width

Austria:

Motor cycles	1 mm over the full width
Passenger cars and vans up to 3,000 kg laden weight	1·6 mm over the full width
PSVs and goods vehicles	2 mm over the full width

Netherlands:

Passenger vehicles for up to 9 people (including driver)	1 mm over the full width except the tyre shoulder
Goods vehicles with a laden weight of up to 3,500 kgs and trailers	
Other goods vehicles and PSVs	No tread depth. tyre must be suitable for use and have rubber over whole surface. Slight cuts in rubber are permissible.

Portugal:
1 mm over $\frac{3}{4}$ of width.

HGV Test Centres

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many firms have block bookings at the HGV test centre at Beverley.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Five firms have block booking arrangements at the Beverley HGV driving test centre.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport upon what principles block bookings at the Beverley HGV test centre are allocated.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At Beverley, and all other HGV driving test centres, block booking arrangements are made with full-time training organisations which have a regular demand for HGV tests, provided that a reasonable amount of testing capacity remains to accommodate individual applicants.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the waiting time for individual applications for tests at the Beverley HGV test centre for firms without block bookings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The forward booking date at Beverley HGV driving test centre is not kept separately for individual and block booked candidates. The forward booking date inclusive of both is currently 17 weeks. This is too long. We are urgently seeking ways to improve the situation.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the commercial value for firms training for HGV licences of the value of block bookings at the Beverley HGV test centre.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No financial estimate has been made. The Department's policy is to provide block booking facilities at Beverley and other HGV driving test centres wherever possible.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why block bookings are granted to HGV licence training firms at the Beverley HGV training centre.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At all HGV driving test centres we provide block booking facilities so that firms can plan their HGV driver training programmes to known test dates. The extent to which block booking facilities can be made available is currently limited at Beverley by shortage of accommodation.

M23 (Traffic Delays)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Worthing on 20 June, whether he will take steps to ensure that the county council officials responsible for delaying the traffic on the M23 on 11 June to use a deflectograph machine are no longer employed on his Department's work; why it was considered necessary to undertake the work at short notice; what cost saving was achieved by employing the machine at that particular time; who owns the machine used; and what factors led to the conclusion that similar weather conditions were unlikely to prevail at a time when traffic was not heavy.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The county council is being asked for a report. I shall write to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Worthing of 20 June, what information he has, in respect of the measurements of the road surface of the M23 on 11 June, as to when the police were first informed by the county council of its intention to carry out the work; what conclusions were reached as a result of the measurements; what action has been taken as a result of measuring the condition of the road; and when he expects a review by his Department of traffic flow maintenance.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Surrey county council and the police first discussed the programme for the measurements on 26 April. The police were informed at 11.30 am on 10 June of the work to be done on the following day. The information obtained will take some weeks to analyse. It is needed to decide the structural treatment required during future major maintenance works. We are considering more generally what further steps might be taken to improve traffic flows in connection with maintenance works.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 135**

SESSION 1987–88

13th June–24th June 1988

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, • = matter taken formally, without debate.

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